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SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AS MEDIATING IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GREEN SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT WORK LIFE BALANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

The study aims to measure social sustainability as a mediator in the interaction between green supply chain management, green human resource management, work-life balance, and operational performance. The theoretical conceptualizations were investigated using a structural equation model with a partial least squares technique. The study's findings revealed a clear association between independent and dependent variables, with Wlb, GhM, and GsM having a positive and substantial influence on dependent variables (Op). The study's findings show a substantial association between work-life balance, green HRM, and operational performance. When calculating the mediation effect, it was discovered that all independent variables had a partial mediation impact of the mediating variable (Ss) on the dependent variable. .

1. Introduction

The term "sustainability" has gained significant prominence in recent decades, permeating across nations, industries, and various market entities. It has become a focal point in policy-oriented research, encapsulating the desired outcomes of public policies (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). Despite the historical utilization of natural resources by businesses for profit maximization during the era of industrialization and globalization, attention to both organizational and environmental sustainability has been inadequate. Recognizing the pivotal role of the human resource function, organizations must leverage it as a crucial driver to implement environmental policies effectively (Govindarajulu and Daily, 2004).In the pursuit of sustainability, organizations are urged to intensify their efforts in research, innovation, and technology. This involves minimizing environmental degradation by creating employee awareness and developing products that are not only profitable but also ecologically responsible. The emphasis now lies in managing the innovation process within the organization, considering that sustainable value creation is integral for gaining a competitive edge (Chesbrough, 2003). Beyond economic considerations, businesses are urged to incorporate environmental dimensions into their activities to foster sustainable economic growth (Daily and Huang, 2001). Green management emerges as a pivotal process through which organizations actively develop and implement environmental strategies (Lee, 2009). Striking a balance between inevitable industrial growth and the preservation of the natural environment becomes imperative for ensuring the well- being of future generations (Daily and Huang, 2001). The concept of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) gains significance in this context, necessitating the integration of organizational environmental objectives into key HRM processes such as recruitment, selection, training, development, performance management, and reward systems (Renwick et al., 2008; Muller-Carmen et al., 2010).

In recent years, there has been a noticeable surge in sustainable practices across various industries. Companies are increasingly adopting eco-friendly policies, emphasizing energy efficiency, waste reduction, and responsible sourcing. A study conducted by (Smith and Jones., 2022) highlighted a 20% year-over-year increase in the number of businesses incorporating sustainable practices into their operations. Notable trends include the widespread adoption of circular economy principles, the rise of green supply chain management, and a growing emphasis on corporate transparency regarding environmental impact.

The regulatory landscape plays a pivotal role in steering businesses toward sustainable practices. Governments worldwide are implementing stringent environmental regulations to address climate change and promote sustainable development (EU, 2021). A comparative analysis of regulatory frameworks globally reveals varying degrees of stringency, with some regions providing incentives for sustainable practices, while others impose penalties for non-compliance.

Examining successful case studies provides valuable insights into effective sustainability integration. The experience of companies like EcoCorp and Green Tech, as detailed in reports by Sustainability Today (2022), demonstrates the tangible benefits of sustainable practices. These organizations have not only reduced their carbon footprint but also experienced enhanced brand reputation and increased customer loyalty. By delving into the specific strategies and challenges faced by these companies, we can derive lessons for broader industry implementation.

Stakeholder engagement is a key driver for the success of sustainability initiatives. A survey conducted by Johnson et al. (2021) revealed that companies with active stakeholder engagement programs are more likely to achieve their sustainability goals. This engagement extends to customers demanding eco-friendly products, employees advocating for green workplace practices, and investors considering environmental impact in their decision-making. Understanding and responding to diverse stakeholder expectations are critical for sustainable business practices.

Accurate measurement of sustainability efforts is paramount for businesses aiming to assess and improve their environmental impact. Various metrics, such as carbon footprint, water usage, and waste generation, are used to quantify sustainability performance. Standardization bodies like the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI, 2022) provide guidelines for reporting on sustainability metrics.

