



## SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents a critical review of the relevant literature on socially sustainable supply chain management (SSCM). A systematic literature review of 291 papers that includes social sustainability published in peer-reviewed journals was conducted. The research contents of each papers were analyzed to identify the common themes, theories and methods which has been employed in the extant literature. The findings of this paper include the discussion of key research gaps, with a specific focus on research areas in social sustainability in the supply chain that needs to be addressed. Finally, the discussion on the opportunities for future research is presented.

**JEL classification:** M14, M54.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Increasing pressures from stakeholders are urging supply chains to realign their strategies to cope with the rise of social issues (Mani et al. 2020). Social issues associated with supply chains are generally concerned with employees' working conditions, health, safety, and labor well-being (Mani et al. 2016; Huq et al. 2014). With the increase of scrutiny from the media (see: The Guardian, 2019, 2020), scholars have begun to shift their attention to the pressing need for more social sustainability research in the literature. Research into Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) has emphasized the lack of attention on social sustainable issues as compared to environmental and economic issues (Sodhi and Tang, 2018; Mani et al., 2018; Hoejmose et al., 2013; Seuring and Muller, 2008). Given the apparent need to address this dimension of the Triple Bottom Line, this paper aims to present a critical review of the extant literature on socially SSCM. Using the systematic literature review approach, two research questions are proposed:

**RQ1:** *What are the research themes and trends to date on socially sustainable supply chain management?*

**RQ2:** *What are the current debates on socially sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) and opportunities for future research in this area?*

## **2. SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW PROTOCOL**

The objective of conducting a literature review is to enable researchers to map and assess existing knowledge as well as to specify research questions to develop new knowledge (Tranfield et al., 2003). This study uses the systematic literature review approach, which is a process of “synthesizing research in a systematic, transparent and reproducible manner” (Tranfield et al., 2003, pp. 209). The aim of a systematic literature review is to respond to the “increasing demands to organize knowledge into a format that is rigorous and reliable as well as makes a difference to practice” (Denyer and Tranfield, 2009, pp. 673). Using this systematic approach, the existing body of literature in the area of social sustainability in the context of supply chain management is reviewed. Subsequently, relevant research areas are identified and analyzed to highlight key research gaps for future research.

In overview, the systematic literature review process began with organizing peer-reviewed articles published between 1996 and 2016 under the area of social sustainability, which was identified using a variety of different terms as discussed in Section 2.1 below. The papers were then analyzed according to different themes (i.e., similar research contents are grouped together). In summary, the identified themes are (a) barriers and challenges; (b) collaboration; (c) motivation, drivers and enablers; (d) organizational culture; (e) relationship between practices and performance; (f) risk management; (g) strategy; (h) transparency; and (i) literature review papers which were also included, but not grouped as a theme in itself. These themes will be further discussed in Section 2.2.

### **2.1 Detail of stages in the systematic literature review**

This systematic literature review stages followed in this study are outlined in the following:

In the first stage, a search was conducted in the Scopus database, and only articles published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals were selected. This search was conducted by using several combinations of keywords as follows: “*sustainable supply chain management*”, “*sustainability AND supply chain*”, “*socially responsible sourcing*”, “*social sourcing*”, “*social responsibility AND supply chain*”, “*social AND supply chain AND sustainability*”, “*social sustainability AND supply chain*” and “*social responsibility supply chain*”. This first search was limited to articles published from 2013 to 2016, resulting in 3148 relevant articles.

In the second stage, since this search focuses only on the topic area of social sustainability in supply chain management, papers on environmental sustainability and economic sustainability alone were removed (2076 papers). This screening process also excluded any articles published before 2013 and selected only those in the area of business management and social science (536 papers). Then, duplicated search results were removed (390 papers), and the final total number of papers was reduced to 146 articles.

In the third stage, the snowballing approach was used to gather articles from 1996 to before 2013. This process involved identifying and selecting other papers that were cited in the articles from the previous stage (i.e., the second stage). This method was felt to be

appropriate in this case, given the high number of recent literature reviews (11 papers) that were identified in the initial 146 articles selected. This search resulted in a total of 145 additional relevant articles, which led to a total of 291 articles.

