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Problematizing socially sustainable global supply chains: Theoretical insights, contextual challenges, and the issue of modern slavery

Barnabas Ishaya^a, Dimitrios Paraskevadakis^a, Alan Bury^a, and David Bryde^b

^aLiverpool Logistics Offshore and Marine Research Institute (LOOM), School of Engineering, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, England; ^bLiverpool Business School, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, England

ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the literature on enablers of socially sustainable global supply chains, with a particular focus on the theoretical underpinnings that contribute to their establishment and maintenance. It also explores the contextual factors that perpetuate modern slavery within supply chains, evaluating the measures taken to address these issues. A comprehensive review of 265 publications from 2012 to 2024, identified through a keyword search in the Scopus database, forms the basis of this analysis. Key factors that enable labor abuse in global supply chains are identified, including business models that prioritize profit over ethics, socio-economic vulnerabilities of workers, commercial pressures, and insufficient regulatory oversight. By bridging gaps in the current literature, this study contributes to developing best practices for managing socially sustainable supply chains, with significant implications for theory, context, and policy.

KEYWORDS

Contextual analysis; enablers; modern slavery; social sustainability; theoretical framework

Introduction

The global supply chain's role in perpetuating modern slavery and labor exploitation is a critical issue that has not been fully addressed in the literature. Existing research has highlighted various factors contributing to this problem, but there remains a significant gap in understanding the theoretical foundations and contextual dynamics that enable these practices. This study aims to fill this gap by problematizing the concept of social sustainability in supply chains, drawing on existing theories, and critically assessing the contextual factors that allow modern slavery to persist.

Undocumented immigrant workers are often vulnerable to exploitation due to their lack of legal status (Strauss 2012). This exploitation can take many forms, including low wages, dangerous working conditions, and denial of fundamental labor rights (Clarke and Boersma 2017; Strand et al. 2023). The consequences of this exploitation can be far-reaching for the workers and society (Gabriel, Korczynski, and Rieder 2015). It can lead to increased poverty, decreased access to healthcare and education and a breakdown of trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement (Phillips 2015). Addressing the issue of exploitation of undocumented immigrant workers is crucial for creating a more just and equitable society (Gold, Trautrim, and Trodd

CONTACT Dimitrios Paraskevadakis  D.Paraskevadakis@ljmu.ac.uk  Liverpool Logistics Offshore and Marine Research Institute (LOOM), School of Engineering, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, England.

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2015). Many organized sectors have hired workers who are not eligible for minimum wage payment (Awaysheh and Klassen 2010; Clarke and Boersma 2017). This boosts the company's profitability, as it can save money on labor costs (Gold, Trautrim, and Trodd 2015). These workers are usually from marginalized groups and cannot access better job opportunities. Unfortunately, some companies prioritize their profit over the well-being of their employees. This practice should be discouraged, and companies should be held accountable for providing fair wages to all workers. These kinds of practices often give rise to unwanted practices such as human trafficking or slavery.

The term "*modern slavery*" refers to a range of exploitative practices, such as forced labor, human trafficking, and child labor (Boersma and Nolan 2022). As per the Modern Slavery Act (2015) published by the UK, modern slavery includes the abhorrent practice of human trafficking for various purposes, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, criminal exploitation, and other forms of abuse and exploitation (Mai, Vourvachis, and Grubnic 2023). Forced labor is a significant issue worldwide, with an estimated 22 million victims, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO). This is especially prevalent in the global apparel supply chain, prompting researchers to investigate the causes and characteristics of forced labor. Unfortunately, these practices are widespread in global supply chains, especially in industries like agriculture, mining, and manufacturing (Hsin 2020). It is a complex crime that is apparent in every country (Heerden 2015). The cases of modern slavery have continued to increase in all sectors despite government anti-trafficking legislation (Meehan and Pinnington 2021). For example, Uzbekistan has the second-highest prevalence of modern slavery globally and is home to the fourth most prominent enslaved persons. According to Bhat (2013), Uzbekistan, the largest exporter of cotton, has been accused of using underaged children to harvest cotton. Furthermore, the trafficking of human beings and labor exploitation are ongoing issues in the southeastern part of Asia, including Thailand', which is both a source and destination for exploited migrant laborers (Vandergeest, Tran, and Marschke 2017). Severe labor abuse continues in the Thai fishing and seafood processing factories, where over a hundred thousand Burmese and Cambodian migrants working in Thailand's fishing industry get exploited (Page & Priest 2020). Child labor is also apparent in western Africa, especially in Ghana's cocoa supply chain. Invariably, victims of modern slavery lose their liberty and are physically, mentally, and psychologically affected. Companies must identify and eliminate modern slavery in their supply chains to protect human rights and maintain ethical business practices (Caspersz et al. 2022). In countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Africa, and the Middle East, modern slavery often remains unnoticed due to a lack of adequate infrastructure to address the issue (Qian, Tilt, and Belal 2021).

