

The Moderating Role of Sustainable Maintenance on the Relationship between Sustainable Manufacturing Practices and Social Sustainability: A Conceptual Framework

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ABSTRACT--- *It appears that companies' interest in achieving economic returns has made them neglect the social effects of their activities. With this imbalance in sustainability performance that causes environmental pollution and social damage, there is an urgent need to strike social sustainability. Therefore, this study aims to achieve social sustainability (SoS) by providing a proposed framework that integrates sustainable maintenance (SMA) into sustainable manufacturing practices (SMPs). Effective adoption of SMPs and SMA has a significant positive influence on SoS. Nevertheless, there are limited studies conducted on integrating SMA into SMPs and how it could impact SoS. The theoretical contribution of the present study depends mainly on expanding existing knowledge about highlighting the moderating role of SMA on the relationship between SMPs and SoS*

Keywords: *sustainable manufacturing practices; sustainable maintenance; social sustainability*

I. INTRODUCTION

In this time, social sustainability (SoS) has become a significant issue for researchers and practitioners. In fact, all companies have a great responsibility in caring for their employees and communities [1], as well these companies should add value to these communities to achieve SoS [2]. Achieving SoS leads to achieving economic and environmental sustainability [2, 3]. Likewise, Magis and Shinn [4] confirmed that its recognition as a phenomenon featured from environmental and economic sustainability would lead to its clarification of their contribution and appropriate use. Also, companies can not address the challenges of sustainability without involving social associates or stakeholders [5]. However, SoS is neglected and not considered as significant as economic or environmental sustainability [6], as well as its study in

practical implementation is still missing [7, 8]. Therefore, this study is interested in studying of SoS to address the issue of research, which aims to produce a conceptual framework that helps companies improve their social performance.

The vital question that arises is about how to address the issue of research about the improvement of SoS. In this respect, sustainable manufacturing practices (SMPs) have not been widely studied and documented by researchers [9-11]. Moreover, several empirical evidences suggests that SMPs contribute to improve SoS [e.g. 12, 13-20]. Therefore, there is a necessary need to study SMPs as they will contribute to addressing the practical issue of SoS in the companies.

Furthermore, Amrina and Aridharma [21] pointed to the need to study sustainable maintenance (SMA). Zhang, Kim, Tee and Lam [22] stressed that literature in SMA is the most limited. Similarly, Ararsa [23] noted that studies on SMA are still in infancy. Additionally, Franciosi, Iung, Miranda and Riemma [24] and Pires [25] recommended through their systematic review that more research should be conducted on the impact of maintenance on SoS. Similarly, Sénéchal [26] suggested further investigation on the relationship between maintenance and SoS. However, many companies still do not have a full understanding of the importance of effective maintenance activities and their significant role in achieving SoS [27]. Therefore, there are two main reasons for investigating in SMA: first, theoretically, to bridge the gap in the literature and the second reason practically, because it will contribute to addressing the practical issue of SoS in the companies.

Indeed, companies that have an interest in SMPs are more inclined to adopt SMA [8, 23, 24, 27-33]. This is because they have the same goal of improving SoS. Besides, many studies have examined the relationship between SMPs and SoS [34-40]. However, SMA has not been given any consideration in their studies. Accordingly, to the best of the knowledge of the authors, surprisingly, the moderating effects of SMA are ambiguous and have not been closely studied in any previous study. This gap points to the need for a theoretical framework to investigate the moderating impacts of SMA on the relationship between SMPs and SoS. Therefore, this study aims to encourage the companies to

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achieve SoS by providing a proposed framework that integrates SMA into SMPs.

The results of the current study are expected to benefit many aspects in different areas. Academicians will obtain a better perception of the importance of integrating SMA into SMPs to achieve SoS. Additionally, policymakers and top management in the companies will gain a better understanding of how to improve the SoS, based the focus on SMPs and SMA.

The present study contains two sections viz.; following this introductory section is Section 2, the conceptual framework which provides insights from empirical literature and conceptual framework about SMPs, SMA and SoS, followed by Section 3, which involve conclusions of this study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social Sustainability (SoS)

Social sustainability (SoS) also called “social equity” or “People” [41]. It is relevant to the social and safety matter of sustainability [42], and its main focus is people [43]. SoS can be considered as the principle which guarantees for all the society has an equal way to opportunities and resources [44, 45]. It is one of the most important dimensions of sustainability that was highlighted in the definition of Brundtland in 1987. WCED [46] reported it through the concept of “needs” and emphasised that the primary goal of development is to satisfy human aspirations and needs, besides, focus on meeting the needs of the present and the future. In addition, it needs to be framed in the companies according to the time and place in which they operate [47].

