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NEXUS AMONG SOCIAL SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE, SOCIAL SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES AND OPERATION PERFORMANCE: DOES THE LONG-TERM ORIENTATION MATTER?

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ABSTRACT

This study's prime objective is to explore the nexus among social sustainable performance, socially sustainable supply chain practices, and operational performance. Additionally, the study has also examined the moderating role of long-term orientation between social sustainability performance and socially sustainable supply chain practices. The results of the study are different from the previous researches in different ways. Operational performance cannot be improved through the implementation of basic social sustainable supply chain practices. Innovation can be suppressed by basic practices in this way. The operational outcomes can improve through the use of advanced social sustainable supply chain practices. Moreover, it influences the operational performance positively. The results are consistent with the previous research, which supports that change in product design and the process can result in improved learning for the organization. In this research, the specific practices and their influence created on the operational performance have been defined, which makes it different from the previous researches. The use of advanced SSSC practices needs coordination and improved strategic planning in the supply chain. The operational outcomes of the firm can improve as well. The study has contributed to long term orientation and social sustainable performance theory regarding the second research question. The use of advanced practices enables the positive influence of sustainability orientation on the firm's operational performance. It has been found that the use of advanced practices results in operational benefits but there is a need for further analysis from the aspect of basic practices. It is important to invest in advanced practices that may require more resources but result in improved operational performance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Different initiatives are included in socially sustainable supply chains. These initiatives are related to slave and child labor, health and safety, community impact and human rights programs. In 2012, the incident of Dhaka fire and Rana Plaza collapse in 2013 highlighted the issues of slave and child labor in the internal supply chain (Haque & Azmat, 2015; International Labor Organization, 2017). Several international brands including Marks and Spencer started expanded their practices of SSSC (Sustainable Service Supply Chain) to facilitate better human rights across the supplier communities and supply chain. Different outcomes can be achieved through the implementation of SSSC (Sustainable Service Supply Chain) practices as compared with environmental ones (Bansal & Song, 2017; Yawar & Seuring, 2017). For suppliers, the practices of SSSC including monitoring and codes of conduct serve as instructions for the issues of sustainability and monitoring of supplier activities (Mani & Gunasekaran, 2018; Mani et al., 2016; Yawar & Seuring, 2017). By improving behavior of supplier sustainability, sustainability performance may not be achieved.

The compliance audit was passed for the Rana Plaza just a few months before its collapse. The Ferrero Group planned to eliminate the slavery of cocoa suppliers by 2020. Being the 3rd largest producer of chocolate in the world, the act was done in collaboration with Enterprise Cooperative Kimbre in Côte D'Ivoire. A major factor of sustainability effort was formed by this collaboration while representing the challenges for reputation and improving the operational performance (OP) (Croom et al., 2018). It has been argued that a wide range of SSSC activities should be implemented by firms. Most of the firms try to limit such practices to the upstream partners including certification and monitoring. It is crucial to know about the effective practices to improve sustainability, which enhances the overall performance of the firm and the ways for creating such influence (Hameed et al., 2019; Stevens & Johnson, 2016).

In a wide range of sustainable service supply chain practices, the basic and advanced practices were distinguished by Mani and Gunasekaran (2018). The basic practices focus on the workers' health and safety within the supply chain and management systems. However, the advanced practices have focused on new products/processes development, offering several benefits to the stakeholders, ensuring transparency. These include the communities and NGOs in the decision making of the supply chain (Mani & Gunasekaran, 2018). It is difficult to define these activities because of limited research on practices of SSSC. Therefore, it is not much known about their drivers and influences. Moreover, the evidence is not clear for the influence of SSSC on the firm's OP (Mani & Gunasekaran, 2018). Some studies found that the knowledge access and capabilities of information sharing are improved through general practices of sustainability. OP can be improved indirectly by the SSSC practices through a decrease in the operational risk and increase of reputation when the public recognizes the adoption of SSSC (Yawar & Seuring, 2017). Sodhi (2015) noted further investigation of this concept. Thus, this study is based on analyzing the influence of social sustainability orientation (SSOR) and Limited Time Offer (LTO) on OP and SSSC practices. SSOR refers to the level with which the firms are committed to the practices of SSSC in their activities. This study, research questions are

