

India Studies in Business and Economics

V. Mani
Catarina Delgado

Supply Chain Social Sustainability for Manufacturing

Measurement and
Performance Outcomes from India

 Springer

India Studies in Business and Economics

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ISSN 2198-0012 ISSN 2198-0020 (electronic)
India Studies in Business and Economics
ISBN 978-981-13-1240-3 ISBN 978-981-13-1241-0 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1241-0>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018946571

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank the incessant source of divine blessings, his holiness Sri Sri Shivakumara Swamiji, Siddaganga Mutt, Tumkur, who always inspires me to move forward with his omens and love.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Rajat Agrawal, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee, for his time, guidance, enthusiastic interest, support and invaluable comments throughout my research work. I will fail in my duty if I do not mention the contributions of the entire faculty and staff members of the Department of Management Studies, IIT Roorkee, whose help and assistance was immense during my association with the institute.

I would like to mention the invaluable contribution of my wife Kavitha and my two children Sumuk and Trilok, whose sacrifice, support and motivation helped me chase this dream. Without their support and constant encouragement, I would have quit a long time ago.

I am much indebted to my co-author, Dr. Catarina Delgado, for her guidance and critical comments during this research. I consider myself truly blessed to have such good researchers around me. Their inspirations, support, and cooperation are beyond the scope of any acknowledgement, yet I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to them.

I wish to extend a word of acknowledgement to Springer's editorial team, especially Ms. Nupoor, whose guidance and drive helped me complete this task on time.

Finally, I would also like to thank all the prospective readers of this work, since any research is useful if it is read and understood by others in order to act as a bridge for further research.

With profound gratitude, love and devotion, I dedicate this research to my family.

V. Mani

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Chapter 1

Introduction



1.1 Introduction to Social Sustainability

Sustainable manufacturing is gaining much attention among practitioners and academicians over a decade. This is because of many of today's social and environmental issues are rooted in unsustainable forms of industrial and economic development that causes tremendous pressure on finite natural resources. At the same time, corporations are required to meet the stakeholder's requirements, in order to garner support and legitimacy for smooth conduct of business. Further, corporates are developing new technologies and sustainable approaches that could be integrated with sustainable manufacturing to achieve an overall competitive advantage. The term sustainability refers to as "meeting today's needs of present generations without compromising the future generation's needs" (Brundtland 1987). Brundtland report also points out two major concerns: development and environment, and these can be labelled as "needs" versus "resources" or short term vs long term. Further, United Nations in its development agenda propose sustainability as economic development, social development and environmental protection and are interdependent and mutually reinforcing mechanisms of sustainable development for achieving higher quality of life for people.

Although sustainability encompasses three dimensions, that is, environmental, economic and social, due to the much more apparent threat of climate change and global warming, it was the environmental dimension that received most of the attention for over a decade (Carter and Easton 2011; Winter and Knemeyer 2013). However, increasing stakeholder awareness of the issues, such as safety, health and poor labour working conditions, has of late, brought the focus on socially oriented sustainable manufacturing practices, in addition to the environmental sustainability. As more and more companies commit themselves to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability policies, there is increasing pressure on them to contemplate the social impact of their business operations all through the supply chain. The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), an apex body of United Nations,

ranks the countries based on education, income disparity, mortality rate and such other parameters in various countries. Because of poor management of social issues, the majority of the developing countries are consistently rated poorly on the HDI. This in turn acts as a motivating factor for them to improve the performance of their social sustainability activities.

Increasingly corporates use Sarbanes–Oxley Act, Dow Jones Economic Index (1896) and mandatory financial disclosures as benchmarks for economic sustainability. Similarly, firms use environmental reporting on water, energy use and waste generation and disposals, through ISO 14001 and ISO 26000 certifications. Green manufacturing and environmental sustainability issues have attracted the attention of scholars for over two decades and made significant progress in sustainability adoption and implementation (Bhattacharya et al. 2014; Seuring and Müller 2008a). However, very little progress was made for social sustainability in the supply chain. It could be because of the complex human issues involved in it (Mani et al. 2016; Yawar and Seuring 2017). Further, scholars also caution with regard to isolation of one dimension among social, environmental and economic and any such isolation is detrimental to overall development of sustainability. According to Elkington (1997), sustainability encompasses all three dimensions and studying of interrelationship among the economic and environmental and social dimension is integral to the concept of sustainability. In the same vein, Carter and Easton (2011) conceive the need to characterise the interactions among economic, environmental and social dimensions to understand the overall impact on the future generations.

