

TOP MANAGEMENT ROLE IN ENSURING SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: EXPLORATORY REVIEW OF LITERATURE

^a Albert Tchev Agbenyegah, ^b Gifty Kumadey

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Top management plays a crucial role in implementing Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) practices, especially in developing countries, by driving performance, securing resources, and promoting necessary changes. This study explores how top management's commitment and strategic leadership impact SSCM adoption and implementation in developing countries like Ghana, where SSCM adoption rates are low and empirical research is lacking.

Method: Using a qualitative research design and a systematic literature review from the SCOPUS database, the study analyzes peer-reviewed studies from 2010 onwards.

Results and Conclusion: Findings reveal that top management's commitment to sustainability fosters organizational responsibility, innovation, and compliance with ethical standards, encouraging proactive approaches to opportunities, market adaptation, and green practices.

Research Implication: These insights provide practical recommendations for improving performance, building trust, and achieving sustainable development goals, contributing significantly to the understanding of SSCM practices and their positive impact on organizational performance.

Originality/Value: By leveraging empirical work this study builds analytical patterns on issues that relate with management roles and sustainable supply chain management. The standardized assessment of the issues provides a trustworthy result as this study does not entirely rely on the exclusive opinion of the researchers but is based on standard deduction of the role of managers in ensuring the adoption of sustainable supply chain management within industries.

Keywords: top management, sustainable supply chain management, developing countries, strategic leadership, empirical research.

^aPhD in Bus. Adm, Dept. of Applied Management, Riverside Campus Pietermaritzburg, Durban University of Technology, South Africa. E-mail: alberta@dut.ac.za Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3410-2809>

^b PhD in Pub. Mgt & Economics, Durban University of Technology, Takoradi Technical University (TTU), South Africa. E-mail: 22175046@dut4life.ac.za Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5692-2026>



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FUNÇÃO SUPERIOR DE GERENCIAMENTO NA GARANTIA DE PRÁTICAS SUSTENTÁVEIS DE GERENCIAMENTO DA CADEIA DE SUPRIMENTOS: REVISÃO EXPLORATÓRIA DA LITERATURA

RESUMO

Objetivo: A gestão de topo desempenha um papel crucial na implementação de práticas de Gestão Sustentável da Cadeia de Abastecimento (SSCM), especialmente nos países em desenvolvimento, impulsionando o desempenho, garantindo recursos e promovendo as mudanças necessárias. Este estudo explora como o compromisso e a liderança estratégica da alta gerência impactam a adoção e a implementação do SSCM em países em desenvolvimento como Gana, onde as taxas de adoção do SSCM são baixas e falta pesquisa empírica.

Método: Utilizando um desenho de pesquisa qualitativa e uma revisão sistemática da literatura a partir da base de dados SCOPUS, o estudo analisa estudos revisados por pares a partir de 2010.

Resultados e Conclusão: Os resultados revelam que o compromisso da alta gerência com a sustentabilidade promove a responsabilidade organizacional, a inovação e a conformidade com os padrões éticos, incentivando abordagens proativas para oportunidades, adaptação do mercado e práticas ecológicas.

Implicação da pesquisa: Essas percepções fornecem recomendações práticas para melhorar o desempenho, construir confiança e atingir metas de desenvolvimento sustentável, contribuindo significativamente para a compreensão das práticas SSCM e seu impacto positivo no desempenho organizacional.

Originalidade/valor: ao alavancar o trabalho empírico, este estudo desenvolve padrões analíticos sobre questões relacionadas às funções de gerenciamento e à gestão sustentável da cadeia de fornecimento. A avaliação padronizada das questões fornece um resultado confiável, já que este estudo não se baseia inteiramente na opinião exclusiva dos pesquisadores, mas se baseia na dedução padrão do papel dos gerentes na garantia da adoção de uma gestão sustentável da cadeia de fornecimento dentro das indústrias.

Palavras-chave: gestão de topo, gestão sustentável da cadeia de suprimentos, países em desenvolvimento, liderança estratégica, pesquisa empírica.

FUNCIÓN DE LA ALTA DIRECCIÓN PARA GARANTIZAR PRÁCTICAS SOSTENIBLES DE GESTIÓN DE LA CADENA DE SUMINISTRO: EXAMEN EXPLORATORIO DE LA LITERATURA

RESUMEN

Propósito: La alta dirección desempeña un papel crucial en la implementación de las prácticas de Gestión Sostenible de la Cadena de Suministro (SSCM), especialmente en los países en desarrollo, al impulsar el rendimiento, garantizar los recursos y promover los cambios necesarios. Este estudio explora cómo el compromiso y el liderazgo estratégico de la alta dirección afectan la adopción e implementación de SSCM en países en desarrollo como Ghana, donde las tasas de adopción de SSCM son bajas y falta investigación empírica.



Método: Utilizando un diseño de investigación cualitativa y una revisión sistemática de la literatura de la base de datos SCOPUS, el estudio analiza los estudios revisados por pares a partir de 2010.

Resultados y conclusión: Los resultados revelan que el compromiso de la alta dirección con la sostenibilidad fomenta la responsabilidad organizacional, la innovación y el cumplimiento de los estándares éticos, fomentando enfoques proactivos para las oportunidades, la adaptación al mercado y las prácticas verdes.

Implicación de la investigación: Estos conocimientos proporcionan recomendaciones prácticas para mejorar el desempeño, generar confianza y alcanzar los objetivos de desarrollo sostenible, contribuyendo significativamente a la comprensión de las prácticas de SSCM y su impacto positivo en el desempeño de la organización.

