

## **Beyond Buyers: The Role of Civil Society Organizations and Consumers in Promoting Buyers' Justice and Social Capital in Supply Chains**

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### **Abstract**

*In today's supply chain management, managing sourcing relationships has become a challenging real-world problem. To tackle social deficiencies, the study focuses on socially sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) practices such as assessment and collaboration that can encourage suppliers to act responsibly. Scholars have made considerable effort to investigate how the implementation of SSCM practices can effectively sustain suppliers' social performance. The study aims to build a framework that explores the individual impact of assessment and collaboration practices on suppliers' social performance. It also investigates whether buyers' justice, including distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, and social capital factors such as relational, cognitive, and structural capital, can complement the SSCM practices to sustain suppliers' social performance. Through survey analysis of companies in Karachi, it has been found that assessment and collaboration practices are ineffective in improving suppliers' social performance. Furthermore, buyers' justice and social capital factors showed no significant impact on the relationship between assessment and collaboration practices and suppliers' social performance. Nevertheless, this study highlights the importance of justice and social capital dimensions and calls for further research to understand their impact on SSCM and suppliers' social performance.*

*Keywords: Socially sustainable assessment, cooperation, Buyer Justice, Social Capital, Social Performance, Supplier Sustainability*

## **Introduction**

Organizations looking to save costs or potentially gain competitive advantages are increasingly using strategies like subcontracting to suppliers and setting up production networks in developing nations (Locke, 2009). However, owing to reputational risks arising from internal immoral activities of suppliers, such as exploiting babies or forced labour and unfair charge methods, the transfer from domestic buying strategy to international sourcing will not generally attain the desired goals (Speakman, 2004). In response to mounting pressure from consumers, alternative institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the fear of supply chain disruptions, agencies have devised collaboration and assessment strategies to assist them in maintaining appropriate levels of suppliers' internal social performance (Klassen, 2012).

In order to improve supplier compliance with consumers' social needs, the assessment method—which is frequently interpreted as the length of the support—emphasizes the use of socially sustainable evaluation procedures, such as certification and auditing (Jiang, 2009). The cooperation approach focuses on the importance of socially responsible cooperation practices (SSCPs), such as supplier development, to build suppliers' capacities and improve general sustainability performance (Klassen, 2012).

Businesses frequently look to focus on their core competencies to survive in highly competitive enterprise contexts. They may also achieve significant cost savings by outsourcing some of their services and goods to suppliers (Klassen, 2012). Under pressure, suppliers—especially those who take advantage of weak regulatory environments—regularly resort to unethical practices that amount to modern slavery practices, such as toddler labour, forced labour, and health and safety concerns—in order to satisfy the growing demands of buying corporations for higher business offers related to cost reduction, better order flexibility, and shorter lead times (Alghababsheh, 2018).

The current social SSCM research shows that a few buying firms will pursue an 'arms of path wherein they right away transfer from a present violating supplier without caution ("0 tolerance") to choose an opportunity with the more extraordinary, responsible, and credible supplier (Porteous et al., 2015). However, unfavorable price–gain analyses of this path (e.g., extended seek costs and feasible deliver disruption) have shifted buying for firms' conduct toward a 'fingers-on direction wherein companies allocate assets and time to power and construct the social sustainability of current suppliers' (Klassen, 2012).

## **Research Questions**

- How do buyers perceive how supplier's social performance is affected by assessment and collaboration practices?
- What role does buyer justice (such as distributive, procedural, and interactional) play in the buyer-supplier relationship in implementing assessment and collaboration practices?
- What role does social capital (such as relational, cognitive, and structural) play in the buyer-supplier relationship in implementing assessment and collaboration practices?

## **Review of Literature**

Socially sustainable supply chain control (SSCM) practices may be widely defined as the mechanisms, practices, techniques, and activities via which buying for corporations affects suppliers' moves and abilities to meet social objectives (Klassen, 2012). Our expertise in the character of social SSCM practices is guided by dominant theoretical perspectives— transaction fee economics (TCE) (Williamson, 1975) and the relational view (RV) (Dyer, 1998). Preceding social SSCM studies drawing broadly speaking on TCE have counselled that to mitigate suppliers' social problems, assessment practices (e.g., auditing) ought to be in the region (Sancha, 2015). Supplier collaboration practices mention those practices through which buyers work closely with suppliers to build their abilities if they want to successfully enhance overall performance (Klassen, 2012).

The shift from traditional supply chain management, where the point of interest is on maximizing economic price (Gunasekaran, 2004), to SSCM, wherein the emphasis is on concurrently sustaining economic, environmental, and social overall performance (Carter, 2008) has similarly multiplied the complexity of gauging supply chain performance (Ahi, 2015). While the magnitude of supply chains' financial and environmental overall performance is highly superior, the scope of social overall performance remains underdeveloped (Ahi, 2015). This in component, can be attributed to the relative significance connected to each type of overall performance and the nature of social performance per se.