Although scholars acknowledge social aspects are integral part of sustainability, less attention was devoted so far and has rarely been anywhere near that given to environmental and economic concerns (Seuring and Müller 2008b). On the other hand, reports suggest that social performance occurs infrequently and inconsistently across global organisations (GRI, established in 1997). Similar view was shared by Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS) that: “while there has been considerable work carried out on economic and environmental aspects, the social dimension tended to fall off the agenda for sustainability”. Further, studies in the literature suggest that very few social issues that include labour working conditions, safety, health issues were discussed, rather than bringing a comprehensive focus on all social issues, implying for future requirement of in-depth studies (Ashby et al. 2012). When it comes to manufacturing supply chain, social studies are scant (Seuring and Müller 2008a, b; Ashby et al. 2012; Hohenstein et al. 2014).

In manufacturing, measurement of sustainability is based on entire value chain of the firms and the value chain consists of many economic entities (partners), which work together to create a better value for the customers. The supply chain sustainability is thus dependant on many standalone partners, which are integral part of the corporate’s value chain (Barki 2013). Direct interpretation of this argument suggests that the sustainability impact is not only restricted to manufacturing firms, but also extends to its extended partners (Ashby et al. 2012). Increasingly, many manufacturing corporations have set up their supplier base in developing countries for their low-cost advantage. Invariably, the poor management of social issues in these supplier locations affects the reputation of the global

corporations in their own locations. There are evidences of penalties and fines of multibillions for unethical and safety issues in the supplier locations. At the same time, firms loose its image among stakeholders, resulting in financial loss (Tybout and Roehm 2009).

There have been several such incidents reported by the media. One such incidence was recently reported in Chinese media, where the use of melamine-contaminated milk, toxic toothpaste, lead-tainted toys, defective tyres and fake medicines have led to 24 million customer settlements (Tybout and Roehm 2009). In another instance, the unethical action of McDonald's largest meat supplier that supplied "expired meat" to McDonald, has severely damaged the image of the company (CBS News 2012). In another case, Walmart's reputation was stained by the issue of hygiene health and poor wage practices of one of its supplier from "Thailand" from where Walmart used to procure it's most preferred "shrimp" (HRW report 2012).

1.2 Social Issues and Indian Manufacturing Supply Chain

In India too, there have been several popular media reports and stories concerning social sustainability issues that include diversity, child and bonded labour, ethical and gender discrimination, resulting in product recalls by the manufacturing units (Ministry of Labour 2014). Thus, World Bank criticised TATA—one of biggest corporate houses in the country—for its inability to address the "working conditions" issues in its coffee supply chain (World Bank 2014). Similarly, a number of children and bonded labourers have been rescued from the manufacturing facilities in Sivakasi and Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu and a few parts of Uttar Pradesh (Ministry of Labour 2014). The Nobel Laureate Khailash Satyarthi's efforts have been instrumental in rescuing and rehabilitating many children and bonded labours from the Indian manufacturing facilities. Further, media reports routinely pour in about women's safety issues at the workplace.

Recently, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) initiated action against the leading pharmaceutical major Ranbaxy for not complying with the safety measures (CGMP) in its manufacturing facilities in India. Its investigations revealed mismanagement of the social issues, including safety, ethical standards and working conditions in the supply chain involving manufacturing facilities, and suppliers or customers in the value chain (FDA 2014). Similarly, there has been sharp public censure of Adidas, Sainsbury and Nike, for their failure in regulating the working conditions in their suppliers' establishments (Emmelhainz and Adams 1999; Barton 2007).

