

Relationship Among Sustainable Supply Chain Management, Employee Retention, and Organizational Performance: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to examine the relationship between sustainable supply chain management and organizational performance in the manufacturing industry. This study further extends its research on the role of employee retention between sustainable supply chain management and organizational performance.

Design/Methodology/ Approach: This is a systematic literature review. We screened 361 articles based on title out of which 150 articles selected for abstract reading and finalized 89 for full paper reading on sustainable supply chain management, employee retention, and organizational performance.

Findings: The findings of this study clearly indicate that organizations that adopted SSCM into their business operations have substantially improved their organizational performance through enhanced employee retention and outperformed their competitors.

Originality/Value: The study identifies important factors influencing the relationship among SSCM, ER, and OP and offers scope for empirical research in the future for new research scholars.

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Introduction

The integration of sustainability into various operations of an organisation has been gaining customers' attention since the last decade. Customers nowadays are very much aware and enlightened about environmental degradation. They prefer to buy from companies that adopt environmentally friendly practices in their operations. This paper aims to investigate the impact of such environmentally friendly practices on organisational performance. The article further extends its investigation to sustainable supply chain management practices and their influence on organisational performance through the mediating role of employee retention. According to (WCED, 1987), sustainability may be defined as utilizing available resources to meet present needs rationally without compromising the need for the future generation. There are three dimensions to sustainability consisting of environmental, social, and economical (Elkington, 1998). Thus, (Elkington, 1998) advocated that organisations must strive to incorporate activities into their operations to achieve all the above-mentioned objectives—economic, social, and environmental—simultaneously. According to (Cater and Rodger, 2008), incorporating sustainability into business practices is not a matter of choice for the organisations; rather, it is essential to sustain in the fast-changing business dynamics.

The primary focus of the concept “**sustainability**” is to help organisations to attain stability between economic, social, and environmental performance, minimising the impact of their products on the environment, and improving the **brand image**. The goal is to minimise the negative impact of business practices on the environment (Sarkis, 2006). Sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) practices encourage business organisations to evaluate their suppliers' environmental performances by incorporating activities that improve the environmental quality of goods and services and assess the quality of waste in the operational activities (Handfield et al., 2002). According to (Gatewood et al., 1993), **brand image** positively impacts **employee retention**. An employee would like to stay longer with a highly reputed brand.

Organisations face numerous challenges in retaining their employees. An efficient and loyal human resource can boost the chances of an organisation gaining a competitive advantage (Huselid, 1995). A high rate of **employee retention** has a positive effect on **organisational performance** (Huselid, 1995) and (Guthrie, 2001). Research has proved that employee retention and organisational overall performance are positively related to each other. Retained employees turn out to be an asset to the company since they have a deeper understanding of the business process and how the internal system of the business operates, which fosters productivity and enhances service and product quality. A highly engaged and devoted employee is also highly motivated, which

contributes to the success of the company and finally leads to improved company performance (Guthrie, 2001) and (Wang & Shyu, 2008).

Sustainability adoption into the business practices affects their supply chain and enhances organisational performance. But some scholars do not advocate the adoption of sustainability into business practices due to its' heavy investment, particularly in attaining environmental performance (Robinson & Wilcox, 2008) and (Cheng et al., 2008). This may adversely affect the tendency of the organisation to spend less on building brand image and employee welfare schemes to retain employees. But (Sarkis, 2006) supports the adoption of sustainability in business operations as it enhances environmental performance, economic performance, and improves brand image. The differences in opinion of scholars have triggered the zeal to investigate the linkage among sustainable supply chain management, employee retention, and organisational performance.

Ample studies were undertaken on SSCM and organisational performance, particularly in developed countries, and limited studies were conducted in developing countries (Zailani et al., 2012). A study on manufacturing sectors in the Indian context in a developing country can contribute to showing SSCM results worldwide.

Methodology

There could be many ways by which sustainability has evolved in supply chain management over the past two decades. The literature review in the current study was directed by the following research questions:

RQ1. How has sustainability evolved in supply chain management? RQ2. How is SSCM associated with the company's performance? RQ3. How does SSCM impact employee retention in an organisation?

RQ4. What is the relationship between employee retention and organisational performance? RQ5. How is the organisational performance measured in the context of SSCM?

To find answers to these research questions, the existing literature on employee retention and organisational performance in SSCM has been synthesised and systematically reviewed.