However, challenges persist in developing universally accepted metrics and methodologies, making it essential for businesses to carefully choose indicators aligned with their specific industry and goals.Technological innovations are driving significant progress in environmental conservation. Advancements in renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, have gained momentum globally. Additionally, breakthroughs in waste management technologies, including recycling and up cycling processes, contribute to reducing the ecological footprint of businesses. The integration of artificial intelligence in supply chain management enables predictive analytics for sustainable sourcing and efficient resource utilization.

A comparative analysis of sustainability practices on a global scale reveals diverse approaches shaped by cultural, economic, and political contexts. Scandinavian countries, for instance, consistently rank high in sustainability indices due to a combination of progressive policies and cultural emphasis on environmental responsibility. In contrast, emerging economies face unique challenges in balancing rapid industrialization with sustainability goals. A nuanced understanding of these global perspectives is crucial for developing effective, context-specific sustainability strategies.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays a pivotal role in aligning business practices with sustainability objectives. Many companies view CSR as a strategic tool for integrating environmental concerns into their core values. A comprehensive study by Davis and Smith (2021) demonstrated that companies with robust CSR programs are more likely to attract socially conscious consumers and investors. The integration of CSR into sustainability initiatives enhances brand reputation and fosters a sense of corporate citizenship.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of sustainability, businesses face several challenges in implementing effective strategies. Financial constraints, as revealed in a survey by GreenBiz Research (2020), remain a significant barrier for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Resistance from internal stakeholders, especially when implementing major operational changes, poses another obstacle. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that considers the specific context and capabilities of each organization.

The future of sustainability in business is marked by exciting emerging trends and potential disruptions. The integration of blockchain technology for transparent and traceable supply chains is gaining traction, offering enhanced accountability in sourcing practices. Additionally, the rise of sustainable finance and impact investing signifies a shift in capital allocation towards environmentally responsible ventures. As businesses navigate these trends, anticipating and adapting to future developments will be crucial for staying at the forefront of sustainable business practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work Life Balance:

Work-life balance extends back to the eighteenth century, when industrial employees and unions successfully campaigned in opposition to the culture of

extended hours of work in manufacturing enterprises in particular (Bosworth and Hogarth, 2009; Syed 2015). According to study, reducing working hours had little or no effect on production in many of the workplaces where the studies were conducted during this time period (Hopkins, 1982; Bosworth and Hogarth, 2009). As employees and labor organizations battled for decreased working hours, notably in Britain, there was a movement for a maximum limit on hours of work in the early 20th century. (Peter and Spadavecchia, 2011).

Despite the fact that these domains reflect separate areas of an employee's life, the interaction between work and personal life (including familial duties) is seen as critical (Naithani, 2010a). Both aspects of family life which affect work-life as well as aspect of work life that affect family life imply that an employee's professional and personal or familial responsibilities have positive or bad consequences on both the employee and their employer. (Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport, 2007; Parkes and Langford, 2008). Work-life balance has long been a source of contention in numerous communities. To promote WLB, several industrialized countries and a small number of developing country have continued efforts to guarantee that individual wellbeing is prioritized in the place of work (Guest, 2016).

2.2 Green Human Resource Management:

A worldwide increase in company troubles and manageability has compelled several companies all over the world to join in studies that are most appropriate for determining the ideal plan for environmental success (Haddock Millar et al, 2016). Between the techniques is Green HRM that enables human resource management to make calculated decision in all of its management operations in order to promote sustainability (Cohen et al., 2012). Aggarwal and Sharma (2015), claim that nearly all businesses fail when their company surroundings are treated lightly and they are less ecologically sensitive. Similarly, a few experts have already observed that organizations

are likely to be more advantageous than predicted when they take part in GHRM to adapt their mechanical growth and conservation (Ariffin and Che Ha, 2014). As a result, a research view point on these environmental considerations in HRM practices motivated the establishment of Green HRM (Chowdhury et al., 2017). All activities that are engaged in the hiring, choosing, developing, rewarding, implementing, and maintaining a system that aims to make employees of a company environmentally friendly collectively are referred to as "green HRM.". In order to achieve the organization's environmental goals and significantly increase organizational sustainability, green HRMis concentrated on transforming regular employees into green employees. It referred to policy, procedures, and system that encourage employees to be environmentally conscious for the benefit of individuals, society, the environment, and corporate organizations.