Very recently in India, the leading packaged food manufacturer, Nestle, was on fire for its noodles brand "Maggi". The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) found it with lead content beyond the permissible limit for consumption, resulting in consumer outrage and a ban on the brand. The investigations showed that the problems were related to not only the safety of the product but also

the alleged unethical practices of misleading the customers with “no added MSG” information on the packets while the product still contained MSG beyond permissible limits. As a result, the product was recalled from Indian market and the Nestle brand image has been tarnished. Moreover, it has affected the company’s revenues to the tune of 3.6 billion (BBC 2014).

Similarly, Mylan Inc. whose supplier Agila pharmaceuticals initiated a nationwide recall on 13 February 2014, of its etomidate injection 2 Mg/MI–10 MI and 20 MI due to the presence of small black particles in the individual vials, identified these as paper shipper labels. It is notable that intravenous administration of particulate matter may lead to the impairment of microcirculation, phlebitis, infection, embolism and subsequent infarction (Mylan 2014).

All these were supplier, manufacturer or customer-related problems, yet their consequences impacted the companies the most. This implies that the corporations need to recognise the supply chain-related social issues as a strategically important concern. Such incidents not only tarnish the image of the buyer company, they also affect their financial performance. Most importantly, most of the developing countries are still plagued with poverty, safety, health, child labour and gender inequality problems, and the lack of social sustainability awareness on the part of the companies tends to perpetuate these.

Addressing these social issues has acquired a sort of urgency in the developing countries, more so in India, as the country tries to improve its image in the manufacturing sector, through the government’s “Make in India” initiative. Among the developing nations, the Indian manufacturing industry is considered as one of the fastest growing and India was ranked the fourth most preferred manufacturing destination in terms of competitiveness in the world (Deloitte 2013). India’s manufacturing sector contributes 15–16% to the country’s GDP, and the National Manufacturing Competitive Council (NMCC) has set the objective of increasing it to 25% within a decade, creating 100 million jobs (NMCCR 2013). This research is, therefore, highly relevant because of the government’s commitment to improve the competitiveness of the Indian manufacturing industries through various measures. Through manufacturing, the Government of India is attempting to address the pressing issues of creation of employment, spread of education and improvement in the overall standard of living. In pursuit of this, the Manufacturing Competitive Council (NMCCR 2013) has proposed several enablers to enhance manufacturing competitiveness, sustainability being one of them.

The government’s financial market regulator, Stock Exchange Board of India (SEBI), has mandated all the listed firms to comply with and publish business responsibility report (BRR), in addition to their financial reporting requirements. This strengthens the government’s efforts in the direction of sustainability and emphasises its importance. However, Global Reporting Initiative’s report (GRI), titled “Mumbai declaration on sustainable reporting for sustainable development”, suggests that only 80 organisations comply with the sustainability reporting norms in India (GRI 2014). The GRI is an international independent standards organisation founded in 1997; GRI is a non-profit organisation with its secretariat at Amsterdam, the Netherlands. GRI aids businesses, governments and other

organisations to understand and communicate their impact on issues such as climate change, human rights and corruption. GRI has formulated one of the world's most widely used standards for sustainability reporting, also known as ecological footprint reporting, triple bottom-line (TBL) reporting, environmental social governance (ESG) reporting and corporate social responsibility (CSR) reporting.

In addition, the report also specifies the sustainability measures in Indian organisations owing to many issues and suggests a series of guidelines for the adoption of sustainability. This shows that social sustainability has not been a priority for the Indian manufacturing sector and research on social sustainability is yet to gain momentum. Hence, it is imperative even for the companies to pay a greater attention to the sustainability measures, especially social sustainability measures, to attain manufacturing competitiveness and have a strategic advantage. As mentioned above, the developing countries are still inundated by poverty, child labour, gender inequality, health, safety problems and such other issues, due to lack of awareness of social sustainability measures on the part of the companies sourcing from these countries. This is not surprising, as the social sustainability remains the least explored in the area of sustainability, especially in the supply chain of manufacturing (Ashby et al. 2012; Hohenstein et al. 2014). And even the few available studies are either based on case studies or use analytical models (Martínez-Jurado and Moyano-Fuentes 2014; Ashby et al. 2012; Soni et al. 2013, 2014; Yawar and Seuring 2017). The empirical studies were limited when it comes to emerging economies.