Globalization has led to the emergence of international labor systems that operate without prioritizing fundamental civil rights for workers in the manufacturing and distribution sectors. Slavery and human trafficking are severe violations of human rights, and despite significant progress in the fight against them, they still pose a global threat. Unfortunately, due to a lack of comprehensive knowledge and awareness, these issues often go unnoticed and unaddressed, leading to continued suffering and exploitation. It is crucial to continue raising awareness and taking action to combat this grave violation of human rights.

There is a pressing need to develop effective strategies and policies to address this problem and ensure supply chains are free from exploitation and abuse. This has resulted in an environment where exploitation and unfair labor practices are prevalent. Krifors (2020) conducted an in-depth analysis of how migrant labor logistics affect the global economy. Despite this, developed countries often lack the power to regulate the labor practices of their suppliers, as there is no reliable governance structure in place. Although the globalization of manufacturing and the development of complex international production chains have the potential to reduce labor abuse, it is

still rampant in the form of contemporary slavery, which includes forced labor, child labor, and human trafficking.

This issue has been previously discussed by experts like Buck (2019), Phillips and Mieres (2014), and Benstead, Hendry, and Stevenson (2020). Although modern slavery in the supply chain is a complex and often hidden issue, its victims are typically controlled through debt bondage and the threat of harm or punishment by authorities if they try to escape (Bansal and Wyss 2013). Lambrechts (2020) research sheds light on a significant breakthrough in global supply chains. The study highlights the growing prominence of sustainable sourcing and manufacturing practices, providing valuable insight into the latest developments in this critical business area. Although there is a considerable amount of literature on the subject, research conducted so far on modern slavery in supply chains is limited and inconclusive. This suggests that there is still much to learn about the issue, and more research is needed to fully understand the scope and impact of modern slavery in supply chains.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze the extant literature on the enablers of modern slavery in supply chains and provide a synopsis based on the following research question:

RQ1: How are socially sustainable measures implemented to tackle labour explorations in complex global supply chains?

The 2024 report by the International Labor Organization highlighted the increasing global demand for affordable consumer goods such as ready-made garments, semiconductor chips, lithium, nickel, and coffee beans. This demand has resulted in the need for cheap labor, leading to instances of human trafficking to meet the growing demand in these industries (Wilhelm et al. 2024). As a result, the global supply chains of these products indirectly contribute to a demand for exploitative practices that victimize vulnerable populations (Soundararajan, Wilhelm, and Crane 2021).

RQ2: How effectively have policymakers developed existing global anti-trafficking awareness frameworks in identifying modern slavery?

Saner, Yiu, and Rush (2018) argue that the definition of human trafficking and the appropriate measures and indicators lack consistency. They suggest that this lack of consistency can lead to challenges in effectively addressing and combating human trafficking. This inconsistency may hinder the ability to accurately identify and respond to cases of human trafficking, impacting the protection and support available to victims. Saner, Yiu, and Rush (2018) emphasize the need for a unified and comprehensive approach to defining human trafficking and establishing clear indicators for effective prevention and intervention. We plan to delve into the development of research on indicators of anti-trafficking, building upon the arguments and evidence that have been put forward in the literature.

Theoretical, contextual and critical examination underpinnings

In terms of theorization the study begins by revisiting the theoretical frameworks that underpin the concept of social sustainability in supply chains. It critiques the prevailing models that often prioritize economic efficiency over ethical considerations, thereby enabling labor exploitation. Theories of global capitalism, labor commodification, and ethical supply chain management are examined to provide a robust theoretical foundation for understanding these issues.

The contextual factors that allow modern slavery to thrive in global supply chains are complex and multifaceted. This study situates the discussion within specific geographical, economic, and regulatory contexts, highlighting how these factors vary across different regions and industries. For instance, the prevalence of forced labor in the apparel industry in Southeast Asia is contrasted with the exploitation of child labor in West Africa's cocoa supply chains. By

contextualizing these practices, the study underscores the importance of tailored solutions that consider local conditions.

The research problem is framed around the persistent inadequacies in addressing modern slavery within supply chains, despite numerous efforts and regulations. The study problematizes the concept of social sustainability by questioning the effectiveness of current approaches and exploring the contradictions inherent in global supply chain management. It challenges the assumption that existing frameworks and regulations are sufficient to address these issues, arguing for a more nuanced understanding that incorporates both theory and context.

The manuscript is divided into seven sections, each covering a different aspect of the research topic. Section “Introduction” provides a detailed description of the research method used for the literature review, including the database searched, the keywords used, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied. Section “Research method” presents the thematic findings based on the extensive literature review, including the key themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis. Section “Thematic findings” focuses specifically on human trafficking for labor exploitation, examining the various forms of exploitation that occur and the factors that contribute to the problem. Section “Methods of human trafficking and recruitment” delves into the various measures introduced to combat modern slavery disclosures, including legislation, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and civil society campaigns. Section “Modern slavery disclosure measures” examines the impacts of modern slavery on supply chains, looking at the various actors involved and how they contribute to the problem. Section “Responding to the impact of modern slavery on the global supply chain” presents case studies of modern slavery in different sectors, highlighting the complex nature of the problem and the challenges of addressing it effectively. Finally, Section “Research gaps” identifies the critical research gaps that need to be addressed to improve our understanding of modern slavery and develop more effective interventions to combat it.