The fundamental tenant of the social capital concept is that people's or corporations' networks of relationships are considered precious sources that facilitate collective movements (Adler, 2002). Two significant perspectives have emerged on the source of social capital fees within the relationship, namely the structural and relational views (Kostova, 2003). Based on social

network theory, the structural view argues that it is far from the structure of the relationship that offers cost for individuals (e.g., Baker 1990).

### **Hypothesis Development**

Socially responsible supply chain management practices positively affect suppliers' social performance. Three dimensions of buyer's justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional) and three social capital dimensions mediate this relationship.

The forecast of the high-quality effect of the assessment practices on suppliers' social overall performance is regular with the reasoning of TCE theory. Based on TCE, firms craft contracts and set up monitoring with a view to reduce opportunism and make sure compliance with agreements (Grover, 2003).

- H1a: *Assessment practices are positively associated with suppliers' social overall performance.*
- H1b *Collaboration practices are undoubtedly related to suppliers' social overall performance.*

Buyers' Justice and Suppliers' Internal Social Performance

- H2a *Buyers' distributive justice is positively related to suppliers' internal social performance.*
- H2b *Buyers' procedural justice is positively related to suppliers' internal social performance*
- H2c *Buyers' interactional justice is positively related to suppliers' internal social performance.*
- H2d *The higher the level of all three justice dimensions simultaneously (distributive, procedural, and interactional), the higher will be suppliers' internal social performance.*
- H4a *Procedural justice moderates the relationship between SSAPs and suppliers' internal social performance in such a fashion that the relationship becomes significant and positive when the supplier perceives a higher level of procedural justice.*

H4b *Procedural justice moderates the relationship between SSCPs and suppliers' internal social performance in such a fashion that the positive effect of SSCPs on suppliers' internal social performance is stronger when the supplier perceives a higher level of procedural justice.*

- H5a *Interactional justice moderates the relationship between SSAPs and suppliers' internal social performance in such a fashion that the relationship becomes significant and positive*

when the supplier perceives a higher level of interactional justice.

H5b Interactional justice moderates the relationship between SSCPs and suppliers' internal social performance in such a fashion that the positive effect of SSCPs on suppliers' internal social performance is stronger when the supplier perceives a higher level of interactional justice.

### **Research Methodology**

Significant manufacturing enterprises in Pakistan represented the buyers' side of the relationship in this study. The inter-organizational connection between the buyer and the supplier is the unit of analysis. The large Pakistani manufacturers provided a suitable framework for the current study for various reasons. Working conditions and human rights issues (e.g., child labour, freedom of association, unfair payment, unpaid overtime, forced labour, working hours, and health and safety) tend to be more common and concentrated in the manufacturing sector, which is likely due to the labor-intensive nature of much of the activity within the manufacturing sector (Zorzini, 2015).

A stratified random sample of 1000 manufacturing enterprises working in various industrial sectors was selected using the Financial Analysis Made Easy (FAME) database as a sampling frame. A mail survey, accompanied by a prepaid envelope and a cover letter explaining the purpose and importance of the study, was personally addressed and administered to chief executive officers (CEOs), supply chain, procurement, operations, purchasing, and logistics managers within the selected sample, according to (Dillman, 2007) Total Design Method. Of the 1000 questionnaires distributed, 500 were returned complete and ready for analysis.

### **Measurement Items**

All of the scales used for measurement were established scales adopted/adapted from the literature on socially sustainable supply chain management and supplier's social performance in the light of the role of social capital (Alghababsheh, 2018) and improving performance and reducing cost in buyer-supplier relationships: The role of justice in curtailing opportunism (Luo, 2015). All social SSCM practices (such as assessment and collaboration) are first-order reflective constructs. The respondents were asked to rate the social SSCM practice implementation level with a critical supplier on a scale of "strongly disagree=1" to "strongly agree=5".

The remaining constructs' scales are based on prior research. Four, five, and five items measure distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice, respectively. We use the items to

determine the cost of governance. Supplier's social performance is a first-order reflective construct measured using three items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree = 1" to "strongly agree = 5." Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they had improved safety and working conditions, human rights compliance, and child labour employment in the supplier's facilities.

### Data Analysis

We used partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) for data analysis, as it produces more accurate estimates of interaction effects than other SEM techniques and overcomes model identification and convergence issues. PLS-SEM is also useful when a research model is proposed in a domain where theory and/or data are lacking. In addition, PLS-SEM can estimate models with large sample sizes.