1.3 Need for Social Sustainability Study in India

There are few useful studies in the literature on social sustainability in the Indian context and even these predominantly address supplier selection and overall sustainability of the firms (Kumar et al. 2014; Bhattacharya et al. 2014; Mani et al. 2014). These studies are more analytical and case study based, concentrating on the upstream or the downstream part of the supply chain in a standalone manner. As such, they do not address the whole gamut of supply chain social sustainability. To the best of our knowledge, the research on social aspects of the supply chain in Indian manufacturing industry is scant. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature related to social sustainability in the manufacturing industry. Though there are such studies in the global context (Carter and Jennings 2000, 2002a, b, 2004; Ciliberti et al. 2008; Andersen and Larsen 2009; Lu et al. 2012), the studies specific to India are hard to find. This research is one of the early attempts to explore supply chain social sustainability in a more comprehensive manner.

In the literature, apprehensions for managing social issues in the supply chain typically fall under social sustainability. One common perspective to understand the supply chain social sustainability is the resource-based view that conceptualises social sustainability as the way the companies nurture and maintain their human resources, which cannot be easily imitated by the competitors, and thus, possessing

such resources gives the companies a strategic advantage (Barney 1986a, b, 1991). Further, the majority of the social issues have usually been addressed under the CSR activities (Hutchins and Sutherland 2008), and the research on sustainability in operations and supply chain management is merely an extension of CSR in the form of purchasing social responsibility (PSR) (Carter and Jennings 2000) and logistical social responsibility (LSR) (Ciliberti et al. 2008). A few others have extended this literature by introducing the term “socially responsible supplier development” (SRSD) (Lu et al. 2012). However, most others consider corporate social responsibility synonymous with social sustainability (Hutchins and Sutherland 2008).

While there is still a discussion on what constitutes social sustainability, the available literature is restricted to the relationship between buyer–supplier level (Awaysheh and Klassen 2010; Gimenez and Tachizawa 2012). All the researches are either focused on manufacturer sustainability or supplier sustainability or both, in a standalone manner. But the relevance of the social issues is not confined to the suppliers and manufacturers; it also extends to the customers, consumers and the society which the company operates in (Mani et al. 2015). Thus, social issues become relevant to the entire supply chain because of the involvement of multiple stakeholders who directly affect the buying firm’s reputation (Hoejmose et al. 2014; Roberts, 2003). A few recent studies, for example, that of Miao et al. (2012), discussed the importance of the supplier, customer, manufacturer and society in adopting the social sustainability measures in the logistics supply chain. However, this research examined “how” social sustainability can be adopted by identifying antecedents in China, ignoring the “what” aspect of sustainability. Yet another research by Lu et al. (2012) explored socially responsible supplier development (SRSD) and how the ethical issues can be addressed by implementing the CSR activities in the suppliers’ establishments.

Thus, to the best of our knowledge, the literature on social sustainability focusing on all three stages of the supply chain in a comprehensive manner is scant. On the other hand, the progressive stakeholders today (both internal and external) are holding the firms accountable for the social issues in their supply chains and forcing them to behave in a socially responsible manner (Klassen and Vereecke 2012). Thus, a comprehensive research on social sustainability in the supply chain focusing on all three aspects of it is the need of the hour. Especially in India, social sustainability in the supply chain remains the least explored field of sustainability (GRI 2014). Hence, there is a need to understand the social issues in the country and find out how these issues can be measured in the supply chain. Further, in the current understanding of social sustainability in the supply chain, the literature offers limited guidelines on how the corporations can enhance their overall performance by enhancing their supply chain sustainability measures covering all three stages of the supply chain. The literature, as mentioned earlier, mostly discusses the sustainability measures pertaining to either the suppliers or the manufactures in a standalone fashion. These measures revolve around the CSR aspects, trying to find out how the CSR can be integrated with the supply chain. However, social sustainability should be looked at from a much broader perspective, in terms of addressing the social issues not only in the suppliers’, manufacturers’ and customers’ establishments,