Research Question 1: Is there any influence of sustainability orientation on operational performance via SSSC practices (basic and advanced). In what way, the influence is created,

Research Question 2: Is there any influence of LTO on the association of SSSC practices, sustainability orientation, and OP? If yes then how?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 BASIC AND ADVANCED SSSC PRACTICES, SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ORIENTATION (SSOR) AND OP

Mani and Gunasekaran (2018) used SSSC practices, based on the context of internal decision-making and the firm's sourcing. The potential relationship between operational performance and sustainability orientation of a firm is not addressed by their study. Two main types of basic SSSC practices have been identified including management systems and monitoring activities, to improve the workers' health and safety within the supply chain (Mani and Gunasekaran, 2018).

The relationship between OP and basic practices of SSSC has been analyzed by a limited number of studies. The influence of basic practices including capabilities and behaviors of suppliers as well as productivity on the operational performance has been examined by some studies. It was found that the basic practices including policies and code of conduct of the company can support improvement in the sustainable behavior of suppliers but these may not result in sustainable outcomes. Yawar and Seuring (2017) found the firms implementing basic SSSC practices including monitoring of suppliers can share the social capabilities of suppliers. Similarly, the quality, productivity, retention of employees is improved through the use of basic practices. Yawar and Seuring (2017) suggested that the benefits of basic practices can improve quality, processes, reduction in lead-time, which ultimately improves operational performance.

For a decade, an international company for sportswear, Puma has engaged itself in dialogues with multiple stakeholders. These dialogues are being used in the process of decision-making and strategy formulation. Suppliers have been motivated to give information about the key indicators for social performance. The supply chain visibility has been increased allowing Puma to identify opportunities and mitigate risks for the development of products and processes. Social issues become central to the supply chain and organization. It should increase the long-term performance of the firm (Bansal & Song, 2017). Moreover, the identification of inefficiencies of products and processes in an analytical manner signifies the advanced practices. This is based on the use of operational data in the analysis for making a decision. The personnel engaged in the knowledge sharing collaboration related to the internal activities of organizations is increased by this forensic approach. The sustainability goals are achieved by this approach. By analyzing the relationship between operational performance and social sustainability orientation, the influence of SSSC practices (basic and advanced) can be different. The relationship will be influenced by the implemented type of practice. In this way, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H1: SSOR has a significant impact on Operational performance (OP).

H2: SSOR has a significant impact on the Business Sector Support Program (BSSP).

H3: SSOR has a significant impact on the Application-Specific Standard Product (ASSP).

H4: BSSP has a significant impact on the OP.

H5: ASSP has a significant impact on Operational performance.

LTO is important to achieve the benefits of supply chain practices and sustainable operations.

The corporate sustainability is considered as a construct, which is long term (Klassen & Hajmohammad, 2017). Bansal and Song (2017) argued that the value of investing in sustainable activities is recognized by LTO even the investments cannot be recovered in a short time. Therefore, other benefits including lower risks, stakeholder relations, and reduced distraction of management by increasing alignment between the demands of stakeholders need to be traded off. The relationship between LTO, sustainability, and firm performance has been supported by Stevens and Johnson (2016). It was pointed out that several firms realize that there is a need for LTO for the implementation of SSCM practices in a successful manner. For instance, when firms have LTO, they are capable of making partnerships successfully with the suppliers. This can create a positive influence on the operational performance through reduction in lead times, improvement of processes, and quality. Jamali and Karam (2018) and Klassen and Hajmohammad (2017) noted that rare attention has been received by the temporal issues linked with performance and sustainability practices. The temporal orientation of a firm is linked with use of various types of sustainability practices.