According to (Transfield et al.; 2003), a systematic literature review includes five stages consisting of

1. Research identification;
2. Selection of research;

3. Quality assessment of research;
4. Extraction and monitoring data; and
5. Data synthesis and reporting.

The stages are elaborated below:

1st stage: In this stage, the relevant literature was identified by using matching keywords to highlight the focus of the study. The set of keywords used in the study are (“Sustainability” OR “Environmental” OR “Green” OR “Social” OR “CSR”) AND (“Organisational

Performance” OR “Firm Performance” OR “Company Performance”) AND (“Supply Chain Management” OR “Supply Chain Management Practices” OR “Supply Chain” OR

“Sustainable Supply Chain Management”) AND (“Employee Retention” OR “Employee Attrition” OR “Green Human Resource Management” OR “Employee Satisfaction”). An open-source database like Google Scholar has been used to feed these matching keywords to find the required literature. To avoid unrelated articles and narrow down our search, we followed some inclusion and exclusion criteria explained by (Johnson and Schaltegger, 2015). For example, handbooks, working papers, technical reports, and conference papers have excluded and focused only on good-quality and peer-reviewed articles. In our initial search using the above-mentioned keywords in the respective database of Google Scholar, we extracted 479 articles.

2nd Stage: In this stage, all unwanted papers were filtered out, such as (7) book chapters, (8) conference papers, and (12) duplicate articles, and a final list of 452 papers was produced.

Secondly, articles that did not focus on sustainability and supply chain management from the operational point of view and meeting the quality aspects were excluded from the search. In total, 177 articles were omitted at this stage. Further, we were able to exclude 189 papers because they did not match our research aim while examining the abstracts of such papers.

These papers provide a limited idea about the concept of sustainability and its adoption into supply chain management and did not use any tool to measure organisational performance in the context of SSCM. All this gave a final list of 86 articles.

3rd Stage: To ensure the quality of these articles, we included only those papers that went through a strict peer-reviewed process and were significant to our research topic. The final collection of papers was based on basic information, which includes title, journals, year of publication, etc.

4th & Final Stage: In this stage, all the selected articles were examined and synthesised to extract the findings of the studies.

Literature Review Sustainable Supply Chain Management

Sustainable supply chain management includes socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable practices from beginning to end in the supply chain system to save the environment and people. In other words, a company maintains financial, social, and environmental standards in their own as well as their suppliers’ operations. Sustainable supply chain management may be defined as “the transparent and strategic integration and meeting a firm’s environmental, social, and economic goals via systematic coordination of other key business processes in the whole supply chain to enhance the long-term financial performance of the company together with their supply partner” (Gungor and Gupta, 1999). The holistic view of sustainability consists of a three-dimensional perspective (Elkinton, 1994), which refers to people, profit, and planet and intends to measure the environmental, social, and financial performance of a firm over a period.

According to (Markman and Krause, 2016), sustainable supply chain management practices must prioritise the triple bottom line in a sequence such as first the environment, then society, and financial performance should be last in the priority list. (Markman and Krause, 2006) also advocated that it is difficult for a company operating in the manufacturing industry to become sustainable in a true sense because the firm’s operation leads to depletion of natural resources and causes harm to the environment. However, for human survival and progress, sustainability should play the role of an ethical code (Sharma and Ruud, 2003) and be achieved in “a complete, interrelated, equal & fair, judicious, and safe manner” (Gladwin et al., 1995). The first three components in the mentioned definition are strongly linked with the social dimension (Schaefer, 2004) that can be integrated with supply chains by minimising unemployment, ensuring fair treatment to employees, preventing social exclusion, and protecting employees’ health and safety (Lerie and Mont, 2010).



Social sustainability refers to managing social resources, which consists of human skills and ability, social values and relationships, and institutions (Sarkis et al., 2010). In terms of business, organisations and their supply partners are supposed to add value in the supply chain by increasing the human capital of individuals (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002). In the supply chain management, social sustainability can be formed in the internal human resources by adopting supply chain practices that ensure **employment stability and employee health and safety** (Sakris et al., 2010). The functions of supply chain management can play a significant role in formation of social capital (Spekman et al., 1998). Consists of human capital in terms of skills, loyalty, and motivation (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002). A

sustainable supply chain may invest in human capital in several ways, such as implementing effective HR practices to enhance employee well-being and commitment and creating an organisational culture that treats employees equally (Pagell and Wu, 2009).