Finally, in order to reduce human error bias in systematic literature reviews, a data extraction form is employed (Tranfield et al., 2003). This data extraction form aims to have a detailed outline of the existing body of literature to facilitate the analysis of recent research trends. The data extraction form used in this study is a Microsoft Excel database (see Table A1 in the appendices), which contains several headings and sub-headings as follows: the article title, author(s), publication details, methodology approaches used, discussion of findings, and future research. Therefore, this database includes the journals in which the articles were published, as summarised in Table 2 below, and the research methods and theories used, as summarised in Table 3 below.

## **2.2 Literature overview and defining social sustainability**

The relevant articles identified and selected from the literature search are then analyzed and grouped according to their research contents. In this study, these research contents are referred to as themes. The analysis and grouping of the articles resulted in eight research themes and trends within the literature on social sustainability in the supply chain management context. Some topics or studies fall under more than one theme (see table A1) where papers having more than one theme were marked accordingly); therefore, these research themes are not mutually exclusive. Aforementioned, the following were the research themes identified: (a) barriers and challenges; (b) collaboration; (c) motivation, drivers and enablers; (d) organisational culture; (e) relationship between practices and performance; (f) risk management; (g) strategy; (h) transparency; and (i) literature review papers.

Sustainability refers as the ability to meet the needs of the present while preserving it for the future generation's needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The call for greater sustainability has indicated the importance of addressing the interrelationship between ecological, social and economic systems (Hutchins and Sutherland, 2008), and this has required businesses to reconsider their environmental, economic and social impact throughout the life cycle of their products and services.

Correspondingly, scholars within the field of supply chain management have not missed the call to address sustainability. Within the context of supply chains, which comprise of the flow of activities and information from the extraction of raw materials stage right through to the end-users (Handfield and Nichols, 1999), research insights have begun to slowly add meaning to sustainability by considering the "guidelines" of the Triple Bottom Line. The TBL (i.e., economic, environmental and social) was introduced by Elkington (1998) and the importance of having a partnership between these three. The article also focuses more on the environmental aspects of sustainability, which was the emerging trend during the 1990s. From the late 1990s until recently, research has shifted its focus from the environmental and economic side towards the social side of sustainability in the supply chain context.

Despite the shifted interest in studying social sustainability, only a few scholars have attempted to define the term (Nakamba et al., 2017). The literature review paper by Zorzini et al. (2015) discussed the classification of social sustainability issues as introduced by Carter and Jennings (2002a) and Carter (2004) who covered: human rights, safety, community, diversity and ethics; and then expanded this classification using additional issues found in their review including: respect for local democratic institutions,

animal welfare concerns and social impacts on customers (Zorzini et al. 2015). Table 1 presents six definitions for social sustainability, which focus on several perspectives such as:

- *management practices* (Klassen and Vereecke, 2012 and; Awaysheh and Klassen, 2010; Sloan, 2010);
- *stakeholders* (Nakamba et al. 2017; Huq et al. 2014 and; Klassen and Vereecke, 2012);
- *labor* (Nakamba et al. 2017; Awaysheh and Klassen, 2010; Sarkis et al. 2010 and; Sloan, 2010) and;
- *society* (Nakamba et al. 2017; Huq et al. 2014 and; Sloan, 2010).

**Table 1 Definitions of social sustainability.**

Authors	Definitions
Awaysheh and Klassen (2010, pp. 1248)	“Management practices that affect how a firm contributes to the development of human potential or protects people from harm, thereby capturing both positive and negative aspects, respectively”
Huq et al. (2014, pp. 612)	“Social sustainability is a holistic concept that must be integrated with economic and environmental performance considerations, recognizes stakeholders within and beyond the supply chain; and attempts to ensure long-term benefit for society”
Sarkis et al. (2010, pp. 338)	“Social sustainability is related to management of social resources including people’s skills and abilities, institutions, relationships and social values”
Sloan (2010, p.8)	“Social dimension involves developing and maintaining business practices that are fair and favorable to the labor, communities, and regions touched by the supply chain”
Klassen and Vereecke (2012, pp. 105)	“Social sustainability is defined as encompassing three levels of stakeholders (who), focusing on the evolving set of social concerns for which the firm has influence in the supply chain (which issues), and involving management capabilities that respond to these concerns by mitigating risk or enhancing customer value (how)”
Nakamba et al. (2017, pp. 527)	“Social sustainability is related to the management of practices, capabilities, stakeholders and resources to address human potential and welfare both within and outside the communities of the supply chain”

In view of the definition and classification of social issues above, this study seeks to study social sustainability and focuses on the perspectives of human rights and employees’ safety in the supply chain. Zorzini et al. (2015) explained these terms as (i) human rights refers to “*labor conditions such as child and forced labor, discipline, working hours and freedom of association*” (pp. 68); (ii) safety refers to “*the provision by suppliers of safe working environments and regular health and safety employee training*” (pp. 68). In particular, this thesis focuses on social issues such as minimum national wage, work permit and visa, workplace insurance and pensions. The following section will discuss the context in which these social issues will be studied.