Indicated by literature, the adoption of SSSC practices (basic) is based on temporal orientation. A small number of studies have analyzed the temporal orientation of the firm on the use of SSSC practices (basic). The short-term outcomes are emphasized by some certification programs of suppliers i.e. FLO-CERT given by Fairtrade (Klassen & Hajmohammad, 2017). Moreover, such suppliers can retain skilled workers for a long time that signifies the role played by LTO in the decision of a firm to implement basic practices. Moreover, there is a relationship between advanced practices of SSSC with LTO. Khan et al. (2016) found a positive relationship between sustainable firms and LTO. It is claimed that the use of sustainable practices is required for LTO, which can fulfill the needs of various groups of stakeholders.

The discussion formulates the research hypotheses

H6: LTO moderates the relationship between SSOR and BSSP.

H7: LTO moderates the relationship between SSOR and ASSP.

3. METHODOLOGY AND MEASUREMENT

A total of 239 questionnaires were forwarded to the respondents and the gathered questionnaires were around 137. The response rate came out to be 57.32 percent, which is significant as per the argument of Dikko (2016). A 30 percent response rate is acceptable for research surveys. Senior management includes chief executives, vice presidents, presidents (19 %) supply chain and operations managers (58.2%), and supply chain directors (22.9%) along with functional in managing supply chain (58.2%) were included in the sample. The average respondents were working for 7-8 years.

A seven-point Likert scale was used for checking the agreement level of the respondents (1 refers strong disagree and 7 strongly agree). A seven-item construct was used to measure the orientation of social sustainability as proposed by Mani and Gunasekaran (2018). The measures proposed were used to assess operational performance. Two-second order constructs were used to determine SSSC practices (basic and advanced). A three-item construct was used to determine the LTO suggested by Bansal and Song (2017).

4. RESULTS

Two tools have been used for the analysis of data in this research including Smart PLS-2 and SPSS. For statistical analysis, SPSS version 22 can be used for coding, screening of data, descriptive statistics, biasness of non-response, missing data detection, and assessment of internal consistency and condition of multivariate data i.e. common method variance, homoscedasticity, normality, and linearity, etc. Ringle et al., (2015) has recommended software for statistical analysis, which has been used in this research for the determination of the inner and outer model. The software is Smart PLS 2.0 M3. The hypotheses have been tested in the estimation of the structural model. The inter associations among the variables can be examined simultaneously through SEM (structural equation modeling). Substantial justification is required for the adoption of PLS-SEM (Jaafar et al., 2015; Muneer, 2020). Therefore, this research has selected PLS-SEM because of the various benefits associated with it. Firstly, when the model is complex, a simple PLS approach cannot give appropriate results. For the complexity of research models with several variables and paths, PLS-SEM is considered an effective approach. It has been recommended by Jaafar et al. (2015) that when there are more than 23 items involved in the research model, PLS-SEM can be effective to adopt. Another important fact, which makes the choice of PLS-SEM method effective, is the sample size. Suitable results are not given by the goodness of fit for the validation of the model (Henseler et al., 2015). Through the use of simulated data with the PLS path models, model validation cannot be determined by goodness of fit. In this research, the initial step involves the evaluation of the outer model i.e. measurement model and the final step is the inner model evaluation i.e. structural model.