Research method

The literature on socially sustainable supply chains has primarily focused on identifying best practices and compliance strategies. However, there is a lack of critical engagement with the underlying theoretical assumptions that inform these practices. This section synthesizes existing research, identifying gaps in the literature where further theorization is needed. It also contextualizes the discussion by examining how these practices are implemented in different settings, highlighting the variability in outcomes.

To gain insights into RQ1 and RQ2, we conducted a comprehensive systematic literature review (SLR) following the guidelines by Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003). A systematic literature review is a methodical approach to analyzing and synthesizing literature on a particular topic or research question. By systematically searching for, selecting, appraising, and synthesizing relevant literature, this review helps minimize individual biases and subjectivity (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart 2003; Durach, Kembro, and Wieland 2017). Using appropriate keywords and search strategies, systematic literature reviews provide a comprehensive and unbiased overview of existing knowledge, enabling researchers to gain a more nuanced understanding of the evolution and current state of the field. We conducted our research using a systematic review approach, covering 2012 to 2024. The search applied a combination of keywords on modern slavery and supply chains, social sustainability, and socially sustainable measures. We meticulously selected keywords, considering the definition provided in the Modern Slavery Act (2015) published in the UK. For example, (‘modern slavery’ OR ‘labor rights’ OR ‘labor right’ OR ‘human rights’ OR ‘forced labor’ OR ‘forced labor’) OR (‘child labor’ OR ‘child labor’) AND (‘supply chains’ OR ‘value chains OR ‘procurement’ OR ‘purchase’) as keywords to identify English-language articles in peer-reviewed journals. In addition, other databases, such as the Social Science Research Network (SSRN),

Education Information Resource Center (ERIC), Web of Science and Google Scholar, were used to enhance the search.

During the initial search on the Scopus database, 265 articles were retrieved using specific keywords related to modern slavery, contemporary slavery acts, and slavery in supply chains. After reviewing the article titles and abstracts, the study narrowed down the selection for literature review. Finally, 155 articles were included in the literature review after reading the text. The focus of the review was on contemporary slavery issues such as human rights, forced labor, and child labor, specifically as they relate to supply chains. We excluded most of the articles that do not comprehensively address modern slavery issues from a global supply chain perspective. Figure 1 illustrates the literature screening process and the criteria used after the preliminary search in the Scopus database.