Originalidad/Valor: Al aprovechar el trabajo empírico, este estudio construye patrones analíticos sobre cuestiones que se relacionan con los roles de gestión y la gestión sostenible de la cadena de suministro. La evaluación estandarizada de los problemas proporciona un resultado confiable, ya que este estudio no se basa completamente en la opinión exclusiva de los investigadores, sino que se basa en la deducción estándar del papel de los gerentes para garantizar la adopción de una gestión sostenible de la cadena de suministro dentro de las industrias.

Palabras clave: alta dirección, gestión sostenible de la cadena de suministro, países en desarrollo, liderazgo estratégico, investigación empírica.

1 INTRODUCTION

The drive for sustainable measures and strategies within business has become the norm of the day given the need to safeguard society and business environments at large (Koberg & Longoni, 2019; Shan et al., 2020; Zahiri et al., 2017). Profitability and wealth creation for shareholders are paramount for managers unlike devoting business resources to the benefit of society and environment (Hutagalung & Siagian, 2022; Kiel et al., 2017).

Sustainable supply chain embodies the operational

One of the primary objectives in Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) is to ensure that supply chain operations will continue for a long time and will withstand any internal or external forces by applying the social, environmental, and economic considerations (Koberg & Longoni, 2019; Sánchez-Flores et al., 2020). Balancing a great supply chain with the minimum negative impact on the environment via waste production, resource depletion, and carbon emissions is a core task that the company needs to be aware of (Brandenburg & Rebs, 2015; Cristini et al., 2021). One of the means where carbon footprints can be curbed is the application of green logistics that include energy-saving packaging and the planning of shipping routes (Helo & Ala-Harja, 2018; Mangla et al., 2019). The final part is the social responsibility that is responsible for



human rights, ethical work practices and community involvement. Ethical business conduct and adjacent communication with all stakeholders are getting more and more significant as they enhance the competitiveness of the brand and reduce risk of supply chain problems (Dubey et al., 2017; Saeed & Kersten, 2019).

From the point of view of economy, SSCM gives encouragement to the creativity and efficiency of business activities as it helps in finding the ways to cut costs and implement the reliable supply chains (Becerra et al., 2022; Da Silva et al., 2015). Profiting by investing in eco-friendly practices may in the long term turn out to be competitive and bring more revenue. Common understanding and common goals initiate the process of spreading outstanding practices and launching joint initiatives that bring profit (Dai et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2017). Resilience, creativity, and moral doctrines can result from the incorporation of environmental, social and economic aspects in green supply chain management systems (Chin et al., 2015; Fahimnia et al., 2015). Companies that explore SSCM not only facilitate the creation of the future that is more sustainable, but they also acquire the competitive edge that most of the company's desire in these fast-moving and highly competitive commercial times (Koberg & Longoni, 2019; Sánchez-Flores et al., 2020).

Extant literature has emphasized the importance of leaders when dealing with supply chain performance (Alshurideh et al., 2022; Gosling et al., 2017). In the view of Gosling et al. (2017), leaders within the organization demonstrates their leadership role within SSCM by being reactive, contributive, and proactive. Through supply chain leadership and supply chain learning, leaders demonstrate their efforts to drive SSCM performance.

High performance results from senior managers that respect organizational learning and disseminate it throughout the routine, infrastructure, and culture of the organization. Since top management sets the tone for the whole company and develops corporate values, management styles, and the company's identity, it is impossible to undervalue them. Stated differently, the company's senior management sets the direction and deploys the systems or resources required to achieve the intended results (Hambrick, 2018; Sajjad et al., 2020). Within the topic of green supply chain management, senior management support is commonly seen as a crucial catalyst for GSCM, enabling the allocation of resources and investments toward green practices (Burki et al., 2018; Neri et al., 2019).



A company may find it more difficult to implement institutional pressure and fail to implement green production methods if senior management is not on board. One of the key factors influencing the firms' first decision to adopt various environmental initiatives is the initiative from senior management (Burki et al., 2018; Neri et al., 2019). All things considered, the success of environmental initiatives and programs depends on the backing of senior management.

The dynamics and medium through which leaders and or top management demonstrate commitment to sustainable supply chain management is not clear in literature (Alshurideh et al., 2022; Gosling et al., 2017). Top management commitment varies in nature, given the specific organizational environment. Providing clarity on which top management commitment is desirable becomes a pivotal tool to aid management policy design and strategies to attaining sustainable supply chain management goals within the organization.

2 RELATED LITERATURE

This section of the study critically discusses extant literature on Sustainable Supply Chain Management and top management commitment among various organizations across the globe.

2.1 SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT (SSCM)

A key paradigm in contemporary business, sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) weaves social, environmental, and economic factors into supply chain operations (Alshurideh et al., 2022; Gosling et al., 2017; Nangpiire et al., 2024). Green procurement, or the practice of selecting products and suppliers with minimal environmental effect, is a crucial part of supply chain management. Companies are becoming increasingly aware of how important it is to consider the environment when making judgments on what to buy in order to minimize negative ecological effects (Carter & Rogers, 2008). By adopting green procurement practices, businesses may reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to the development of environmentally conscious supply chains (Tahan et al., 2024).



Close collaboration with suppliers is necessary to create sustainable supply chains. Establishing long-lasting relationships fosters cooperation and trust in the pursuit of sustainable practices (Brömer et al., 2019; Kumar & Rahman, 2015). Collaborative endeavours include knowledge exchange, cooperative environmental projects, and the development of sustainable commodities. The robustness and general sustainability of the supply chain are bolstered by these links (Kumar & Rahman, 2015). Sustainability is more than just protecting the environment; it also entails a global social responsibility (Development Chantes et al., 2023). Businesses have realized that fair labor standards, ethical sourcing, and community development are important factors for their supply chains to take into account (Brandenburg & Rebs, 2015; Cristini et al., 2021; Da Silva et al., 2015). Reputation of the supply chain for morality in reorganizing the entire network via social responsibility.