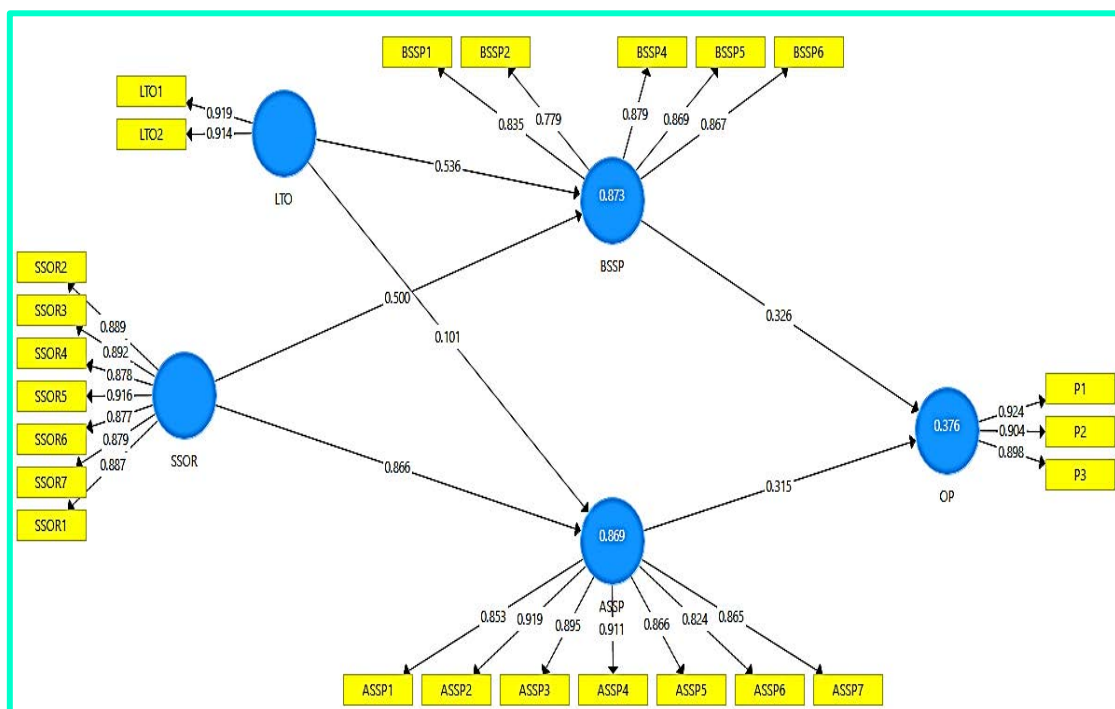


Figure 1: Measurement Model

Certain measures are involved in the assessment of the outer model as depicted in Figure 1. These measures involve the reliability of individual items, reliability of internal consistency, discriminant validity, and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2016; Henseler et al., 2015). Hair et al. (2014) suggested that the reliability of every item is explained by the reliability of the individual item.

Therefore, the outer loadings of every construct have been determined to evaluate the reliability of individual items (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 1: Outer loading

Variable		ASSP	BSSP	LTO	OP	SSOR
Application-specific standard product (ASSP)	ASSP1	0.853				
	ASSP2	0.919				
	ASSP3	0.895				
	ASSP4	0.911				
	ASSP5	0.866				
	ASSP6	0.824				
	ASSP7	0.865				
Business Sector Support Program (BSSP)	BSSP1		0.835			
	BSSP2		0.779			
	BSSP4		0.879			
	BSSP5		0.869			
	BSSP6		0.867			
Limited Time Offer (LTO)	LTO1			0.919		
	LTO2			0.914		
Operational Performance (OP)	OP1				0.924	
	OP2				0.904	
	OP3				0.898	
Social Sustainability Orientation (SSOR)	SSOR1					0.887
	SSOR2					0.889
	SSOR3					0.892
	SSOR4					0.878
	SSOR5					0.916
	SSOR6					0.877
	SSOR7					0.879

Different cases have been provided in literature in which weak outer loadings are obtained (Davicik & Sharma, 2016). The items with a value in the range 0.4-0.7 need to be excluded for improving the composite reliability and AVE. These values should be greater than the standard value. The level with which the same concept is measured by a specific scale item is referred to as reliability of internal consistency. To determine the reliability of internal consistency, the coefficient of composite reliability has been estimated because composite reliability (CR) has benefits over Cronbach's alpha. Composite reliability gives less biased estimates of reliability, compared with the coefficient of Cronbach's alpha. Another reason, CR is the over or underestimation of reliability in Cronbach's alpha. Alternatively, the occurrence of various loadings for indicators is considered by CR. The individual loading of every item is signified in CR along with their contribution. It also determines the correlation of the same variable with other measures. For every latent variable, convergent validity has been determined by examining the average variance extract (AVE). Table 2 shows all reliabilities are more than 0.7 thresholds.