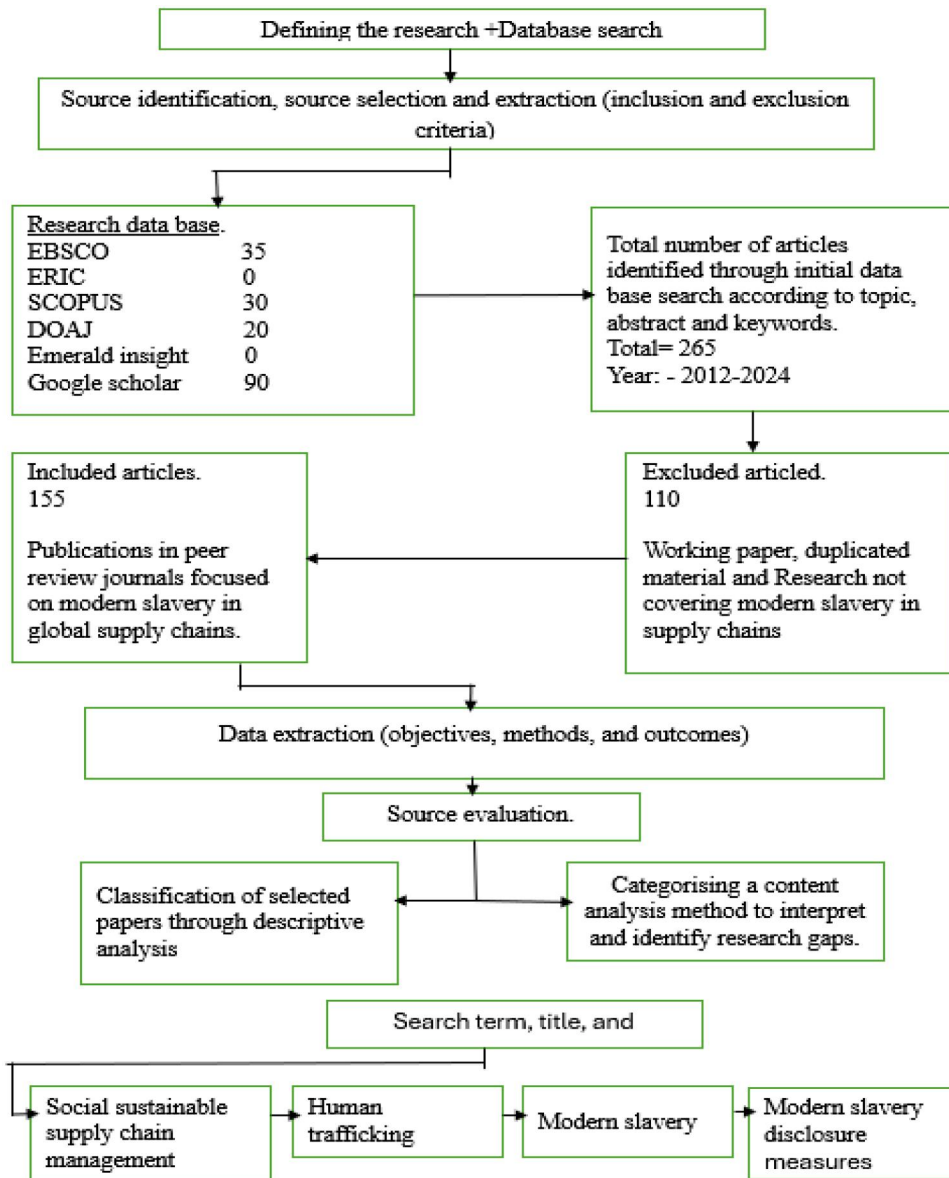


Figure 1. Review process.
Source: Author's work.

Thematic findings

Thematic analysis is an in-depth qualitative research method that aims to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data to understand the underlying meaning of modern slavery in the global supply chain (Sodhi and Tang 2018; Caruana et al. 2021). This method plays a significant role in recognizing and comprehending the complexities and nuances of modern slavery. Guided by the Modern Slavery Act (2015), this approach seeks to contextualize the broader societal, economic, and legal dimensions that contribute to and perpetuate modern slavery within the global supply chain. This section discusses the findings of the study as presented in the literature. Firstly, we analyze the causes of modern slavery in supply chains identified in the literature and the factors that enable socially sustainable supply chains through an awareness model for detecting modern slavery. This includes examining methods for detecting and assessing modern slavery in supply chains. Finally, we review the literature, which covers relevant disclosure measures and company compliance with practices designed to prevent modern slavery in supply chain management.

Modern slavery systematic review

Recent studies on modern slavery are shifting toward governance responses that underpin community resilience against labor exploitation (Mende and Drubel 2020). Avis (2020) remarked on several significant factors enabling social challenges in global supply chains, such as wrong business models, social and economic vulnerabilities, commercial pressure, and lack of government regulation. However, the emergence of socially responsible aspects has paved the way for organizations to gain a competitive advantage and protect brand reputation over businesses that fail to incorporate social commitments in their practices (Scott et al. 2012; New 2015). The failure of an organization to manage its supply chain in a socially sustainable manner can have significant implications for a company's reputation (Hoejmoose, Roehrich, and Grosvold 2014). Notwithstanding, standard measures to identify and prevent forced labor, trafficking, and slavery are an increasingly central component of the governance awareness model (Mani, Agrawal, and Sharma 2016; Pager and Priest 2020).

The contemporary trend of traveling to developed countries in search of better jobs has created an avenue for traffickers to take advantage of the socioeconomic vulnerability of individuals (Christ and Burritt 2020; Weitzer 2015). On a global level, adopting the UN protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in 2000 provided an impetus for world governments and civil society to take more collaborative action to address trafficking (Bales and Trodd 2013; Idris 2017). However, unscrupulous third-party labor recruiters often recruit the victims of trafficking and then promise high-paying jobs in breach of the initial agreement (Sereni and Baker 2018; Benstead, Hendry, and Stevenson 2020). The research by Van Buren, Schrempf-Stirling, and Westermann-Behaylo (2021) demonstrated that analyses of due diligence obligations had dominated the response to human trafficking in corporate supply chains. Modern slavery is a significant issue in various sectors of the global economy, posing challenges for the information technology industry (Jones and Comfort 2022). Identifying and addressing the risk of modern slavery within supply chains is particularly challenging for information technology companies (Datta 2014). According to Suprun et al. (2022), modern slavery is a prevalent issue affecting primarily workers in labor-intensive markets, spanning across multiple tiers of a supply chain. There is an extensive body of literature on slavery and modern slavery from historical, philosophical, and socio-cultural perspectives (Bhakoo and Meshram 2021). Modern slavery is increasingly understood as a continuum of exploitation, reflecting the complex nature of the practices found in different contexts, according to Boersma and Nolan (2022). The rise of global sourcing and production has had significant adverse effects on global supply chains (Forde and Slater 2016). However, there is a growing recognition from governments, businesses,

and civil society of the need to address risks and avoid exploitation in global supply chains. Modern slavery is a complex and challenging situation that may hinder the sustainable development of global supply chains (Han et al. 2022).

Pesterfield and Rogerson (2024) conducted research focused on the UK construction industry to understand and prioritize modern slavery risks, providing a valuable case study. Liu et al. (2022) developed a framework for assessing the readiness of entities in the construction industry to address modern slavery. Additionally, Geng et al. (2022) suggested that firms should be more motivated and capable of addressing these problems, especially when sourcing from nations with heightened slavery risks and demonstrating better performance in corporate sustainability.