Sustainable Manufacturing Practices (SMPs)

SMPs have gained vital importance over the past few years. Adebajo, The and Ahmed [48] noted that there is a growing interest worldwide in the implementation of sustainable management practices. Also, interest in sustainable practices has increased as a result of grown interest in sustainable manufacturing SM over the years [9]. In other words, SM plays a significant role in manufacturing companies, and SMPs contribute to creating the right environment for companies [49]. It is because of linking the operations and decisions of industrial companies to environmental and social factors related to their activities [50].

SMPs have become a required necessity expected from all industries [14], and companies should prefer to implement them [51], as they lead to overcoming the challenges, they face in the industry [52]. There is increasing pressure on companies in all sectors by society, clients and other stakeholders to apply SMPs [51]. These pressures came as a result of the environmental effects of manufacturing practices through the inefficient use of resources, increased emissions and wastes, posing a significant threat to the global ecosystem and the welfare of society [53]. Which led to awareness and interest in SMPs by manufacturers [54]. Accordingly, Despeisse [55] defined SMPs as “an action or set of actions improving the manufacturing system’s environmental performance”.

Previously, manufacturing companies focused on the volume of profits realized regardless of the environmental impact of their activities [53]. Whereas, at present, it is necessary to use environmentally friendly practices in manufacturing to eliminating their harmful effects on the environment [56]. In addition to minimising possible hazards while maintaining the success of the business [57], besides great social benefits [58]. Likewise, Al-Ashaab, Flores, Hernando Anta and Varro [53] noted that the adoption and continuous improvement of SMPs are achieving economic, social and environmental benefits. In other words, SMPs achieve efficiency in resources and responsibility towards society [59]. Therefore, the adoption of SMPs according to the product lifecycle perspective improves SP.

Depending on the perspective of the product life cycle, SMPs can be classified into four dimensions concerning the phase at which the practices are implemented. These dimensions include the sustainable product design, sustainable manufacturing process, sustainable supply chain management and sustainable end of life management [12, 18, 31, 60, 61]. Which it is considered the dimensions of SMPs in the present study. Hence, the product life cycle perspective is more appropriate for the companies when implementing SMPs.

SMPs and SoS

Generally, several studies have been conducted to examine the linkages between SMPs and SoS. Agudo-Valiente, Ayerbe and Salvador [39] investigated the relationship between social responsibility practices and corporate social performance in Spanish service and manufacturing industry using a sample of 416 managers. The result showed a significant positive relationship between social responsibility practices and corporate social performance. In a different study, Croom, Marshall and McCarthy [37] demonstrated that social sustainability orientation was positively related to advanced social sustainability practices. They investigated the relationship among social sustainability orientation, advanced social sustainability practices and operational performance in the service and manufacturing industry in the United States of America. Likewise, the findings of Vargas, Mantilla and Jabbour [36] in the service and manufacturing industry revealed that the adoption of social practices leads to improve the competitive advantage of companies. Literature as above shows mostly a significant positive relationship between SMPs and SoS. Thus, based on the arguments above and assumptions of stakeholder theory [62], which propose that some advantages, benefits, firms decision-making power should be taken away from shareholders and given to stakeholders [63], the following proposition is offered:

P1: SMPs have a significant positive relationship with SoS.



Sustainable Maintenance (SMA)

These days, it is essential for academicians and practitioners to focus not only on the technical aspect of maintenance activities but as an integrated set of technical, economic, environmental and social and safety dimensions [64]. This is because the maintenance activities and breakdowns in industrial companies result in harmful emissions, waste, dangerous accidents and consumption of energy and resources [27]. While the adoption of SMA by companies will make a significant difference in the economic, environmental, social and safety and technical [24, 27, 65]. Likewise, additionally the economic and environmental dimensions, SMA included social and safety dimension and worked to achieve a balance among these three dimensions [31, 33, 66, 67]. Moreover, companies that interesting on sustainable manufacturing face a new challenge in their implementation of SMA [21, 31, 33, 66-68]. This is because of the complexity of manufacturing practices and processes [69-72], the need to make changes in policies and procedures of maintenance, attention to environmental and social and safety aspects as well as financial aspects [31, 33, 66, 73], competition pressure in manufacturing [74] and the government regulations towards sustainable development in manufacturing [75]. However, in recent years, changes in manufacturing paradigms have forced companies and managers to recognise the changing role of maintenance regards sustainability [23, 31, 66, 67, 69-71, 76, 77]. Likewise, in recent few years, the importance of incorporating sustainability into maintenance function has been recognised [26, 64, 75, 78-80]. This is due to it provides lost costs and energy consumed during the product lifecycle [81]. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt SMA by companies that follow a sustainability approach in their business.

Jasiulewicz-Kaczmarek [31, 66] and Stuchly and Jasiulewicz-Kaczmarek [33] defined SMA “as proactive maintenance operations striving for providing balance in social (welfare and satisfaction of operators and maintenance staff), environmental and financial (losses, consequences, benefits) dimensions”. Whereas, this study defined SMA as all maintenance activities that support the sustainability of the company, through the reduction of environmental impact, the safety and social and safety welfare of employees, the implementation of technical factors at the highest possible level and reducing maintenance costs.