Table 2: Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
ASSP	0.950	0.951	0.959	0.769
BSSP	0.900	0.902	0.926	0.716
LTO	0.810	0.810	0.913	0.840
OP	0.895	0.902	0.934	0.825
SSOR	0.955	0.956	0.963	0.789

The extent to which a specific variable is different from other unobserved variables is shown by discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2016). Therefore, the discriminant validity has been examined through the use of AVE and cross-loadings criterion (Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2017). The discriminant validity is determined when the AVE square root is high than the correlation of unobserved variables. Table 3 indicates the discriminant validity is sufficient.

Table 3: Validity.

Variable	ASSP	BSSP	LTO	OP	SSOR
ASSP	0.899				
BSSP	0.826	0.896			
LTO	0.843	0.749	0.017		
OP	0.885	0.787	0.832	0.909	
SSOR	0.829	0.835	0.726	0.735	0.888

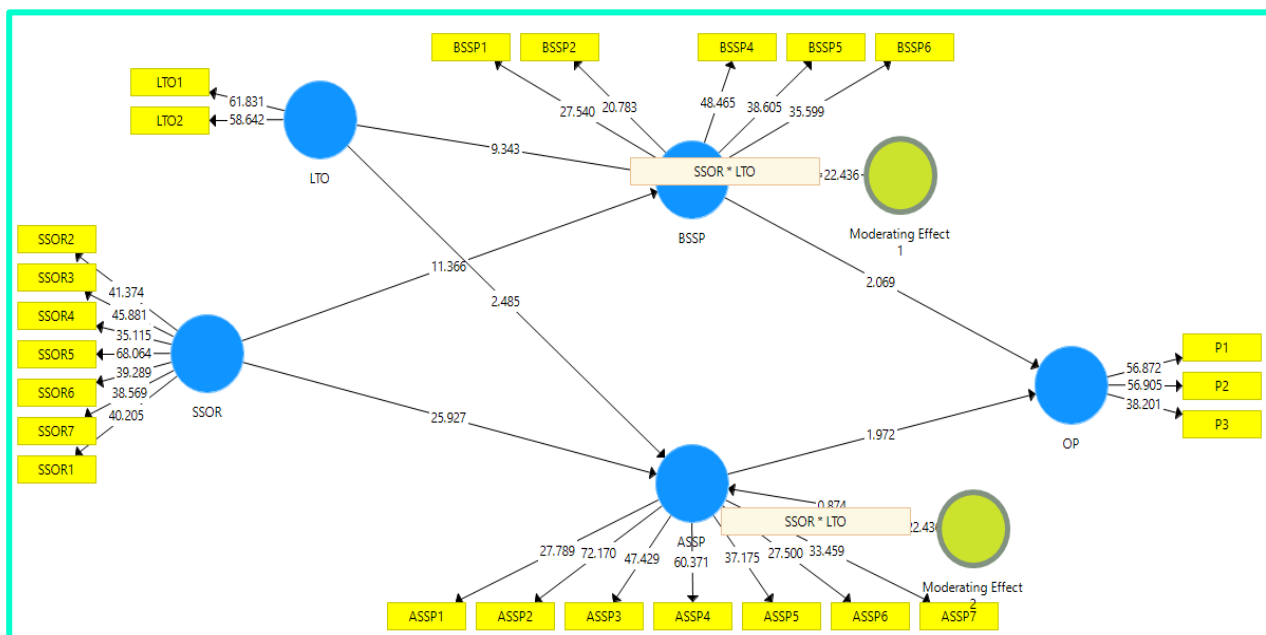


Figure 2: Structural Model.

To determine the path coefficient significant, the method of bootstrapping has been used in this research with a sample of 5000 and 134 cases (Hair et al., 2016; Henseler et al., 2015). It is essential to use the bootstrapping method in PLS because of the non-normality distribution of data (Hair et al., 2014). Moreover, better standard error estimates are provided by the process of bootstrapping. The path coefficients have been explained as the strength of the relationship between the endogenous and exogenous variables and the hypothesized relationships.