The disclosure of modern slavery risks has garnered increased attention, emphasizing greater transparency in business operations and supply chains (Townsend, Watkins, and Hughes 2016; Ahmed et al. 2022). Ahmed and Arun (2022) discussed the role of disclosures in improving work practices within ready-made garments (RMG) supply chains. In another research study, Jones and Comfort (2018) provided an exploratory commentary on how leading UK retailers use storytelling in the corporate social responsibility reporting process. Mandatory annual reporting to enhance transparency of working conditions in firms' supply chains is the preferred approach of UK policymakers for reducing modern slavery risks in supply chains (Pinnington and Meehan 2023). Islam and Van Staden (2021) examined the shortcomings of the disclosure and transparency requirements of the UK. Pinnington, Benstead, and Meehan (2023) argued that transparency is at the core of most modern slavery reporting legislation. However, while publication of statements is mandatory, compliance with content guidance is voluntary, resulting in poor corporate responses overall. Saha, Bose, and Khan (2024) examined the association between textual disclosure readability in modern slavery reports and business supply chains. Supply chains have become increasingly important over the last three decades as companies have outsourced production, relying on a succession of legally independent suppliers (Burmester et al. 2022).

The enablers of a socially sustainable global supply chains

The study focuses on social sustainability issues in business supply chains and the factors driving them. This section will discuss the factors enabling social sustainability in supply chains, emphasizing the need for visibility across long and complex supply chains, as shown in Figure 2. Figure 2 represents the outcomes of a detailed analysis of emerging trends in the context of global sustainable supply chains (refer to Sodhi and Tang 2018; Soundararajan, Khan, and Tarba 2018; Golicic, Lenk, and Hazen 2020).

It is crucial to understand the primary feature of many contemporary forms of labor exploitation, termed modern slavery (LeBaron et al. 2018). Modern slavery is a societal problem and a denting factor in the actualization of the UN SDGs (KPMG 2019). According to Avis (2020), modern slavery combines human trafficking, forced labor, child labor, and domestic servitude. The prevalence of modern slavery in business supply chains has prompted the development of action plans and interventions to tackle the root cause. However, corporations must take action to protect workers from forced labor rather than fueling business demand for it within supply chains.

Sustainable development goal

Sustainability is meeting today's needs without compromising the needs of the future generation (Elkington 1997). However, managing the supply chain poses a significant challenge for companies across various industries (Seuring 2012). In addition, global competitiveness has forced companies to be conscious of their impact on the social, environmental, and economic aspects (Arowoshege, Uniamikogbo, and Atu 2018; Saeed and Kersten 2017). However, the UN

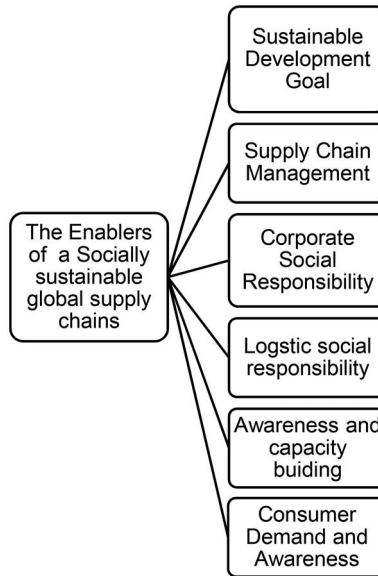


Figure 2. Enablers of social sustainability in global supply chains.
Source: Author's Work

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are both a challenge and an opportunity to serve the global population sustainably in the long term. For example, target 8.7 takes immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor by 2025.

The SDGs facilitate improving global supply chains' economic, environmental, and social performance (Taghavi, Adams, and Berlin 2014). Oncioiu et al. (2020) confirmed this point of view, which reinforces the need to understand better the role of businesses in contributing to the development of a sustainable society by actively introducing products and services that are not only economically appealing and environmentally friendly but that advance the fulfillment of a social need. Akhtar et al. (2020) explored linkages between macro-and micro-level dynamic capabilities and environmental sustainability, which urge emerging economies' multinationals to reconsider their environmental policies and practices to compete with enterprises from developed countries.

Supply chain management

Supply Chain Management (SCM) has become an essential part of a competitive strategy to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization to respond to customer needs in a socially sustainable manner (Al-Odeh and Smallwood 2012). However, the illegal hidden nature of modern slavery makes it difficult to detect due to the fragmented multi-tiered nature of supply chains (Silvester 2016). Accordingly, New (2015) and Gold, Trautrim, and Trodd (2015), along with the socially sustainable research by Mani, Gunasekaran, and Delgado (2018) and LeBaron (2021), have contributed to the growing literature on Supply Chain Management. However, SCM acknowledges that risks are among the most critical management issues that can lead to disruption and other supply chain problems (Silvester 2016; Yun et al. 2019; Brandenburg, Grutchmann and Oelze 2019). In addition, Mani, Agrawal, and Sharma (2016) highlighted that SCM is a diverse combination of logistic transportation, operations management, information technologies (IT), marketing, purchasing and distribution management.