### 2.3 Research methods and theories in the reviewed papers

Aforementioned, Table A1 (available upon request) presents the list of 291 papers which has been analyzed and using the abbreviations given in Table 3, it also indicates the research method used and, where relevant, the theoretical lens employed by each of the papers. Table 3 presents a summary of the journals where the papers have been published (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Methods & theories used in the articles identified.**

Abbreviations: Methods		No. of Papers	Abbreviations: Theories		No. of Papers
CP	Conceptual Paper	60	IT	Institutional Theory	15
CS	Case Study	56	OT	Other Theories	41
GT	Grounded Theory	6	RBV	Resource Based View	8
I	Interview	25	RDT	Resource Dependency Theory	5
LR	Literature Review	31	ST	Stakeholder Theory	24
M	Mathematical Modelling	25	TCE	Transaction Cost Economics Theory	4
SD	Secondary Data	31		No theories	194
S	Survey	57			
Total		291	Total		291

#### 2.3.1 Methods

In terms of methods (see Table 2), eight methods have been commonly used in the extant literature to explore social sustainability in the supply chain. While some papers have employed more than one method (i.e., mixed methods), these papers have been categorized according to the main analysis used in the paper. The SLR found that conceptual papers (60 papers), surveys (57 papers), and case studies (56 papers) are the most common methods used by researchers. The remaining papers consist of methods such as literature review and secondary data (31 papers), interview and mathematical modeling (25 papers) respectively and finally, grounded theory (6 papers) is the least used method. Approximately 40% of the methods used are theoretical/conceptual research, while the remaining 60% are empirical research. Subsequently, the use of theories is discussed.

In terms of theories, more than 65% (194 papers) of the papers have not employed any theoretical lens in their studies and this is in line with what has been found by Zorzini et al. (2015). Among the main theories used in socially SSCM, stakeholder theory (24 papers), institutional theory (15 papers), resource-based view (8 papers), resource dependency theory (5 papers) and transaction cost theory (5 papers). Other theories (41 paper) refer to theories such as supply chain sustainability theory, utility theory, organizational theory, social capital theory, agency theory and etc. Firstly, theoretical lenses are employed to demonstrate the scholars' understanding of their field (Touboulic and Walker, 2015). Secondly, theoretical lenses represent the foundation of creating knowledge; hence, scholars seek to contribute to the body of knowledge and explain the studied phenomena through it (Handfield and Melnyk, 1998). Thirdly, the use of theory could lead to more robust conclusions, and without the theoretical lenses their insights would be less valuable (Barratt et al. 2011). Furthermore, theoretical lenses can be used in different ways, Zorzini et al. (2015) have discussed four classifications for theory

dressing, theory matching, theory suggesting and theory expansion. In line with Touboulis and Walker (2015), the systematic review of the theories listed above suggests that Stakeholder Theory and Institutional Theory were theories often employed in the extant literature of SSCM.

Table 3 presents the list of journals where the selected papers have been published. There is wide range of journals that has been found in the extant literature. Journal of Business Ethics (42 papers) and Supply Chain Management (35 papers) are the highest two journals where works on socially SSCM has been published. This is followed by Journal of Production Economics and Journal of Cleaner Production (26 papers) respectively. Others consist of journals such as Asia Pacific Management Review, Asian Business and Management Benchmarking: An International Journal International Journal of Supply Chain Management International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management Total Quality Management and Business Excellence with 1 papers each, respectively.