Those firms that leverage on SSCM are seen adopting lean and agile supply chain techniques such waste reduction and increased responsiveness (Ciccullo et al., 2018; Manzoor et al., 2022). When these strategies are in accordance with sustainability goals, they assist minimize the impact on the environment and maximize resource efficiency. By streamlining processes and reducing inventories, companies may boost the economy and the environment at the same time (Ciccullo et al., 2018).

Circular economy concepts are starting to be prioritized in sustainable supply chain approaches (Kazancoglu et al., 2023; Sehnem et al., 2019). In order to reduce waste and promote closed-loop systems, this requires developing items that are long-lasting and recyclable or reusable (Bastas & Liyanage, 2018; Touboulic & Walker, 2015). While the implementation of circular economy principles in the supply chain enables the achievement of sustainable development goals and the reduction of activities' negative environmental consequences (Chen et al., 2020; Schroeder et al., 2019).

Transparency in the supply chain has increased significantly as a result of technological advancements like blockchain and IoT (Francisco & Swanson, 2018). These car-connected solutions allow firms to monitor goods movement in real time across the whole supply chain (Ivanov et al., 2019). For this reason, transparency is a fundamental component that makes it possible to spot inefficiencies, reduce risks, and accomplish sustainability goals.

Monitoring and assessing the efficacy of sustainable supply chain procedures is essential to their continuous improvement (Bastas & Liyanage, 2018). Key performance



indicators (KPIs) that are environmental, social, and economic allow businesses to assess their sustainability activities. Regular assessments support informed decision-making and identify areas in need of further development.

Ensuring compliance with environmental regulations is a fundamental aspect of SSCM (Jia et al., 2018). Businesses need to adapt their supply chain practices and stay up to date with evolving environmental rules in order to lower their legal risks (Ivanov et al., 2019). Compliance not only shields against penalties but also demonstrates a commitment to environmental preservation (Reefke & Sundaram, 2017; Wiengarten et al., 2016).

Social, environmental, and economic sustainability should be the ultimate goal of sustainable supply chain management and a combination of different strategies can help to reach that goal (Koberg & Longoni, 2019; Sánchez-Flores et al., 2020). Companies are now employing a variety of approaches from advanced technologies and circular economy concepts just to the green buying, to embed sustainability in their supply chain management systems (Bastas & Liyanage, 2018; Brandenburg & Rebs, 2015; Cristini et al., 2021). The need for sustainable supply chain management is becoming more and more obvious as the global business environment changes, and this important aspect of contemporary company operations is being further shaped by industry efforts and continuing research (Bastas & Liyanage, 2018; Cristini et al., 2021).

2.2 TOP MANAGEMENT ROLE

Literature has demonstrated the importance of top management commitment within organizations and how this leads to several gains within the organization (Ahmed et al., 2021; Zahiri et al., 2017). Practically, upper echelon theory provides some underpinnings to why top management are important to ensuring that strategy adoption and implementation, and overall organizational performance increases within an organization (Díaz-Fernández et al., 2020; Hambrick, 2018).

Managers of manufacturing firms and specifically pharmaceutical companies have a role to play when it comes to ensuring that the supply chain undertakes sustainable measures. Top Management Commitment to attaining increased performance outcomes has been identified in extant literature (Plöckinger et al., 2016; Ting et al., 2015). Top management commitment is regarded as essential to management initiatives. Top



management facilitates employee empowerment, improved levels of job, and the adherence to industry standards (Ahmed et al., 2021; Siagian et al., 2021; Yusliza et al., 2019).

The magnitude of top management support in supply chain fields is vast. Apart from being financially supportive and setting up priorities, support from top management can come from psychological and behavioural support for employees who are resistance to change (Burki et al., 2018; Menon & Ravi, 2021). However, managerial complexity and poor vision from top management are barriers to successful supply chain integration (Burki et al., 2018; Ilyas et al., 2020). SCM is among top management agendas, but the inability to comprehend the need to support SCM is lacking.

2.3 THE ROLE OF TOP MANAGEMENT IN ENSURING SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Top managers, namely the “CEO and its direct subordinates responsible for corporate policy”, act as important drivers in implementing diverse managerial practices that influence organizational performance (Burki et al., 2018; Hambrick, 2018). Top management plays an essential role in securing the required financial and personnel resources. They also have a critical role in the promotion of changes, which is important in the adoption of the organizational commitment to new values (Hambrick, 2018). Top management support has been examined in broad business sectors, including customer relationships, product development, information systems, and project success (Hambrick, 2018; Sajjad et al., 2020). When top managers value organizational learning and when it is shared through the organizational routine, infrastructure, and culture, this knowledge leads to high performance. Top management can never be underestimated since it creates a vision for the entire organization, which shapes corporate value, management direction, and the identity of the firm. In other words, top management leads the company at the forefront and implements resources or systems that are necessary for desired output (Hambrick, 2018; Sajjad et al., 2020). In the field of GSCM, top management support is widely treated as an essential driver for GSCM, facilitating resources and investment allocation into green practices (Burki et al., 2018; Neri et al., 2019). The principles and beliefs of senior management can directly impact the extent of a company's sustainability efforts (Paulraj, 2011).