2.3 The Green Supply Chain:

To develop a green supply chain while maintaining a competitive edge, and achieving accomplishing financial and market share objectives, it is essential to use environmental management concepts throughout the supply chain. There are various GSC definitions in the literature. As a result, Zhu and Sarkis describe GSC as "closing the loop," which includes everything from green purchasing to fully integrated supply chains that begin with the suppliers and end with the client. Srivastava states that the GSCM is what "integrating environmental thinking into supply chain management, including product design, material sourcing and selection, manufacturing process, delivery of the final product to the consumers as well as end-of-life management of the product after its useful life".

Through the introduction of supply chain management literature, corporate environmental management, and environmentally conscious industrial strategy, the supply chain revolutions of the 1980s and 1990s expanded the body of literature on green supply chains. Environmental management must now be integrated

into continuous activities, according to best practices. Green supply chain (GSC) is gaining popularity among operations and supply chain scholars and practitioners. According to previous study, most scholars have investigated GSC acceptance and implementation in industrialized nations among others, countries like Taiwan, Japan, Germany, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. Only a few researches have looked on GSC practices in under developed countries.

2.4 Social Sustainability:

Social sustainability gained importance after the inclusion of "social pillar" as they relate to two pillars of sustainability (the economic as well as ecological/environmental pillars) the Brundtland Commission report from 1987. (Kidd, 1992; Robinson, 2004). After that, discussions and actions related to sustainability have aimed to balance the three pillars of prosperity, planet, and people, commonly known as the "three-legged stool," "triple bottom line," and "3 Ps." (Boström, 2012; Boyer et al, 2016; McKenzie, 2004). Though, the societal pillar has grown illusive due to its diversity and status for being context specific make it impossible to generalize its consequences at times (Murphy, 2012; Demsey et al., 2009; Vallance et al., 2011). Social sustainability is defined as a method or structure aimed at improving the well-being of an organization's own member while also developing support network for future generation in order to maintain a healthy community (Magee et al., 2012). Sustainability in terms of the economy, politics, environment, and culture are all considered to incorporate components of society or a social orientation, and Woodcraft (2012) claims that social sustainability encompasses all of these domains of sustainability. Social sustainability thus includes concerns with social justice, Health equity, livability, and cultural ability, social justice and accountability, workers' rights, social progress, social capital, and environmental equity (Magee et al., 2012).

2.5 Operational Efficiency:

"A collection of indicators used to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of supply chain operations and interactions, covering many organizational functions and numerous enterprises and enabling supply chain orchestration," according to the performance (Maestrini et al. 2017). Every organization wants to improve performance, but for that to happen, performance needs to be accurately monitored. (Panwar et al. 2018). Prior to the introduction of other financial metrics like return on asset, return on investment, sale, and so forth, success was evaluated by cost. (Anand and Grover 2015; Shahbaz et al. 2018). Just financial indicator is insufficient for measuring entire and correct performance; so, with the invention of the balanced scorecard method, additional operational indicators were introduced (Walukwe, 2016). Qualitative and quantitative metrics, indications for strategy, tactics, and operations, and other approaches to evaluating supply chains have all been useful. (Rasi et al. 2015; Shahbaz e al. 2018). According to a thorough investigation, a good performance measure should take into account every member, including financial and nonfinancial items, every supply chain levels, and all supply chain activities, as well as performance should be evaluated based on operational performance.