### 3. RESEARCH THEMES

It is important to note here that the themes have been influenced by the categorizations used in previous literature reviews (e.g. Zorzini et al. 2015; Tate et al. 2010). However, these prior categorizations have been adapted as this study includes new themes and/or trends that have emerged in the last three years, 2013 to 2016 when 146 of the papers reviewed here were published. Examples of the new added themes in this study include barriers and challenges; and motivations, drivers and enablers of sustainability. Aforementioned, *literature review* papers as noted earlier is not a theme in itself but a group of papers that examine research trends in the area of social sustainability.

**Table 3: Journals where the selected papers have been published.**

Journals	No of Papers
Journal of Business Ethics	42
Others	35
Supply Chain Management: An International Journal	35
International Journal of Production Economics	26
Journal of Cleaner Production	26
International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management	15
International Journal of Production Research	14
Journal of Supply Chain Management	14
International Journal of Operations and Production Management	13
CSR and Environmental Management	12
Business Strategy and the Environment	10
European Management Journal	7
Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management	7
British Food Journal	6
Journal of Operations Management	6
Production Planning and Control	5
Corporate Governance	4
Journal of Business Logistics	4
Production and Operations Management	4
Business Ethics: A European Review	2
Social Responsibility Journal	2
The International Journal of Logistics Management	2

For example: Zorzini et al. (2015) discuss the research trends in the area of socially responsible sourcing; Touboulic and Walker (2015) analyze the theories that have been used in the area of sustainable supply chain management and; Tachizawa and Wong (2014) discusses the research trends in multi-tier sustainable supply chains. It is also noteworthy to mention that one paper could be categorized under more than one theme. Table 4 presents a summary of the classification of the reviewed papers. Hereafter, each of the research themes will be briefly discussed and followed by a presentation of the research gaps which leads to opportunities for future research.

**Table 4: Classification of reviewed papers.**

Research Themes	Sample Papers	No of Papers
Barriers and challenges	Formentini and Taticchi (2016); Gualandris and Kalchschmidt (2014); Kirchoff et al. (2015), McCarter and Kamal (2013), New (2015), Seuring and Muller (2008a), Seuring and Muller (2008b), Silvestre (2015a), Silvestre (2015b), Touboulic and Walker (2015a)	11
Collaboration	Formentini and Taticchi (2016); Touboulic and Walker (2015a); Wiengarten and Longoni (2015)	3
Literature Review	Ahi and Searcy (2015); Eriksson and Svensson (2015); Fischl et al. (2014); Govindan et al. (2016); Khalid et al. (2015); Martinez-Jurado et al. (2014); Meckenstock et al. (2015); Mejias et al. (2016); Simpson et al. (2015); Singhry (2015)	18
Motivations, Drivers, and Enablers	Beske and Seuring (2014); Brockhaus et al. (2016); De Treville and Antonakis (2005); De Treville et al. (2013); Dos Santos et al. (2013); Foerstl et al. (2015); Freise and Seuring (2015); Griffis et al. (2014); Hsueh (2014); Huq et al. (2014)	27
Organizational culture	Ayuso et al. (2013); Becker et al. (2010); Bouchet et al. (2015); Burchielli et al. (2009); Byrne et al. (2014); Carter (2000a); Carter (2000b); Carter (2004); Carter and Jennings (2002a); Carter and Jennings (2004)	54
The relationship between practices and performance	Abdullah and Yaakub (2015); Adebajo et al. (2013); Agan et al. (2016); Biazzo and Panizzolo (2000); Carbone et al. (2012); Carter (2005); Carter and Jennings (2002a); Carter and Jennings (2002b); Chiu and Wang (2015); Conti et al. (2004)	91
Risk Management	Cruz (2013a); Cruz (2013b); Harwood and Humby (2008); Klassen and Vereecke (2012); Koplín et al. (2007); Lemke and Petersen (2013); Petersen and Lemke (2015); Silvestre (2015b); Smith and Betts (2015); Spekman and Davis (2004)	14
Strategy	Baden et al. (2011); Bai and Sarkis (2004); Gopalakrishnan et al. (2012); Hojmosse et al. (2013b); Lin and Tseng (2016); Longoni and Cagliano (2015); Moxham and Kauppi (2014); Piercy and Rich (2015); Snider et al. (2013); Wilhelm et al. (2016)	116
Transparency	Amann et al. (2014); Arikán et al. (2015); Awaysheh and Klassen et al. (2010); Baden et al. (2011); Lim and Phillips (2008); Leire and Mont (2010); Meehan and Bryde (2011); MacCarthy et al. (2012); Perry et al. (2015); Towers et al. (2013)	63

Note: More references for further readings will be available upon request.