A lack of support from top management can result in higher resistance from the firm in incorporating institutional pressure and failure to adopt green production practices. The initiative from top management is one of the main driving forces for the companies to implement different kinds of environmental programs in the first place (Burki et al., 2018; Neri et al., 2019). Overall, top management support is necessary for environmental strategies and programs to succeed.

3 RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

This study employs qualitative research designs to understand how top management role contributes to the adoption and implementation of sustainable supply chain management within developing countries.

By combining theoretical and empirical work in a repeatable and transparent process that evaluates the body of current literature using a set of search criteria, a systematic literature review approach generates collective insights on fields and sub-fields of investigation (Durach et al., 2017; Mohamed Shaffril et al., 2021). SCOPUS database was used for a broad search to start the procedure. This database includes a substantial portion of the published, peer-reviewed research on SSCM and top management role (Bramer et al., 2017; Linnenluecke et al., 2020).

The inclusion of literature to this study, those that are previewed and empirical in nature were selected within the period 2010 to date. Preference was given to studies that were conducted in English language. For keys words in this study the following were used: sustainable supply chain management, top management role, and developing countries. The search term in SCOPUS was: (TITLE-ABS-KEY (top AND management AND role) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (sustainable AND supply AND chain AND management)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")). Exclusion criteria adopted for this study included presentations in conference and editorials articles, and empirical studies conducted before 2000.



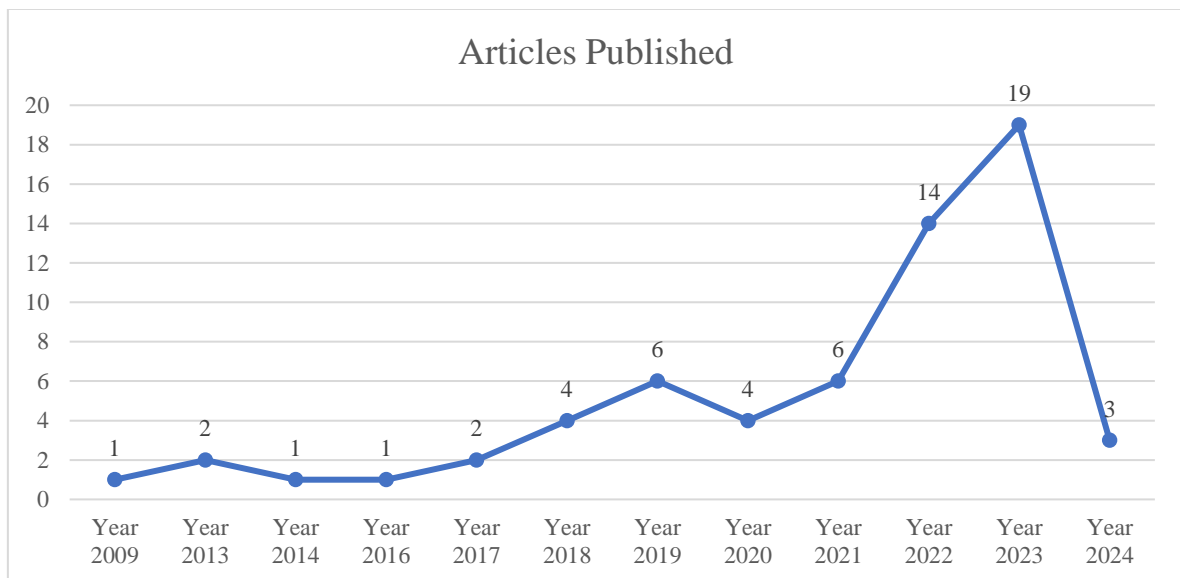
4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 DESCRIPTIVES ANALYSIS

The search on SCOPUS produced a total of 63 journal articles on the subject. The year-on-year publication is captured in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Number of Journal Articles Published