Supply chain management is also an essential environmental and social aspect of corporate sustainability (Seuring 2012; Kilian and Hennigs 2014; Dubey et al. 2017; Alghababsheh and

Gallear 2020). According to Seuring and Müller (2008), SCM allows organizations to incorporate sustainability performance objectives into their decision-making. Carter and Rogers (2008) identified a framework of sustainable SCM to move toward a new theory that demonstrates the relationship between economic, environmental, and social performance within a supply chain management context. The study by Baah and Jin (2019) remarked on the importance of sustainable supply chain management and organizational performance. In addition, Jermstittiparsert and Srihirun (2019) examined the role of ethics in supply chain management. Finally, Liu et al. (2017) explored sustainable service supply chain management to facilitate ethics across the supply chains. Behl and Dutta (2019) remarked on the impact of humanitarian supply chain management in emerging economies.

Corporate social responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) encompasses the responsibility of corporations to include social and environmental impacts in business operations and interactions with stakeholders (Lund-Thomsen and Lindgreen 2014; Yawar and Seuring 2017; Birnie and Rotchild 2018). The link between CSR and company performance is one of the most widely recognized issues in research, particularly in the purchasing function; one of the critical elements for improving a business supply chain is through performance measurement. Rettab et al. (2021) demonstrated the value of measuring the impact of CSR performance. According to Asif et al. (2013), an integrated management system must enhance corporate social responsibility in global supply chains. An organization needs to explore the conditions and capabilities of human exploitation. The study by Buck (2019) highlighted the analysis of published preventive statements and frameworks to protect businesses and individuals in global supply chains. Crane (2013) discussed the conditions and capabilities for human exploitation in his report.

A new model approach is required to ensure corporate social responsibility in supply chain management (Michalski et al. 2018). In their report, Kilian and Hennigs (2014) remarked on the importance of corporate social responsibility and environmental reporting in controversial industries. However, business organizations are encouraged to provide negotiated solutions to human rights violations in global supply chains in conjunction with the ethical trading initiative (Connor, Delaney, and Rennie 2016; Birnie and Rotchild 2018). Furthermore, mandating disclosure of fundamental corporate social responsibility and sustainable labor practices allows the downstream supply chain to know how seriously companies are obliged not to contribute to the worst form of modern slavery (New 2015; Quarshie, Salmi, and Leuschner 2016; Lang 2018).

Logistic social responsibility

Academics often use logistic social responsibility to examine Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) issues concerning logistic management (Piecyk and Björklund 2015). For example, Leon and Juan (2014) encouraged corporate social responsibility in logistics and transport to facilitate social sustainability because customers constantly seek socially and environmentally respectful products and services. According to Carter and Jennings (2002), logistic social responsibility is socially responsible supply chain management from a cross-functional perspective. Guja and Sady (2014) analyzed the role of logistics social responsibility in gaining a competitive advantage in business. Jardine and Trautrim (2021) argued that businesses and employers have an essential role in addressing poor labor and employment practices, which includes adequate time and rest for all workers and appropriate compensation to enable worker voice and empowerment. However, all companies involved in the movement of materials and products should ensure that their supply chain human right due diligence extends to the transport logistics and suppliers' workforce, for instance, as a worker-driven social responsibility (Alexander 2018; Krifors 2020).

Awareness and capacity building

Awareness and capacity building should be an ongoing activity in a company supply chain as there is a need for an information campaign to target specific groups and advocate actions. For example, Trautrimis et al. (2020) recommended capacity building across stakeholders in the supply chain to help mitigate modern slavery. However, it is essential to abide by international standards, frameworks, and best practices that are designed to identify and eradicate labor exploitation in supply chains (Michailova and Stringer 2018). A comprehensive capacity building for workers in supply chains and raising awareness among businesses about human rights abuse indicators on the worksite is significant (Lake et al. 2016). For example, in Kent and Essex, new publicity materials have been created for Essex Police and Kent Police to raise awareness.

Stakeholder engagement with workers is a valuable tool that identifies modern slavery and human rights abuse. For example, the UK government has been trying to conduct a sustained international campaign to raise awareness of modern slavery globally. However, it is yet to build sufficiently on the experience of others by analyzing what set of effective awareness-raising initiatives works best (Idris 2017). Pager and Priest (2020) argued that the lack of awareness of modern slavery might contribute to continued abuses by employers. According to Gardner (2017), approximately 5,000 frontline individuals from the business, private, and public sectors get training from a multi-agency partnership to recognize and report these crime indicators.

Consumer demand and awareness

Despite the complexity of global supply chains, consumers have the right to know if they are purchasing a product that may violate fundamental norms of ethical behavior and a vested interest in seeing material improvements to worker outcomes within the system (Lang 2018). Kara (2011) highlighted that human trafficking is impacted by supply and demand in which demand contributes to the growth of human trafficking and makes it more profitable to traffickers. Consumers of products and services consider cost, quality, and availability when purchasing (Dubey et al. 2017; Giannakis et al. 2020). Recently, much attention has been paid to consumers' purchasing decisions as consumers are now concerned with the conditions of the workers producing their products, known as ethical consumption (Shah and Wiese 2018; Smith and Johns 2020). Brandenburg et al. (2014) demonstrated that ethical consumption is the behavior of sustainable and ethically minded consumers who feel responsible and accountable for the environment and society. However, consumers have a growing demand for socially responsible products and services (Mani, Sharma, and Agrawal 2014; Niinimäki 2015; Vural 2015; Irving 2016). Accordingly, pressure from a consumer is an essential driver of social sustainability in supply chains (Birnie and Rotchild 2018). Carrington, Chatzidakis, and Shaw (2021) Addressed consumer awareness and action toward modern slavery.