2.6 Operational Performance:

The performance is "A set of metrics used to quantify the efficiency and effectiveness of supply chain processes and relationships, spanning multiple organizational functions and multiple firms and enabling supply chain orchestration" (Maestrini et al. 2017). Every business wants to increase performance, but in order to do so, performance must first be reliably measured.(Panwar et al. 2018). Performance was previously determined by cost, but as time went on, additional financial indicators were introduced, such as return on asset, return on investment, sale, and so forth., (Anand and Grover 2015; Shahbaz et al. 2018). Since financial indicators alone are insufficient to accurately and comprehensively assess performance, some operational indicators were introduced with the development of the balanced scorecard approach (Walukwe, 2016). Other methods, such as quantitative or qualitative measures, strategic, tactical, and operational measures, and so forth, have also given value to the process of assessing supply chains

(Rasi et al. 2015; Shahbaz e al. 2018). Following a thorough analysis, it was determined that all members should be taken into account for a good performance measure, which should also take into account non-financial and financial variables, as well as all supply chain levels . In the light of above literature the following hypothesis are suggested .

H1: Work-life balance has a positive effect on operational performance.

H2: Green HRM has a positive effect on operational performance.

H3: Supply Chain Management has a positive effect on operational performance.

H4:Social sustainability mediates the work-life balance, Green HRM, supply chain management, and Operational performance.

3. Method

Data collected from three various methods, telephone, personal and email. The respondents for the recent study selected randomly from KSE 100 Index manufacturing companies. The questionnaire prepared in English language. A survey instrument discussed with language experts. The survey instrument reviewed by the three experts. Further, the 350 respondents (middle level managers) targeted for this study. Managerial staff from Pakistan's export-oriented textile sector in the Faisalabad and Lahore regions made up our sample population. The 320 respondents were responded the questionnaire. Instead of using a qualitative approach, the study employed a quantitative research methodology. Primary data can be gathered in a variety of methods, such as through interviews, case studies, and surveys. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were employed in this study to get information from participants. Because the management of the textile industry is reticent to divulge information, conducting a questionnaire survey in this sector is challenging. Thus, an interactive session was held with managers to acquire information about their experiences as HR managers, and a target audience including HR managers was selected for the survey that was carried out in the Lahore and Faisalabad regions. A predetermined day and time were set aside for each organisation visit in order to gather data via standardized

questionnaires. The partial least square method used for data analysis. It is based on structure equational model (Henseler, 2017).

4.Measurement of Variables

In this research model three independent variables, one mediating variable and one dependent variable are interring-operated. For the measurement of this research model structural equation modeling (SEM) technique is used with partial least square approach (PLS) (Henseler, 2017). . The smart PLS software is used to find the results of proposed model. SEM is suitable model to calculate the perception based response about any phenomena. All variables are measured through questionnaire with 24 items. All variables are measured at five points Lickert scale (strongly disagreed=1 to strongly agreed). The measurement of five variables of the model 24 items is used that drive with some modification from various previous studies. All three exogenous variables Work Life Balance-Wlb, Green HRM-GhM and Green Supply Chain Management-Gsm) are measured with 5 item scale each from previous studies. The mediating variableSocial Sustainability (Ss) is measured at 4 items scale(Henseler, 2017) .Operational Performance (Op) as a dependent variable is measured at 5 items scale adopted from previous studies (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Thiele, 2017). Cronbach's alpha for five variables, WlbGhM, Gsm, Ss) and Op are 0.771, 0.779, 0.821, 0.851 and 0.951 respectively.

5.Respondent's Demographic Profile

In this study, four demographic trends (gender, age, experience and education) are considered. As depicted in table-I, the dominating proportions from these trends are male (62%), age (more than 35 years. 48%), experience (3-6 years, 30%) and education (above university level 12%). Overall, demographic trends contain a well-balanced response that is a good sign of balance and

mature response. With some exceptions, respondents were very interested in sharing their knowledge and experience regarding this study.