SMA and SoS

According to Ali, Kamaruzzaman, Sulaiman and Peng [82], the efficiency in maintenance tasks and activities comes through the selection of proper maintenance. Although studies on SMA and SP are limited [22, 83], studies in most case studies have confirmed that SoS is achieved through the choice of sustainable maintenance [29, 30, 75, 83-85]. Zhang et al. [22], who studied in the context of port infrastructures in Japan, explained that the use of technology in equipment maintenance has positive effects on the all of sustainability performance dimensions. Mahmood, Abdullah and MdFauadi [86] concluded that the implementation of maintenance and overall equipment effectiveness have a positive impact on economic

development and the protection of the environment and social welfare in the Malaysian manufacturing companies. Therefore, based on the arguments above and assumptions of Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV) theory [87], which proposition that clean technology that encompasses a range of activities and processes undertaken by companies lead to achieving sustainable competitive advantage, creating value for shareholders and achieving sustainability [88], the following proposition is offered:

P2: SMA has a significant positive relationship with SoS.

SMA as a Moderating Variable

Indeed, after the Second World War and as a result of rapid technological developments in the manufacturing environment, maintenance was considered as significant enhance function to production, operations and manufacturing [76]. Similarly, Jasiulewicz-Kaczmarek [89], Jasiulewicz-Kaczmarek and Drozyner [90] and Fraser, Hvolby and Tseng [91] maintained that maintenance plays a critical role in industrial companies as a support function for manufacturing. Besides, to achieve the best possible performance of the company [92, 93], the strategies and objectives of maintenance and manufacturing should be integrated [73, 94, 95]. This integration helps manufacturing companies save on costs, time and resources [96], as well as achieving economic benefits and competitive advantages [97]. Therefore, in order for companies to continue, they must keep pace with the rapid development of manufacturing and maintenance paradigms.

The moving of the manufacturing paradigms towards sustainable development has led to a change in the maintenance paradigms towards of product lifecycle, which involves four phases [33, 66, 90, 98]. This is due to the trend toward SMPs [75]. From a practical perspective, each phase of the product life cycle must be supported by maintenance [31, 90], from product design to end-of-life [99]. These phases can be utilised to manufacturing equipment and manufacturing products [28, 29]. In this regards, to illustrate and justify the new process of understanding maintenance, Takata introduced the term “maintenance value chain” [100]. This emphasis on the life cycle view of sustainable manufacturing has produced the redefinition of the task of maintenance as being “a prime method for life cycle management whose objective is to provide society with required functions through products while minimizing material and energy consumption” [100]. In the same vein, the role of maintenance in the phases of the product lifecycle leads to the availability and reliability of equipment, improve environmental efficiency, and achieve safety [29, 101-103]. Thus, maintenance plays a vital role in interacting with all phases of the product lifecycle within SMPs.

The success of sustainable manufacturing operations and practices in improving sustainability performance is achieved through their integration with maintenance activities [27, 85, 97, 104]. Similarly, SMA is considered as a facilitator of SMPs [28, 105], which will improve the

sustainability performance of economic, environmental and social [24, 30, 104]. Based on the discussion and the arguments in the above, it concludes that the impact of SMPs on SoS will be stronger if sustainable maintenance moderates between them. Accordingly, based on the arguments above and assumptions of NRBV theory the following proposition is offered:

P3: SMA positively moderates the relationship between SMPs and SoS.

In short, the proposed conceptual model of this study is formulated by combining the stakeholder theory and the NRBV theory. Meanwhile, the current study integrating SMA into SMPs to examine their effects on SoS, as depicted in Figure 1.

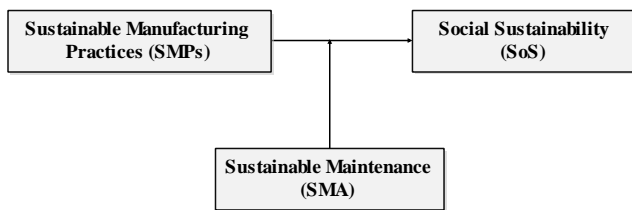


Fig.1.A conceptual framework for Social sustainability

III. CONCLUSION

The present paper offers a conceptual framework that investigates the moderating effect of SMA on the relationship between SMPs and SP. This research gap has been addressed in the present study. Previous empirical studies pointed out that there is evidence that adopting SMPs and SMA in companies improves SoS. The proposed conceptual framework in the current study will have some potential theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, as a contribution to the body of knowledge, academicians will obtain a better perception of the importance of integrating SMA into SMPs to achieve the SoS. Secondly, the practitioners in the companies can put in place SMPs and SMA framework, to achieve SoS. More clearly, the proposed framework will be necessary to policymakers and top management in the companies will gain them a better understanding of how to achieve SoS, based the focus on SMPs and SMA.

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