According to (Harris, 2000), economic sustainability may be defined as “an economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services continuingly, to maintain manageable levels of government and external debt, and to avoid extreme sector imbalances that damage agricultural or industrial production.” Economic sustainability undoubtedly has positive impacts on business performance. However, an organisation that aims to grow needs to increase the flow of materials and energy, which leads to the depletion of resources. The depletion of resources creates a negative impact on the environment; therefore, an organisation must strive to strike a balance between economic and other aspects of sustainability (Ansari, 2012). Economic sustainability in supply chain management consists of factors like logistics cost, cost of investment, and storing and distribution cost of goods (Garcia-Herreros et al., 2014).

Employee Retention

Employees are the most important, productive, and treasured asset for any company or organisation, and retaining them is one of the challenges for businesses (Singh, 2019). As the replacement cost of talented or skilled employees consists of huge revenue, an experienced and skilled employee contributes to enhancing organisational performance. Therefore, employee retention became a vital business strategy for a firm to remain competitive in the market. The term “retention” may be defined as a systematic effort to develop and create a working environment that encourages employees to stay with an organisation for as long as possible.

According to (Ihuah, Kakulu, and Eaton, 2014), employee retention refers to “a method by which companies maintain an efficient workforce and meet operational requirements.” It is

a process of encouraging employees to stay with a company or to stay with a company until a project is over (Ming-Chu, 2017). Many organisations from the manufacturing sector, especially in developing nations, have ignored employee retention as an effective strategy to outperform, which makes them victims of industry competition (Sawaneh and Kamara, 2019). Employee retention is vital to organizational growth, as many companies believe that retaining experienced, skilful, and talented employees lays down a foundation for minimising costs and attaining organisational goals, which leads to organisational performance. Talented and skilled employees work eagerly to achieve organisational goals; therefore, a company must pay attention to them by promoting organisational culture and environment, which may inspire them to outperform their jobs (Mane and Shinde, 2021). A healthy working environment boosts job satisfaction among employees, which plays a significant role in employee retention (Fei et al., 2023). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs, working environment, and overall employment experience are encouraged to stay more loyal to their present company. Job satisfaction often includes a sense of fulfilment in one’s role, positive relationships with other employees, and work engagement. Companies that can enhance the job satisfaction of employees face lower attrition rates and higher employee retention.

Organizational Performance

“Organisational performance refers to an organization’s ability to meet its goals and objectives and helps measure progress, justify capital allocation, optimize resource usage, and more.” Companies measure organizational performance widely based on two matrices, such as market performance and financial performance. According to (Etzioni, 1960), the concept of organisational performance refers to the assessment of an organization that is carried out in regards to the achievement and non-achievement of predetermined goals and objectives.

Whereas other researchers like (Chandler, 1962) and (Thompson, 1967) argued that the ultimate objective of organizational performance is a company’s long-term survival and growth. In other words, continuous improvement forms the most important objective of organizational performance.

When a company, as a social system, can achieve its objectives with optimum utilization of certain resources and means or without putting excessive pressure on its employees, it may be defined as a performance (Jenatabadi, 2015). The most careful and explicit explanation of organizational performance as a concept is offered by (Lupton, 1977), compared to other researchers of his time. He explained in an effective organization the levels of satisfaction and motivation of employees, and the productivity rate is high, whereas employee attrition, labour unrest, and cost are low.

Sustainable Supply Chain Management and Organizational Performance

A sustainable supply chain management includes socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable practices. Many researchers, like (Zhu and Sarkis, 2007), and (Green et al. (2012a), have examined the relationship between the adoption of SCCM practice and organisational performance and suggested there is a positive impact of SCCM practices on organisational performance. According to (Porter and Linde, 1995), coercive pressure through environmental regulation can generate better economic results. However, the environmental dimension is not within the scope of this study; therefore, the current study focused only on the rest of the two dimensions, including social and economic sustainability in the supply chain management. The social dimension of sustainable supply chain management has gained the attention of researchers in recent times. Researchers like (Gopalkrishnan et al., 2012) and (Mani et al., 2020) examined that there is a positive relationship between socially sustainable supply chains and a company's performance.

According to (Marshal et al., 2015), an organisation that voluntarily and proactively takes social initiatives ultimately attains improvement in their performance over a period. Researchers like (Mani et al., 2020) have suggested that a socially responsible firm often performs better compared to the firm that doesn't engage in social activities. Similarly, Cater and (Rogers, 2008) also found that firms that engage in social initiatives can minimise their costs and enhance their brand reputation. Social sustainability has a high inclination to enhance efficiency in the supply chain system of a firm, thus enhancing supply chain performance (Mani et al., 2018). As a result, they also discovered that organisations have taken it as a priority to create socially sustainable activities in their supply chain system. Socially sustainable supply chain management practices primarily focused on minimising waste include product design, product delivery, material acquisitions, and disposal (Vachon and Klassen, 2006) and (Seuring et al., 2008). Such a waste reduction should minimize cost leading to enhance economic performance of a firm.