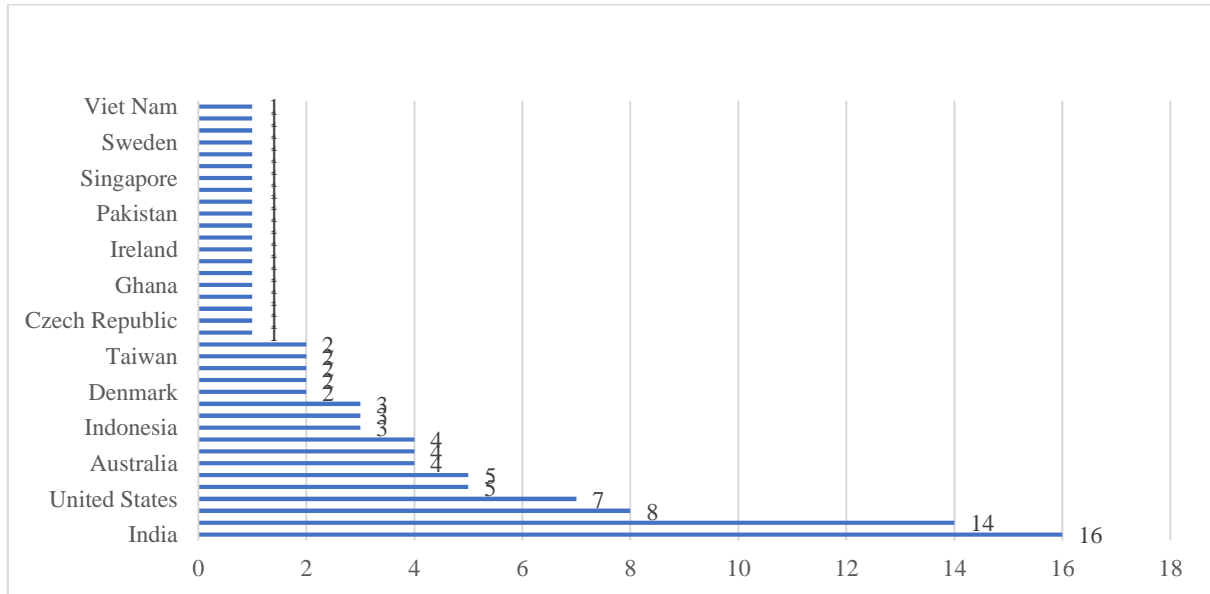


The contribution by authors on the subject of sustainable supply chain management and top management role started to gain momentum from 2018 and peaked in 2023 with overall 19 articles. The drive for increased research interest in sustainable supply chain management and top management role can be seen already in 2024 with 3 articles already published in the first quarter. In terms of territorial publications, India and United States lead with 16 and 14 articles published respectively over the years under consideration. Within developing countries like, the publication of journal articles on the subject of sustainable supply chain management and top management role is minimal. For instance, only 1 publication each is coming from Ghana and Viet Nam.



Figure 2

Territorial Publications



4.2 DISCUSSION

Theories underpinning the top management role in implementing sustainable supply chain management.

The upper echelon idea underpins the ways by which socially SSCM actions within an organization are influenced by external factors (Zhou et al., 2024). According to the upper echelon theory (Hambrick, 2018; Ting et al., 2015), an organization's values and actions are a reflection of the individual cognitions of its top managers. The senior leadership group has the necessary standing to influence the decisions made by the company. To achieve complete social excellence, senior management must demonstrate a strong commitment. Top management support is believed to enable the allocation of sufficient financial and human resources to guide organizational activities, as indicated in top management literature (Dai et al., 2015). The Upper Echelon Theory proffered by Hambrick and Mason (1984) holds that overall organizational outcomes are significantly impacted by top executives' background, values and experiences. The theory of sustainability in the context of sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) helps the managers to understand how they can use top managers to own and drive these sustainability agenda. As the Upper Echelon Theory proposes SSCM Managers acknowledge that the executives' personal traits determine the organizational priorities Guiding team with an environmental or social awareness will most likely consider



sustainability in such decision-making (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Companies benefit from the attraction and recruitment of executive with values mirroring sustainable goals, which in turn cultivates top-down commitment within the organization to environmental and social responsibility practices (Hambrick, 2018; Howard-Grenville et al., 2014; Luu, 2020). Through the use of sustainability metrics in executive performance assessments, companies emphasize the value that SSCM has in their top management layers (Beske & Seuring, 2014). This guarantees integration of sustainability goals into the organizational culture, becoming a determining factor of strategic options and allocation of resources. Upper Echelon Theory is a tool that lets managers understand and utilize the insight of top management executives to put into practice sustainable supply chain management (Beske & Seuring, 2014; Dhir et al., 2023). Harnessing the values and priorities of a company's top executives towards sustainability goals is a driving force in making environmental and social resolutions an integral part of a company vision and operational schemes (Beske & Seuring, 2014; Dhir et al., 2023; Dubey et al., 2018). Such a strategy is crucial for overcoming the current sustainability challenges in the modern world that are very intricate and marked by constant linkages.

The resource-based view (RBV) theory has also been deployed by other authors when describing the role performed by top management (Li et al., 2023). The Resource-Based View (RBV) hypothesis offers a significant framework for managers and organizations to proactively address sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) (Gupta et al., 2018; Zahra, 2021). Resource-based view theory states that a company's competitive edge is rooted in its distinctive and valued assets. Within the framework of SSCM, resources encompass more than just physical assets and also involve sustainable practices, ethical sourcing, and environmental responsibilities (Barney, 1991). Managers utilize the Resource-Based View (RBV) framework to identify and cultivate internal resources that enhance sustainability (Assensoh-Kodua, 2019; Rockwell, 2019). This could entail investing in environmentally friendly technologies, cultivating a proficient and socially conscious workforce, or fostering robust partnerships with sustainable suppliers (Prajogo & Olhager, 2012). Scarce and hard-to-replicate resources offer a competitive edge in achieving sustainability. Companies implementing the Resource-Based View (RBV) for Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) concentrate on developing and upkeeping a collection of resources that are in line with environmental and social goals (Khan et al., 2023). For instance, adopting green logistics processes,



minimizing carbon footprints, and upholding ethical labor practices enhance the firm's sustainable resource foundation (Cao & Zhang, 2011). Managers deliberately use the Resource-Based View (RBV) to position their organizations to meet sustainability criteria and create a competitive advantage by incorporating sustainability into their fundamental competencies (Donnellan & Rutledge, 2019). The RBV theory is a guiding idea for managers and organizations seeking to enhance sustainable supply chain management. Managers can gain a competitive edge and benefit the environment and society by strategically using internal skills to utilize sustainability as a valuable resource (Donnellan & Rutledge, 2019; Khan et al., 2023; Rockwell, 2019). This approach is in line with the changing demands of consumers and stakeholders for ethical and sustainable business operations (Freeman et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2023).