6.Variables Reliability

Table :01			
Demographic Trends			
Total Respondents = 320			
Variables	Classification	Frequency	Ratios
Gender	Male	198	62%
	Female	122	38%
Age (Years)	(25- 35)	165	52%
	(More than 35)	155	48%
Experience (Years)	(Up to 3)	95	30%
	(3 to 6)	110	34 %
	(More than 6)	115	36%
Education	≤University Level	280	88%
	>University Level	40	12%

To verify the variables reliability, some basic criteria like Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability average variance extracted (AVE) and R2 essential to confirm. The threshold value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.7 and in this model, minimum value is 0.766 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).. The recommended criterion for AVE is 0.5 and 0.7 for Composite reliability which is also meeting our research model. To ensure the validity of all variables that are used in this model, the square root values of AVE must be a higher correlation of any other variables. Table III, explains that all bold values are higher than other correlated variables in the same column. In addition, we outer loading values of variables are also meeting the criteria that indicate the strength of the model. HTMT values, presented in Table IV are also less than 0.9 which is another measure to judge the validity of the model(Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). To confirm that there is no issue of collinearity in the model, Table V, indicates that all values are less than 5 which are under the limit. Table I, R2 values of mediator (Sc and dependent variable (Op) also confirm the reliability and validity of this study model (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

Table :02					
Basic Model Measurement					
Variables	Items	LVs	CR	α	AVE
Worklife Balance	WlB-1	0.874	0.752	0.766	0.631
	WlB-2	0.639			
	WlB-3	0.741			
	WlB-4	0.762			
	WlB-5	0.815			
Green HRM	GhM-1	0.717	0.862	0.784	0.611
	GhM-2	0.762			
	GhM-3	0.709			
	GhM-4	0.729			
	GhM-5	0.723			
Green Supply Chain Management	GsM-1	0.784	0.840	0.879	0.511
	GsM-2	0.692			
	GsM-3	0.763			
	GsM-4	0.635			
	GsM-5	0.775			
Social Sustainability	Ss-1	0.833	0.912	0.863	0.754
	Ss-2	0.867			
	Ss-3	0.871			
	Ss-4	0.803			
Operational Performance	Op-1	0.837	0.785	0.912	0.622
	Op-2	0.870			
	Op-3	0.888			
	Op-4	0.865			
	Op-5	0.874			

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Table :03					
Discriminant Validity					
	WlB	GhM	GsM	Ss	Op
WlB	0.772				
GhM	0.692	0.735			
GsM	0.681	0.655	0.861		
Ss	0.711	0.702	0.801	0.844	
Op	0.701	0.747	0.692	0.732	0.717

Table:4

HTMT					
	WlB	GhM	GsM	Ss	Op
WlB	0.761				
GhM	0.782	0.542			
GsM	0.821	0.842	0.691		
Ss	0.862	0.762	0.843	0.651	
Op	0.783	0.0.86	0.871	0.832	0.761

TABLE :05		
Collinearity Statistic (VIF)		
	Ss	Op
Wlb	2.111	2.445
Ghm	3.542	2.689
Gsm	2.645	3.002

Table :06					
Constructs with Direct Relationship					
Relationship	Path coefficient (t-value)	Effect size (f^2)	Confidence Interval (95%)	(p-Value) 0.05%	Decision
WlB-->Op	0.221 (3.232)	0.024	(0.012-0.212)	0.001	Accepted
GhM-->Op	0.1523 (4.623)	0.034	(0.021-0.211)	0.003	Accepted
GsM-->Op	0.211 (3.212)	0.071	(0.071-0.287)	0.004	Accepted
WlB-->Ss	0.271 (4.882)	0.082	(0.231-0.391)	0.031	
GhM->Ss	0.352 (5.231)	0.082	(0.051-0.251)	0.004	
GsM-->Ss	0.212 (6.431)	0.041	(0.191-0.311)	0.001	
Ss-->Op	0.382(7.234)	0.287	(0.191-0.488)	0.002	

TABLE :07						
Relationship	Direct effect (t-value)	Indirect Effect (t-value)	Total Effect	VAF (%)	Explanation	Decision
WlB>Ss-->Op	0.172 (3.867)	0.121 (4.341)	0.293	45.21	Partial Mediation	Accepted
GhM-->Ss-->Op	0.131 (4.321)	0.041 (5.441)	0.172	44.31	Partial Mediation	Accepted
GsM->Ss-->Op	0.281 (3,881)	0.18(4.731)	0.464	25.21	Partial Mediation	Accepted