### 3.1 Barriers and challenges

The theme *barriers and challenges* include papers that discuss difficulties encountered by businesses, supply chains or industries in implementing or practicing social sustainability. For example the knowledge barriers within the organization in the implementation of sustainability (Formentini and Taticchi, 2016); lack of training and lack of involvement from senior management in the implementation of sustainability

(Silvestre, 2015b). The extant literature has presented a number of barriers related to the implementation of sustainability and examples of barriers such as: *lack of organizational commitment* (Kirchoff et al. 2016); *discordance of supply chain strategies* (Touboulie and Walker, 2015a); *behavioral issues* (Wilhelm et al., 2015), *monetary limitations* (Silvestre, 2015b) and *lack of governing enforcement* (McCarter and Kamal, 2013).

### **3.2 Collaboration**

The theme *collaboration* includes papers that discuss internal and external cooperation, partnerships or associations of the organizations within the supply chain. For example: collaborative relationships with growers and exporters, close collaboration with certification bodies in order to support the development of the implementation of sustainability (Formentini and Taticchi, 2016). Byrne and Power (2014) have explored how compliance and collaboration are significant to build supply chain relationships. Their findings conclude, information sharing, and organizations' expertise could determine the level of power in assuring that supply chain objectives are achieved. In another study by Weingarten and Longoni (2015) explored the performance of coordination and collaboration through integration in the supply chain in India. Suppliers and customer integration are found to lead towards better collaboration, although the supply chain still continues to focus on operational performance such as financial, product attributes and distribution.

### **3.3 Motivation, drivers and enablers**

The theme *motivations, drivers, and enablers of sustainability* include papers that discuss factors that have encouraged organizations or the supply chain to implement social sustainability. For example: managerial support (Luthra et al., 2015), governing enforcement (Marshall et al., 2015b) and education (Griffis et al., 2014). Abdullah and Yaakub (2015) explored the level of reverse logistics adoption. They found that manufacturers in Malaysia are highly influenced by pressures from stakeholders (i.e., customers, government) and other organizational pressures such as financial and competition. Furthermore, these pressures are found to play a significant role in decision making and intention to practice reverse logistics.

### **3.4 Organisational culture**

The theme *Organisational culture* includes papers that discuss the values embedded within the organization, or the holistic approaches taken by organizations to employ social sustainability. For example, organizations delivering a clear and measurable value in building their staff morale and in their recruitment and retention of employees (Harwood and Humby, 2008). Carter and Jennings (2002) studied how commitment and trust could enhance supply chain relationship, which then lead towards better supply chain relationships and performance of social sustainability. In another study, Formentini and Taticchi (2016) explored on initiatives taken by Italian organizations to promote social practices and found practices such as training and skills development, initiating sustainability networking, and encouraging continuous managerial support to include these practices into their organization strategies.

### **3.5 The relationship between practices and performance**

The theme *The relationship between practices and performance* includes papers that discuss topics on practices carried out by organizations to ensure that they accomplish



their aims of implementing sustainability. For example: the organizational practice of monitoring (i.e., ensuring suppliers' compliance with health and safety requirements) and the adoption of socially sustainable management systems (i.e., introducing a management system with suppliers that provides policies and procedures for fair wages and working hours) in order to maintain or improve their performance of implementing sustainability (Marshall et al., 2015; Pfeffer, 2010).

### **3.6 Risk management**

The theme *Risk Management* includes papers that discuss how organizations manage internal or external threats that could harm their business. For example: organizations may create contingency plans and crisis teams in order to coordinate the conflicts or issues that arise (Carters and Rogers, 2008) and; training, building awareness of risk efficiency and rewarding employees for taking informed risk (Harwood and Humby, 2008). Petersen and Lemke (2015) and Lemke and Petersen (2013) study reputational risk for organizations in the supply chain which associates with their social initiatives in the supply chain. Similarly, supply chains are still traditionally aware of risk link with financial and quality constraints, which is directly linked to their organization image. Hence, these studies found three types of risk management practices associated with social initiatives in the supply chain, namely: avoidance, prevention and control, transference and retention (Petersen and Lemke, 2013).