Dyer and Singh postulated the Relational View theory in 1998. According to this notion, forming enduring collaborative relationships with strong inter-organizational linkages would help companies implement SSCM methods. This theory offers understanding on how companies might establish valuable connections with individuals to get their intended results. The Relational View hypothesis highlights the significance of inter-organizational ties in establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Managers and organizations in sustainable supply chain management use this approach to encourage collaboration, build long-term partnerships, and improve sustainability. Managers that adhere to the Relational View paradigm understand the importance of establishing robust, trust-based relationships with supply chain partners (Dyer & Singh, 1998). These partnerships allow for the exchange of information, resources, and knowledge, which supports collaborative efforts to promote sustainable behaviors. Companies focus on developing these relational resources, viewing sustainability as a common objective throughout the supply chain (Dyer et al., 2018; Mehdikhani & Valmohammadi, 2019). Firms improve their ability to withstand environmental difficulties by working together. Common sustainability goals bring together various stakeholders to form a cooperative environment where partners collaborate to tackle environmental and social issues (Carter & Rogers, 2008). The Relational View paradigm emphasizes the significance of relational governance mechanisms, like reciprocal investments and cooperative decision-making, that increase dedication to sustainability projects (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Managers are actively involved in constructing and upholding relational governance systems to guarantee a



sustained emphasis on sustainability in supply chain connections. The Relational View theory offers a strategic framework for managers and organizations to promote sustainable supply chain management. Firms can establish a resilient and collectively responsible supply chain network by focusing on relationships, collaboration, and shared values (Dyer et al., 2018; Mehdikhani & Valmohammadi, 2019). This approach helps address environmental and social concerns, leading to overall sustainability in the business ecosystem.

Forms or kinds of Top Management Roles

According to upper echelon theory, executives' decision-making power in establishing socially responsible supply chain management (SSCM) operations influences how much top management support (TMS) can enhance a company's social performance. The company's response to social misconduct is largely influenced by senior management's subjective perception of institutional pressures related to social issues (Zhou et al., 2024).

For full adoption of environmental excellence, senior management needs to be strongly committed (Dai et al., 2015). The boundary bridging role of top management has been shown to have a substantial impact on environmental projects by securing employees' commitment. For effective supplier monitoring, it is essential to have high-level policy and values declarations established. Several environmental assessment tasks rely on predetermined performance criteria for the quality of products and suppliers' internal environmental management (Dai et al., 2015). Endorsement from senior management can encourage the implementation of supplier awards and feedback, which play a crucial role in enhancing suppliers' environmental performance.

Strategy and Decision-Making Power rest with senior managers (Giunipero et al., 2012). The ability of the firm to engage in any sustainable supply chain management endeavor is largely dependent on managers strategic decision making (Wu & Pagell, 2011). Implementing sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) requires strong strategic leadership and effective decision-making authority from organizational executives (Giunipero et al., 2012; Wu & Pagell, 2011). Strategic planning entails integrating business objectives with sustainability goals, prioritizing long-term value generation above immediate profits. Leaders need to clearly communicate a vision for SSCM that incorporates environmental, social, and economic factors into the fundamental company plan (Giunipero et al., 2012). Decisive authority is essential for integrating



sustainable practices across the supply chain. Leaders must carefully select suppliers, resources, and methods that are in line with sustainability objectives. This could entail investing in sustainable technologies, implementing circular economy ideas, and partnering with similar organizations (Awan & Sroufe, 2022; De los Rios & Charnley, 2017). Decisions are to be based on the implications of the supply chain comprehensively in the environmental, social, and economic dimensions. Leaders are mainly responsible for establishing the sustainability atmosphere within the organization. These entail communication of SSCM with workers, suppliers, and other stakeholders. Decision-making Authority includes providing incentives, setting the criteria, and enforcing the accountability mechanisms at all the levels to promote sustainable behaviors (Giunipero et al., 2012; Wu & Pagell, 2011).

Top management would assess competitors' behaviors based on their experience and personal traits and allocate resources inside the company to focus on environmental management operations. Senior managers possess a superior comprehension of the company's resources that can be used to maintain competitiveness in the market (Dai et al., 2015).



Table 1

Roles of Top Management in Sustainable Supply Chain Management

Author	Social and Environmental Initiatives	Strategy and Decision-Making Power	Collaboration and partnerships	Mediating and Moderating roles	Resource allocation	Monitoring and Evaluation of environmental performance	Orientation or education	Risk Management	Regulation and compliance role
(Walker & Jones, 2012)			√						
(Zhou et al., 2024)	√	√	√	√					
(Dai et al., 2015)	√	√	√	√	√	√			
(Wu & Pagell, 2011)		√			√				
(Ageron et al., 2012)	√	√							
(Dubey et al., 2017)	√	√	√					√	
(Paulraj, 2011)	√	√	√						
(Beske, 2012)	√	√	√					√	
(Beske & Seuring, 2014)	√		√			√	√	√	
(Jabbour & De Sousa Jabbour, 2016)	√	√							
(Giunipero et al., 2012)	√	√	√						



(Turker & Altuntas, 2014)								√	√
(Gholami et al., 2013)	√	√	√			√			
(Lee et al., 2012)		√	√						
(Govindan et al., 2014)	√	√			√	√			
(Luthra et al., 2011)	√				√		√		
(Chin et al., 2015)	√	√	√						
(Reuter et al., 2010)	√	√							√
(Saber et al., 2019)							√	√	√
(Zhu et al., 2012)	√	√	√						√
(Men et al., 2023)	√	√	√		√		√	√	√
(Li et al., 2023)	√	√	√					√	√



Developing a typology for the adoption and implementation of sustainable supply chain, Walker and Jones (2012) considered top management as internal actors that direct the flow of SSCM. For instance, top managers are seen to be directing the flow of materials and overall workflow design to aid the reduction in waste (Wu & Pagell, 2011). Thus, resource allocation within sustainable supply chain become a pivotal function performed by top management.