Table 1  
 Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
AP*CC	1	1	1	1
AP*DJ	1	1	1	1
AP*IJ	1	1	1	1
AP*PJ	1	1	1	1
AP*RC	1	1	1	1
AP*SC	1	1	1	1
Assessment Practices	0.67	0.7	0.88	0.45
CP*CC	1	1	1	1
CP*DJ	1	1	1	1
CP*IJ	1	1	1	1
CP*PJ	1	1	1	1
CP*RC	1	1	1	1
CP*SC	1	1	1	1
Cognitive Capital	0.95	0.85	0.8	0.77
Collaboration Practices	1	1	1	1
Distributive Justice	0.5	0.65	0.7	0.5
Interactional Justice	0.6	0.75	0.7	0.5
Procedural Justice	0.65	0.60	0.7	0.6
Relational Capital	0.85	0.95	0.8	0.6
Social Practices	0.55	0.55	0.8	0.5
Structural Capital	0.65	0.75	0.8	0.7

Cronbach's alpha > 0.7, CR > 0.7, AVE > 0.5

### Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is taken into account two measures that are supposed to be measuring the same construct and show that they are related. In this study, all the values of composite reliability are greater than 0.7 and all the values of AVE are greater than 0.5.

Table 2  
 Outer Loadings

Items	Outer Loadings
<b>ASSESSMENT PRACTICES (AP) Cronbach Alpha = 0.614, CR = 0.772, AVE = 0.459</b>	
Developing an ethical code of conduct with a key supplier is essential for supply chain management	0.65
To use a certification program (e.g., SA8000) to recognize the supplier's corporate social responsibility capability.	0.75 0.72
To assess supplier's social performance through form evaluation using established guidelines and procedures.	DELETED
Provide suppliers with feedback about the results of such evaluation improves social performance.	0.67
<b>COLLABORATION PRACTICES (CP) Cronbach Alpha = 1.0, CR = 1.0, AVE = 1.0</b>	
Offer financial incentives for the supplier to improve commitment to social sustainability.	1.00
Visit Supplier's facilities to help them improve their performance.	DELETED
Provide training/education for the supplier's personnel about corporate social responsibility practices and the required skills that can enhance the supplier's sustainability.	DELETED
Developing new products/processes with our supplier to reduced health and safety hazards for employees can be useful for the supplier's social performance.	DELETED
<b>SUPPLIER SOCIAL PERFORMANCES (SP) Cronbach Alpha = 0.501, CR = 0.748, AVE = 0.503</b>	
Improving compliance with human rights in the supplier's facilities enhances their performance and sustainability.	0.80
Improving safety and labor conditions in the supplier's facilities helps suppliers to sustain their performance.	0.74
Improving compliance with child labor employment in the supplier's facilities sustain their social performance.	0.57
<b>DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE (DJ) Cronbach Alpha = 0.573, CR = 0.779, AVE = 0.544</b>	
The amount of effort and investment gain consistency in partnership of buyer-supplier.	DELETED
The roles and responsibilities commensurate the buyer-supplier partnership.	0.82

Gain in relation to buyer-supplier contributed to the partnership is important as the relation with other firms in a similar business.	
I think between-party sharing of rewards or returns generated from cooperation is fair in view of buyer-supplier continued commitment to cooperation.	
<b>PROCEDURAL JUSTICE (PJ) Cronbach Alpha = 0.708, CR = 0.809, AVE = 0.465</b>	
Treating suppliers impartially and in a non-discriminatory way can improve relation of buyer-supplier.	
Buyer will always willing to modify its policies based on feedback they provided.	
Buyers often takes into account of buyers objections can enhance suppliers sustainability and performance.	
Supplier's adoption of consistent policies and decision-making procedures improve social performance.	
Buyers are familiar with the situation supplier's face.	
<b>INTERACTIONAL JUSTICE (IJ) Cronbach Alpha = 0.687, CR = 0.799, AVE = 0.4</b>	
Friendly relationship with suppliers improves social performance of suppliers.	
Expressing criticism to suppliers can enhance their sustainability and improves performance.	
Buyer-supplier relationship is characterized with mutual respect.	
Always makes partners aware of important issues.	
Partner often explains the reasons behind relevant policies to maintain the level of a business relationship.	
<b>RELATIONAL CAPITAL (RC) Cronbach Alpha = 0.828, CR = 0.850, AVE = 0.544</b>	
The relationship is characterized by close interaction at multiple levels.	
The relationship is characterized by the mutual trust at multiple levels.	
The relationship is characterized by mutual respect at multiple levels.	
The relationship is characterized by mutual friendship at multiple levels.	
The relationship is characterized by high levels of reciprocity.	
<b>COGNITIVE CAPITAL (CC) Cronbach Alpha = 0.875, CR = 0.885, AVE = 0.665</b>	
Buyers always have a similar organizational culture /values and management style with suppliers.	
laborassessment.	