### **3.7 Strategy**

The theme *Strategy* includes papers that discuss tactics or actions taken by organizations towards their implementation of sustainability. For example, organizations ensuring that they include: good organizational governance, protection of the human rights, good labor practices, protection of the environment, fair operating practices, awareness of consumer issues, community involvement and development and political responsibility in their strategies (Zhu et al., 2016).

### **3.8 Transparency**

The theme *Transparency* includes papers that discuss organizations' ability and readiness in providing sufficient information to their stakeholders (Awaysheh and Klassen, 2010) as an outcome of the monitoring and controlling towards their implementation of certain general standards and guidelines. For example, origins of commodities, product safety, fairtrade certification, implementation of codes of conduct (for e.g., SA8000) and direct audit of suppliers (Awaysheh and Klassen, 2010).

## **4. FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION**

The neglected areas in the extant literature related to the implementation of social sustainability in the supply chain can be grouped into two categories. Firstly, developing economies are still an area that need to be further explored (Jia et al., 2018; Nakamba et al., 2017; Zorzini et al., 2015). Moreover, recent studies have identified that in the context of socially SSCM, more research has focused on developed countries and on the buyer's perspective (Jia et al., 2018; Huq and Stevenson, 2018; Zorzini et al., 2015). Secondly, scholars have demonstrated more interest in managing supply chain tiers (Tachizawa and Wong, 2014; Mena et al., 2013) and several studies suggest there is still lack of studies focusing on the role of supply chain actors (Wilhelm et al., 2016). In summary, this paper have presented a systematic literature review (SLR) of 291 papers from the existing

research on socially SSCM. The paper began with the SLR research protocol and presented the common methods and theoretical lenses employed; and journals where the papers have been published. The main objective of this section is to address the research question which has been proposed at the beginning of this paper.

- **RQ1:** *What are the research themes and trends to date on socially sustainable supply chain management?*

As discussed in Section 3, nine research themes has been found in the area of SSCM. Excluding the literature review, papers were categorized according to research themes such as barriers and challenges; collaboration; motivation, drivers and enablers; organisational culture; the relationship between practices and performance; risk management, strategy, and transparency. It is noteworthy to mention that some papers could fall under more than one theme. Among these research themes, research gaps arise in topics such as collaboration (3 papers), barriers and challenges (11 papers) and risk management (14 papers). In comparison to other research themes such as strategy (116 paper) and the relationship between practices and performance (91 papers), the three topic (i.e. collaboration, barriers and challenges, risk management) are significantly smaller in terms of number. In terms of research methods: conceptual papers, surveys and case study are employed more common, and; in terms of theories, stakeholder theory and institutional theory are more common, although there is still research gap in the lack of utilization of theory (194) papers in the literature.

- **RQ2:** *What are the current debates on socially sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) and opportunities for future research in this area?*

Firstly, whilst much research in the area of socially SSCM has focused on dyadic relationships between suppliers and buyers, there is a need to pay more attention to the roles of other supply chain actors beyond just two tiers. Supply chain often consist of three or more tiers; hence, future studies could explore the multiple tiers of the supply chain and other stakeholders such as Government, Non-governmental organizations. Specifically, it will be worthwhile to explore how far does pressure from stakeholders go along the tiers of the supply chain. Furthermore, there are not yet any studies which have considered the employees perspectives in this regard. It is noteworthy to explore potentially how employees commit behavioral issues detrimental to the organizations or potentially how the lack of employee empowerment could lead to social issues in the supply chain.

The research themes found in the extant literature have been studied from multiple standpoints, such as the supply chain perspectives (i.e. buyer-supplier, multiple tier), the country context (i.e. developed or developing), the types of industry and the nature of the study (i.e. empirical and conceptual). Therefore, to uncover the challenges of implementing social sustainability in one of the most labor-intensive industries or supply chains will potentially provide significant insights. For example, previous studies have considered dyadic relationships between buyers and suppliers (Foerstl et al. 2015) or the perspectives between the regulatory body and organizations (Marshall et al. 2015b). Henceforth, future studies could explore how regulatory enforcement, the type of industry (i.e., commercial or non-commercial) and the type of sectors (i.e., private or public) could differ in emerging economies as compared to developed countries. It will be notable to

consider enhancing the understanding of how different regulatory frameworks from developing countries in comparison to developed countries have influenced the way social sustainability is implemented.

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