Positive senior management vision of Sustainable Supply Management (SSM) impacts the company's engagement in environmental initiatives and practices (Ageron et al., 2012). Senior executives in companies striving to excel in sustainability adopt an entrepreneurial mindset towards the environment (Paulraj, 2011).

A company's thinking is the cornerstone of establishing a sustainable supply chain management (Beske & Seuring, 2014). Sustainability and supply chain management principles must be integrated at a strategic level and within the company's core values. This approach highlights that top-management support is a crucial aspect in achieving the maximum potential of SSCM. As a key component of a company's strategic values, orientation involves incorporating sustainability into the organization's strategy and strategy formulation to achieve a competitive advantage (Beske & Seuring, 2014). Orientation is the fundamental category that is essential for participating in SSCM. In order to establish a sustainable chain, managers must include sustainability objectives, methods, and awareness in their daily supply chain management.

Top management are sensitive in determining the right form of collaboration within the supply chain (Beske & Seuring, 2014). At the upper echelon of the organization is managers who can understand and initiate the right form of collaboration. Thus, it is the strategic role of top managers to determine which supply chain members to collaborate with and those that require just a one-time business engagement. Again, collaboration with society and business partners require communication that is best designed by top management for implementation throughout the organization (Beske & Seuring, 2014). To address this information imbalance and provide long-lasting services, it is essential to disseminate this knowledge to the end-consumer along the entire chain.

There is a widespread view that organizations involved in sustainability and implementing Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) strategies face various hazards, which may be greater than those in traditional Supply Chain Management (SCM) (Beske & Seuring, 2014; Wolf, 2014). Understanding of the complexity of SSCM risk is



necessary for an organization. Managers are better positioned to identify, analyze, and strategize to mitigate the impact of SSCM risk (Beske & Seuring, 2014). Managers regularly scan the business environment to understand the nature of the existing risk, quantifying them and devising strategies that the organization can adopt to deal with such risks (Giannakis & Papadopoulos, 2016; Sánchez-Flores et al., 2020; Wolf, 2014).

Senior management is crucial in establishing sustainable supply chains by overseeing regulation and compliance (Turker & Altuntas, 2014). They create policies that synchronize business strategy with sustainability objectives, establishing a framework for ethical activities (Formentini & Taticchi, 2016). Top management monitors legislative changes to guarantee adherence to environmental, social, and ethical norms. By implementing strong compliance procedures, they reduce risks, ensure ethical sourcing, and promote transparent reporting (Formentini & Taticchi, 2016; Harms et al., 2013). By promoting a culture of regulatory compliance, top management ensures legal conformity and fosters a sustainable supply chain that reflects corporate values and enhances long-term performance (Harms et al., 2013; Turker & Altuntas, 2014).

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the literature review and findings thereof, this study makes the following conclusions and recommendations for the attention of those in academia as well as those operating within policy formulation.

5.1 CONCLUSION

The examination of sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) and the role of top management reveals significant trends and insights. Analyzing the descriptives, the surge in research interest, particularly from 2018 to 2023, underscores the growing importance of SSCM and top management's involvement. Notably, India and the United States lead in territorial publications, highlighting regional variances in research focus.

Discussing the theoretical underpinnings, the Upper Echelon Theory illuminates how top executives' traits shape organizational priorities. It emphasizes the need for senior leadership commitment to achieve social excellence and integrate sustainability into organizational culture (Dhir et al., 2023; Hambrick, 2018). The Resource-Based



View (RBV) theory identifies sustainability as a valuable resource, advocating for strategic alignment with environmental and social goals (Assensoh-Kodua, 2019; Khan et al., 2023). The Relational View theory emphasizes collaborative relationships for a resilient and collectively responsible supply chain (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Various top management roles in SSCM emerge, including resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation, collaboration, risk management, orientation, and regulation and compliance. Upper echelon roles involve executives' decision-making power, strategy, and decision-making authority. RBV roles include leveraging internal resources, strategic planning, and decision-making authority. Relational View roles encompass fostering strong relationships, collaboration, and shared values.

In the realm of sustainable supply chain management (SSCM), top management's influence extends beyond theoretical frameworks to tangible examples that showcase their multifaceted roles. One noteworthy example is their boundary-bridging role, where top executives serve as a crucial link between internal organizational operations and external sustainability efforts. They facilitate the flow of SSCM initiatives, ensuring alignment with the company's overall strategic objectives (Men et al., 2023; Yusliza et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2024). This boundary-bridging function involves not only internal coordination but also engagement with external stakeholders, reflecting the interconnected nature of sustainability (Sandberg & Abrahamsson, 2010; Zhou et al., 2024).

Strategic decision-making is another exemplar of top management's pivotal role (Li et al., 2023; Luu, 2020). In steering the organization toward sustainability, executives wield their decision-making authority to prioritize environmentally and socially responsible practices. For instance, strategic decisions may involve investments in green technologies, adoption of circular economy principles, or selection of suppliers aligned with sustainability goals (Li et al., 2023; Men et al., 2023). This proactive decision-making not only reflects the company's commitment to SSCM but also shapes its competitive advantage in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

Furthermore, top management plays a central role in fostering collaboration within and beyond the organization (Chu et al., 2017; Li et al., 2023; Sandberg & Abrahamsson, 2010). Collaboration is essential for addressing complex sustainability challenges that often transcend individual company boundaries. Executives strategically determine the right partners, whether within the supply chain or in broader societal



collaborations. Effective communication channels are established under the guidance of top management, ensuring that collaborative efforts are cohesive, impactful, and aligned with the company's sustainability objectives (Aditi et al., 2024; Mehdikhani & Valmohammadi, 2019).