Sustainable Supply Chain Management and Employee Retention

The significance of stakeholders regarding the adoption of social sustainability in the supply chain and the capacity to influence firms to be socially responsible has been highlighted by (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006). Researcher like (Govindan et al., 2021) advocated that trust building and collaboration with primary stakeholders (employees) help maintain quality, minimise cost, and reduce sustainability-related risk. There are many advantages of social innovation in supply chain management, which consists of lower labour turnover and

attrition rates through better working conditions, reduced health and safety risk, and lower absenteeism advocated by (Cater and Rogers, 2008). Safety and security and healthy working conditions provide job satisfaction to employees, which is a major factor influencing employee retention (Fei et al., 2023). Satisfied employees are likely to remain loyal and stay for longer with the current company. Firms which can able to enhance job satisfaction in employees may face lower employee attrition and higher retention. Social sustainability in the supply chain ensures employment stability and employee health and safety at the workplace (Sakris et al., 2010), therefore employment stability and job security are another significant factor to motivate employees to stay with the company for a longer period.

Employee Retention and Organization Performance

The cost of losing skilled and experienced manpower is substantial, and their replacement cost may exceed over 300% of the salary. Lack of Job dissatisfaction among an individual employee in the working environment is one of the primary reasons for an employee to leave an organisation (Sawaneh and Kamara, 2019). However, job dissatisfaction is not the only reason for employee turnover; factors like working conditions, equal and fair treatment from the management, health and safety, job security, etc., are some of the other important factors leading to employee attrition. Working conditions or environments in a company include proper ventilation, space with some natural light, a furnished staff room, air-conditioning availability, a closed office for senior officials, and safety equipment. A healthy and safe working environment provides a sense of relief and motivation to employees to stay with the company for a long time (Singh, 2008). Enhanced job satisfaction motivates employees to give their best to the organization to achieve its goals (Sawaneh and Kamara, 2019).

According to (Ferguson and Ferguson, 1986), employees expect fair and equal treatment from their managers, which motivates them to stay with the company. A well-developed company culture can influence its employees to work with them for a long time (Dailey and Krik, 1992).

Human resources are the significant sources of value addition to firms by developing a competitive advantage (Barlett and Goshal, 2002). Experienced and skilled employees can adapt to the changes in the business environment immediately and solve day-to-day problems faster. This adds value to firms' performance and productivity (Davenport et al., 2002).

Companies can adopt a high-quality employee retention strategy, which enables employees to develop competency and productivity and improve organisational performance (Abel, 2008).



Research Findings

The findings of this study clearly indicate that organizations that adopted SSCM into their business operations have substantially improved their organizational performance through enhanced employee retention and outperformed their competitors. This is evident from the current study that SSCM can significantly influence OP (Zhu and Sarkis, 2007), (Green et al., 2012), (Yu and Ramanathan, 2015); that means SSCM can positively and directly impact OP. The study also explored that SSCM practices enable firms to retain their employees for a long time; in other words, enhance employee retention in an organization. Companies can improve employees' job satisfaction by creating favourable working conditions that contribute to

employee retention; therefore, SSCM has a direct significant influence on ER (Cater and Rogers, 2008) and (Fei et al., 2023). This study discussed one more relationship between ER and OP: a firm that can effectively retain its employees can gain a competitive advantage and improve its performance; therefore, ER can directly and positively influence OP (Barlett and Goshal, 2002). The literature review revealed that many studies have been conducted to

examine the relationship between SSCM and OP, ER and OP, and SCM and ER, but only a few studies have been conducted to examine all three variables in combination, which is present in this study.

Managerial Implications

Today's customers are educated and are aware of the importance of sustainability in business practices; therefore, managers should focus on the implementation of SSCM into their business operations. Businesses, to sustain the competition, need a competitive edge over

their competitors, and employee retention is a powerful strategy to gain a competitive advantage. Therefore, managers should bring in effective employee retention strategies to retain their skilled and experienced employees, which can contribute to the organizational performance.