Table 4: Direct and moderation results.

Mediation	(O)	Mean	SD	T Statistics	p-values
ASSP → OP	0.315	0.325	0.160	1.972	0.024
BSSP → OP	0.326	0.320	0.158	2.069	0.019
LTO → ASSP	0.105	0.110	0.042	2.485	0.006
LTO → BSSP	0.536	0.529	0.057	9.343	<0.001
Moderating Effect 1 → BSSP	-0.001	-0.002	0.022	22.243	<0.001
Moderating Effect 2 → ASSP	0.015	0.016	0.017	2.43	<0.001
SSOR → ASSP	0.870	0.865	0.034	25.927	<0.001
SSOR → BSSP	0.499	0.505	0.044	11.366	<0.001

For the assessment of the structural model, the criterion of R^2 has been used in PLS-SEM. This criterion is also known as the coefficient of determination. It is suggested by Hair, Hult & Sarstedt (2016) that the greater the value of R^2 , the higher is the percentage change of endogenous variables explained by the exogenous variables (Hair et al., 2017). The range of R^2 is 0-1. The closer the value to 1, the higher is the predictive power and the closer the value to 0, the weaker is the predictive power of explanatory variables.

Table 5: R-square

Variable	R^2
ASSP	0.869
BSSP	0.873
OP	0.376

To determine the predictive relevance of the research model, the measure of Q^2 has been used in this study (Hair et al., 2017; Jaafar et al., 2015). When its value lies above 0, it shows the predictive relevance of the model and there is no predictive relevance when the value is below zero.