Walker and Jones (2012) contribute to the understanding of these roles by developing a typology that categorizes top management functions in SSCM (Walker & Jones, 2012). This typology delineates roles such as resource allocation, where executives strategically distribute resources to support sustainability initiatives. Monitoring and evaluation form another crucial function, involving continuous assessment of the effectiveness of SSCM practices and their alignment with organizational goals. Such a comprehensive typology aids in clarifying the diverse responsibilities shouldered by top management, providing a roadmap for organizations seeking to enhance their sustainability practices. Tangible examples underscore the dynamic and influential roles of top management in SSCM. From boundary-bridging to strategic decision-making and collaboration, executives are at the forefront of steering organizations toward sustainable practices. The typology developed by Walker and Jones further refines our understanding by categorizing these roles into distinct functions, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of top management's contribution to sustainable supply chain management (Walker & Jones, 2012).

Understanding the types of roles top management plays, such as orientation, collaboration, and risk management, is vital for effective SSCM (Beske, 2012; Beske & Seuring, 2014). Resource allocation, shaped by senior management's vision, is crucial for directing the flow of materials and reducing waste. The strategic role of top management in collaboration involves determining the right partners and establishing effective communication channels. Orientation entails the deliberate integration of sustainability into the organization's principles and goals. The dedication of top management to Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) acts as a guiding influence, molding the company's overall vision. This attitude involves integrating sustainability principles into daily supply chain operations to link the organization's strategic goals with ecologically and socially responsible practices (Alzoubi et al., 2020; Mehdikhani & Valmohammadi, 2019). Collaboration is a crucial role in which senior management strategically selects the appropriate partners. Efficient cooperation among supply chain and wider societal networks is essential for tackling sustainability issues thoroughly. Top management's role



involves more than just choosing partners (Mehdikhani & Valmohammadi, 2019). It includes creating strong communication lines, promoting transparency, and ensuring that collaborative initiatives are in line with the organization's SSCM goals.

Risk management in SSCM requires top management's understanding of the complex risks involved and their proactive approach to mitigate potential impacts (Elmsalmi et al., 2021; Wiengarten et al., 2016). The regulatory and compliance role underscores the importance of top management in creating policies, monitoring legislative changes, and fostering a culture of compliance. Risk management is a crucial role for top management in Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM). Organizations involved in sustainability programs encounter distinct risks that may vary from those in conventional supply chain management. Senior management's comprehension of these intricate risks enables them to recognize, assess, and develop proactive ways to reduce potential consequences. This risk management function ensures that sustainability initiatives remain robust and enduring in response to changing environmental, social, and economic conditions (Kazancoglu et al., 2023; Scholten & Fynes, 2017).

In summary, the analysis provides a comprehensive view of the evolution, theoretical foundations, and practical roles of top management in sustainable supply chain management. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of theories, managerial functions, and the need for strategic leadership to navigate the complexities of SSCM. The importance of senior management in influencing organizational practices and promoting sustainability and responsibility in company is crucial as sustainability becomes increasingly important. The findings are a significant resource for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers aiming to develop Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) and align corporate strategy with sustainable principles.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Insights from studying sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) and the important role of top management lead to various recommendations for academia, theory development, and policy creation.

For Academia:



Encourage interdisciplinary research by promoting the integration of concepts from management, environmental sciences, and supply chain studies. This approach aims to provide a thorough and linked understanding of the difficulties and possibilities involved in sustainable supply chain management (SSCM). Highlight the need of adopting a worldwide viewpoint in research efforts to encompass local differences in SSCM practices and the crucial involvement of senior management. India and the United States are important in territorial publishing. More varied geographical research are needed to enhance the worldwide understanding of SSCM dynamics. Champion the backing of longitudinal studies to carefully monitor the development of Supply Chain and Supplier Management (SSCM) and the changing responsibilities of senior management over a period of time. The research could provide useful insights into how firms progress towards sustainability, offering a detailed understanding of how these processes evolve and adjust over time.

For Theory Development:

Encourage academics to explore the integration of various theories in sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) studies, acknowledging the benefits of merging viewpoints such Upper Echelon Theory, Resource-Based View, and Relational View. This integrative method provides a detailed and thorough comprehension of the many roles carried out by senior management in SSCM. Promote the creation of flexible theoretical frameworks that can adjust to the always changing nature of SSCM. Theories should be flexible and responsive to adapt to the changing sustainability landscape and effectively address the various aspects that influence Sustainable Supply Chain Management practices. Emphasize the significance of using academic frameworks in practical real-world situations. Theoretical constructs should offer practical insights for firms to effectively execute sustainable practices under top management's strategic direction.

For Policy Formulation:

Advocate for governments and regulatory agencies to establish regulatory frameworks that promote and acknowledge sustainable behaviors. Aligning laws with comprehensive sustainability goals creates a conducive environment that motivates companies to prioritize and integrate sustainable supply chain management (SSCM). Advocate for the development of executive training programs customized for senior management in different sectors, with a focus on Supply Chain and Supplier



Management. Equipping leaders with the essential knowledge and abilities to navigate the complex terrain of sustainability is crucial for successfully implementing sustainable practices in businesses. Promote global cooperation on sustainable practices and policies to cultivate a worldwide approach to Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM). Encouraging the exchange of best practices and fostering collaboration on a worldwide level for sustainability projects can greatly improve the effectiveness of Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) endeavours, leading to a more thorough and unified strategy in tackling sustainability issues.

In conclusion, bridging the gap between academia, theory, and policy is essential for advancing sustainable supply chain management. The recommendations aim to foster a more comprehensive and actionable understanding of the role of top management in driving sustainable practices within organizations.



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