## Discriminant Validity

### *Fornell-Larcker Criterion*

The validity of the measurement model was evaluated through the examination of convergent validity at the item level and discriminant validity at the construct level. Convergent validity was assessed by analyzing the standardized factor loadings of the items and the average variance extracted (AVE) of the construct. The results showed that all of the items had significant standardized factor loadings greater than 0.5, indicating that they shared a common feature captured by the construct. The AVE values of all constructs were greater than 0.5, suggesting that the variance explained by the constructs was greater than the measurement error variances. Therefore, all of the constructs displayed convergent validity, as shown in table 3.

Table 3  
 Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	AP	CC	CP	DJ	IJ	PJ	RJ	SP	SC
AP	0.7								
CC	0.3	0.8							
CP	0.3	-0.1	1.0						
DJ	0.4	0.7	-0.1	0.7					
IJ	0.5	0.7	0.0	0.6	0.7				
PJ	0.4	0.7	-0.1	0.6	0.7	0.7			
RJ	0.6	0.7	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7		
SP	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.7	
SC	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.7

### **Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT)**

The Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio method, developed by Henseler in 2015, was used to evaluate the discriminant validity of the constructs. Voorhees (2016) found that the HTMT ratio method is the most effective technique among the commonly used methods (such as Fornell and Larcker's criterion, constrained phi method, and overlapping confidence intervals) for assessing discriminant validity. The HTMT method is primarily used to assess discriminant validity in studies that use a variance-based SEM. However, PLS-SEM, being a variance-based technique, tends to overestimate factor loadings, which can lead to an increase in AVE values, making it difficult for Fornell and Larcker's criterion to detect discriminant validity violations. But according to the HTMT method, a construct can have discriminant validity if the relationships

between items within the same construct are stronger than the relationships between items across constructs, as shown in table 5. Moreover, the HTMT ratios of the constructs were less than 0.85, indicating that discriminant validity was established, as noted by Henseler (2015).

Table 4  
Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT)

	AP	CC	CP	DJ	IJ	PJ	RC	SP	SC
AP									
CC	0.4								
CP	0.3	0.1							
DJ	0.5	0.7	0.2						
IJ	0.8	0.7	0.1	0.9					
PJ	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.9	0.9				
RC	0.5	0.6	0.1	0.8	0.9	0.9			
SP	0.9	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.3		
SC	0.8	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.4	

### Discussion & Conclusion

This study explores the impact of sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) practices on suppliers' social performance. It found that there was no significant improvement in suppliers' social internal performance when buyers used assessment and collaboration practices. The study suggests that buyers primarily use assessment practices to obtain detailed information about current social issues without also precipitating effective actions such as training or financial support to understand and resolve them. This study also investigated the moderating role of social capital dimensions on the relationship between SSCM practices and suppliers' social performance. However, the study found that social capital dimensions have no significant moderating impact on suppliers' internal social performance when buyers use collaboration practices.

Supply chain managers are under constant pressure from stakeholders to contribute to the improvement under which their outsourced items are manufactured. Managing the social issues of suppliers, especially those in remote locations, is a critical task. Our approach has several practical implications for supply chain managers who want to better understand and manage socially sustainable supply chains. To initiate, it appears that addressing suppliers' social deficiencies through assessment practices such as heavy auditing of suppliers' operations, requiring suppliers

to obtain third-party certification, and/or providing self-assessment reports is ineffective. Engaging in collaborative practices, on the other hand, has the potential to improve the social conditions within suppliers' internal environments by initiating supplier development and training programs, as well as through joint efforts, knowledge exchange, and committing to relationship-specific resources. Second, supply chain managers can increase the potential of assessment practices and thus make observable improvements in the social conditions at suppliers' workplaces when mutual trust and frequent social interactions are established with suppliers, and they can increase the efficacy of collaboration practices when trust and shared understanding are prevalent with suppliers.

To ensure the productive and reliable execution of socially SSCM practices, supply chain managers should actively encourage the development of all justice dimensions (i.e., distributive, procedural, and interactional justice) and social capital dimensions (relational, cognitive, and structural capital) with suppliers rather than being selective. Supply chain managers should work to build trust, respect, and friendship with their suppliers, as well as work regularly to align their values and goals and develop a mutual understanding of their business environments, operations, and processes. To derive the significance of the relationship of assessment practice and collaboration practices with suppliers' internal social performance, we propose three-justice dimensions (i.e., distributive, procedural and interactional) and three social capital dimensions (i.e., relational, cognitive, and structural) that create moderating effect on the relationship. But unfortunately, result analysis does not favor theoretical implications as described in this study. Therefore, this study complicates the proposed research model and cannot be recommended for any managerial source.

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