Limitations and Further Research Direction

The current study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge. But it still consists of certain limitations that need to be explored further. Apart from SSCM practices as mentioned in the study, there are many other factors that have been excluded in the study that have a significant impact on organisational performance, such as capital, equipment, technology, information flow,

outsourcing, and risk, etc. This study is purely based on a literature review and lacks an empirical study; further, the sources of literature are limited to open sources, e.g., Google Scholar only. Due to financial constraints, premium databases like Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, etc., could not be included in this study; consequently, the study loses the broader perspective. The study conducted is based on the manufacturing sector; therefore, it is not possible to generalize across industries. The scope of this study is limited to developing economies only, whereas the developed economies perspective is missing, which may offer a different opinion about the relationships among SSCM, ER, and OP.

As this study is based on a literature review, future scholars may conduct an empirical-based study to validate the findings of this study. Studies may be conducted for other industries also to get to know the holistic view regarding the impact of SSCM on ER and OP.

Conclusion

This study aims to examine the relationship among SSCM, ER, and Op. We did a comprehensive review of 89 articles and discovered that SSCM can significantly influence ER and OP through numerous factors, including reducing delivery cost, reducing delivery time, providing better quality products, offering competitive prices, better working conditions, good organizational culture, maximum job satisfaction, etc. The study further identified that ER plays a mediating role between SSCM and OP. But still, there is a gap in the literature relating to the nature of the relationship between SSCM and OP, SSCM and ER, and ER and OP.

Empirical studies need to be conducted to address this gap by exploring the relationship among SSCM, ER, and OP to identify other factors that can impact these relationships in future studies. There is a need for more research on the implementation of SSCM and ER in different industries or sectors and different contexts. This study offers useful insights for practitioners and managers on how to implement the SSCM and ER strategies to achieve OP by gaining CA. Finally, this study contributes to the existing knowledge through a substantial review of the factors that impact OP in the context of SSCM, ER, and OP.

The findings of the studies recommend that SSCM and ER can be valuable tools to attain OP and highlight the significance of focusing on both internal and external factors before implementing SSCM and ER into their business strategies. Moreover, additional studies are required to validate the findings.

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Annexure 17.4.9

Submission Date	Submission Id	Word Count	Character Count
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22	www.ijcc.net	<1	Publication		

Reviewers Memorandum



Reviewer's Comment 1: The paper presents a structured review of literature addressing the relationship among Sustainable Supply Chain Management, employee retention, and organizational performance, which is a relevant and emerging research area. However, the review largely draws on older studies, with limited inclusion of recent research. Given the growing importance of sustainability and human resource integration in supply chain practices, incorporating more contemporary studies would strengthen the relevance and timeliness of the review.

Reviewer's Comment 2: The manuscript is thematically organized and attempts to integrate SSCM, employee retention, and organizational performance. Nevertheless, the literature review appears to be based on a limited range of academic databases, and the review methodology is not sufficiently detailed. The absence of a PRISMA diagram or a structured review protocol reduces transparency. Providing a clearer explanation of the literature selection process would enhance methodological rigor.

Reviewer's Comment 3: The study offers useful insights into the interlinkages among SSCM, employee retention, and organizational performance. However, many of the conclusions are derived from earlier studies, which may limit the validity of generalizing these findings to the current business environment. Explicitly acknowledging this limitation and emphasizing the need for more recent empirical evidence would improve the robustness and applicability of the review.



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Conflict of Interest: Author of a Paper had no conflict neither financially nor academically.

Editorial Excerpt



The article has 10% plagiarism, which is within the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks, the paper had some minor revisions, which were communicated promptly to the author (Manoj and Anurag), and all necessary corrections were incorporated as and when directed. The comments related to this manuscript are closely aligned with the theme "Relationship among sustainable Supply Chain Management, Employee Retention, and Organizational Performance" both subject-wise and Research-wise. The article offers a comprehensive review of Sustainable Supply Chain Management, Employee Retention, and Organizational Performance their relationship. This study offers useful insights for practitioners and managers on how to implement the SSCM and ER strategies to achieve OP by gaining CA. After thorough reviews and the editorial board's remarks, the manuscript has been categorized and approved for publication under the "Review of Literature" category.

Acknowledgement



The acknowledgement section is an essential part of all academic research papers. It provides appropriate recognition to all contributors for their hard work and effort taken while writing a paper. The data presented and analysed in this paper by the author (Manoj and Anurag) were collected first handily and wherever it has been taken the proper acknowledgment and endorsement depicts. The author is highly indebted to others who facilitated accomplishing the research. Last but not least, endorse all reviewers and editors of GJEIS in publishing in the present issue.

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