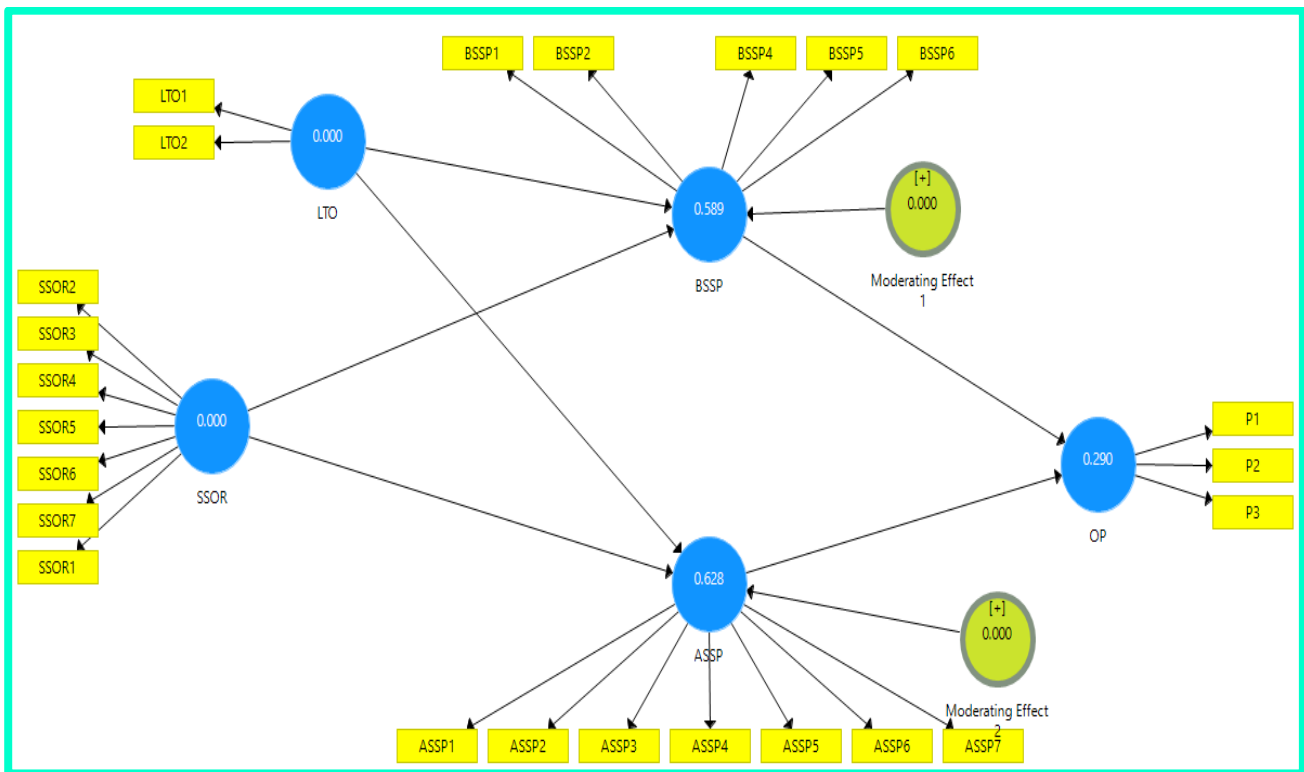


Figure 3: Blindfolding

Table 6 shows the results of blindfolding. However, the values of Q^2 have been represented in Table 6 for all the explanatory variables. The result shows that the value of Q^2 is greater than 0, suggesting that the model has predictive relevance (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 6: Blindfolding

Variable	SSO	SSE	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
ASSP	1,519.000	565.199	0.628
BSSP	1,085.000	445.814	0.589
LTO	434.000	434.000	
OP	651.000	462.020	0.290
SSOR	1,519.000	1,519.000	

All the studied research hypotheses are accepted with the significant impact of organizational performance.

5. CONCLUSION

Several insights have been provided for the relationship of LTO, the orientation of social sustainability, operational performance and various practices of SSSC. To answer the study's first research question, the results support the findings of Mani and Gunasekaran (2018) in which the adoption of SSSC practices (basic and advanced) is based on the orientation of social sustainability. The results of the study are different from the previous researches in different ways. Operational performance cannot be improved through the implementation of basic SSSC practices, which is in contrast with the findings of Lindgreen et al. (2016) and Stevens and Johnson (2016). According to these researchers, the overall performance of the firm is improved through the use of basic practices. This study does not support the use of management and monitoring systems to improve the innovation process (Hafeez et al., 2018). Innovation can be suppressed by basic practices in this way. The operational outcomes can be improved through the use of advanced SSSC practices. Moreover, it influences the operational performance positively. The results are consistent with the previous research, which supports that change in product design and the process can result in improved learning for the organization. The firm can achieve improvements in performance, which are long term.

In this research, the specific practices and their influence created on the operational performance have been defined, which makes it different from the previous researches. The use of advanced SSSC practices needs coordination and improved strategic planning in the supply chain. The operational outcomes of the firm can improve as well (Šuligoj & Štrukelj, 2017; Hameed et al., 2018). This influence is strong for the organizations, which have high LTO and weak for those having low LTO (Bansal & Song, 2017).

When there is LTO, it supports in creating benefits of sustainability orientation. The findings of existing studies related to the influence of LTO on performance are supported by the results of the study (Flammer & Bansal, 2017; Klassen & Hajmohammad, 2017). It has been shown in this research that different levels of LTO can influence the association between operational performance and sustainability orientation. The advanced SSSC practices can be improved through LTO that can support firms to get long-term advantages (Flammer & Bansal, 2017). It has been revealed by the findings that LTO and higher orientation of social sustainability enable the firms to implement basic practices at higher levels. Previous studies supported this finding of the expected influence of LTO in the adoption of advanced practices (Mani et al., 2016).

For the first research question, the operational performance is not significantly improved by basic practices. It is indicated by the LTO influence on the adoption of basic practices that these are the initial steps for moving on the journey of social sustainability. Higher LTO and orientation of social sustainability along with basic SSSC practices act as the basis for sustainability activities. Socially sustainable practice can result in different ways of adopting SSSC practices that can influence the firm's operational performance. The relationship between basic and advanced SSSC practices should be further explored.

6. DATA AND MATERIAL AVAILABILITY

This study data can be provided upon contacting the corresponding author.

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