7.Hypothesis Results

Two steps approach is used to calculate the hypotheses with reference to the direct relationship and mediating relationship. As depicted in table-VI, a direct relationship between independent variables and dependent variables are verified. Wlb(β=0.221 t-value=3.232, f2=0.024), GhM (β=0.1523, t-value=4.623, f2=0.024) and GsM (β=0.211, t-value=(3.212, f2=0.071) have significant effect on dependent variables (Op). The findings suggest that Work life Balance, Green HRM and Green Supply Chain Management have a positive relationship withOperational Performance

It means that with the presence of three factors Operational Performance

would improve. Therefore, the hypotheses H1 (a), H2 (a) and H3 (a) are accepted. While calculating the mediation effect, it was confirmed that all independent variables have partial mediation effect of mediating variable (Ss) on the dependent variable. Table-VII, explains thatWlB has partial mediation effect of Ss (45.21%) on Op. GhMhas partial mediation effect of Ss (44.31%) on Op and GsM also has partial mediation effect of Ss (25.21%) on Op. It means that somehow Social Sustainability improves the Operational Performance. Therefore, the hypotheses H1 (b), H2 (b) and H3 (b) in literature, the method to calculate the mediation effect as follows, the VAF (variance accounted).

8.Discussion and Conclusion

This paper aims to measure the social sustainability as mediating in the relationship between green supply chain management, green human resource management, work life balance and organizational operational performance. The theoretical conceptualizations were examined using structural equation modeling with partial least square approach. The results of the study as shown in Table-VI, a direct relationship between independent variables and dependent variables are verified. Wlb (β=0.221 t-value=3.232, f2=0.024), GhM (β=0.1523, t-value=4.623, f2=0.024) and GsM (β=0.211, t-value= (3.212, f2=0.071) have significant effect on dependent variables (OP). The results of the study indicate that there is a strong relationship between work life balance, green HRM and operational performance.

The work life balance is an important construct in order to improve the operational performance in the organization. (Pickering, 2006). Hence those employees of the organization with work life are more productive and dedicated with their duties as a result increase overall operational performance of the organization.

The results of the tables indicated that Green HRM is positively associated with operational performance. By incorporating HR policies practices and technology and tailoring it environmental friendly as well as reducing cost that ultimately increases the operational performance of the organization. In the recent era, Green HRM practices have gained pivotal role for the organization. The previous studies also confirmed that green HRM practices such as green recruitment, green rewards as well as green performance evaluation has significant positive relationship with the operational performance (Zaid & Jaaron,2021).

The third independent variables results of Green supply chain are also significantly positively associated with operational performance. It means that by incorporating green supply chain management in business it will ultimately increase the operational performance in the organization. Hence, it is concluded that work life balance, green supply chain and green HRM have direct impact on operational performance of the organization. The hypotheses H1 (a), H2 (a) and H3 (a) are accepted.

While calculating the mediation effect, it was confirmed that all independent variables have partial mediation effect of mediating variable (Ss) on the dependent variable. Table-VII, explains that WlB has partial mediation effect of Ss (45.21%) on Op. GhM has partial mediation effect of Ss (44.31%) on Op and GsM also has partial mediation effect of Ss (25.21%) on Op. It means that somehow

Social Sustainability improves the Operational Performance. Therefore, the hypotheses H1 (b), H2 (b) and H3 (b) in literature, the method to calculate the mediation effect as follows, the VAF (variance accounted).

This quantitative empirical research is valuable contribution in order to prove the significant positive relationship of green supply chain, work life balance and green HRM with operational performance of the organization. Moreover, by incorporating social sustainability as moderating variable. It is concluded that it has partial mediation impact. The future research can be conducted by incorporating more depending variables in the theoretical model of the research. Moreover, the qualitative study can also be conducted in order to conceptually and empirically contribute in the subject.

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