The risk of modern slavery in a business corporation

The complex nature of global supply chains increases the risk of human rights violations, with forced and child labor being among the most serious (Parella 2019). Policymakers lack a systematic approach to building evidence on what intervention effectively tackles modern slavery risk in the supply chains (Lake et al. 2016). However, audits alone cannot address forced labor risk or identify modern slavery. However, OSCE has developed due diligence processes that enable business corporations to identify, prevent, and mitigate direct and indirect risks. Jareb, Cvahte, and Rosi (2014) designed a risk assessment model and supply chain risk catalogue to identify the potential threat to all organizations involved in the chain as well as to the supply chain itself, especially to the logistics resources: manufacturing, the flow of goods, services, and information and people. Baur and Palazzo (2011) detailed how the partnership between NGOs and companies

has received considerable attention in corporate social responsibility. Meaningful stakeholder engagement and multi-stakeholder collaboration are necessary to mitigate the risk of labor exploitation.

Wrong business model in a business corporation

Business organizations should be accountable for the environmental and social outcomes of raw material production and primary processing unit through adequate supply chain monitoring (Martin-Ortega and Davies 2016). Benstead, Hendry, and Stevenson (2020) described monitoring as an iterative process that companies use to assess and demonstrate compliance, performance, and progress concerning their supply chains (Islam and Van Staden 2018). However, companies should determine progress toward fulfilling compliance by ensuring the implementation of commitments (Grimm, Hofstetter, and Sarkis 2014). Islam and Van Staden (2021) argued that business organizations should consider developing a framework to monitor and verify implementation and outcomes related to company commitment. For example, the independent Anti-Slavery commissioner's office, in collaboration with the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham, has developed an online toolkit to help local organizations and agencies work better together to tackle modern slavery (Trautrim 2020).

Governments should design business models around forced labor and the purchasing practices and contractual dynamics that make them completely unviable (see Figure 3). LeBaron et al. (2021) indicated that business models shape the broader dynamics of corporations and the supply chain relations they establish. Nevertheless, workers will continue to experience forced labor and overlapping forms of exploitation until prevailing business models and the economic and social realities that govern their construction are overhauled. However, it will not be possible to eliminate forced labor in supply chains without a fundamental change to purchasing practices and the commercial contracts that enclose them (Geng, Lam, and Stevenson 2022). According to Martin-Ortega (2017), corporations should innovate business models to prevent forced labor in supply chains and integrate commercial strategies and social standards by changing purchasing practices, reducing outsourcing along supply chains, and enacting internal governance reforms to address perverse incentive structures.

Socio-economic pressure

The socioeconomic vulnerability of individuals and workers within the global supply chain can lead to modern slavery (OSCE 2014). The exposure is such that people from developing countries where job creation is low and the means to sustain livelihood is poor can result in vulnerable populations looking for alternatives to survive in informal economies. Amnesty International (2013) highlighted the connection between modern slavery practices and informal economies. For example, due to the level of socioeconomic pressure in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, people are being coerced to work under poor conditions with little pay and, in some cases, trafficked to developed countries under false promises of a better life (Nwogu 2014; Obarisiagbon and Ijegbai 2019). Nevertheless, poverty, informalities, violence, gender, and other forms of discrimination limit sustainable livelihood (Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX) 2018).

Commercial pressure

The issue of modern slavery in the global supply chains has been the subject of much recent concern, for example, the case of the Rana Plaza fire incident in Bangladesh and the issue of NHS rubber gloves produced by people under debt bondage labor in Malaysian factories (News 2015). Furthermore, the economic and commercial pressures facing suppliers within the global supply chains can, in combination, lead to modern slavery (Flynn and Walker 2020). For example, short

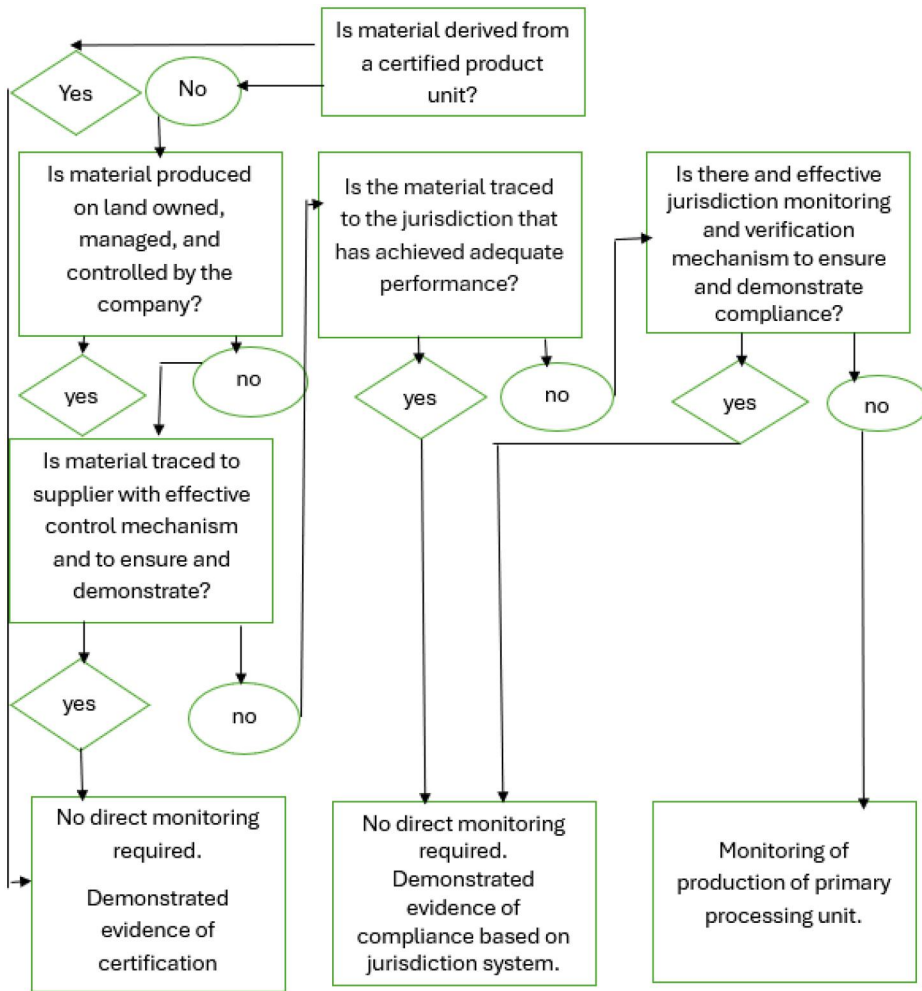


Figure 3. Recommended monitoring approach toward fulfillment of commitment. Source: Authors work adapted from Accountability Framework Initiative (AFI) (2019)

deadlines for large amounts of a product may force a trusted supplier to look outside its operations and engage in unvetted third parties for additional capacity. Correspondingly, LeBaron (2021) analyzed the role of supply chains in the global business of forced labor such that commercial pressure is fundamental to whether decent work flourishes or not in any business supply chain.

Invariably, multinational organizations often source goods from suppliers in large quantities and are expected to do so ethically (Kim, Colicchia, and Menachof 2016). However, in doing so, the suppliers should be given enough prior notice and on-time payment to enable efficient production with adequate welfare for their workforce (Quarshie, Salmi, and Leuschner 2016; Rubio and Yiannibas 2017). For example, when buyers place orders from their suppliers on short notice, there is usually a tendency for the supplier's workforce to be overstretched to meet the demand (Phillips 2016). Essentially, volatility in order volumes and timing, late changes to order contents and specifications, and delayed payments increase the risk of labor exploitation in the global production networks (Phillips and Sakamoto 2012).

Methods of human trafficking and recruitment

Human trafficking is the abuse of human rights and a profitable crime that is highly organized and widespread, impacting many people across the world. According to Gardner (2017), human trafficking is a multidimensional human rights violation that centers on the act of exploitation which can affect people of all genders and ages and have devastating consequences. Similarly, the United Nations defines trafficking in human beings as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons through the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, or deception (Weitzer 2015). The literature by Liu (2010) described human trafficking as an illegal action that commodifies human life, making it sellable, exploitable, and disposable. On the other hand, McGrath (2013) argued that poverty and poor working conditions have historically been blamed for encouraging irregular migration, termed human trafficking. For example, the tragedy in which 21 Chinese migrants died picking cockles in the unsafe tides off Morecambe Bay in February 2004 has led to increased public awareness of the abusive employment relations and poor living conditions of many migrants working in the United Kingdom (Anderson and Rogaly 2005). Essentially, knowing the methods that traffickers use, and the signs associated with them, is an important aspect of awareness.

Labor migration is an economic and social mobility strategy that benefits millions of people worldwide, yet human trafficking and the exploitation of low-wage workers are pervasive (Phillips and Mieres 2014; Zimmerman and Kiss 2017). Bernards (2017) highlighted the measures businesses could take to ensure that trafficking in human beings does not occur in their workplaces or suppliers. Similarly, Jaffee and Bensman (2016) outlined dangerous work and labor actions in the logistic sector characterized by low wages and unstable employment. While migration within and across national borders has been an economic and social mobility strategy that has benefited millions of people worldwide, there is growing recognition that labor exploitation of migrant workers has become a problem of global proportions (Bloch and McKay 2015; Weitzer 2015).

Counter-trafficking measures to prevent human trafficking

Measures are needed to strengthen laws and policies that enhance enforcement actions against forced labor and human trafficking for strict border control (LeBaron et al. 2018). There have been few attempts to critically evaluate the vast numbers of anti-trafficking programs and projects operating in global supply chains (Ford, Lyons, and van Schendel 2012). The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG) observed that the UK had expanded its governance framework and commitment to building up information on the causes of trafficking (Sereni and Baker 2018). Alternatively, business organizations should develop methods to prevent human trafficking in their supply chains. However, the share of trafficking for forced labor contributing to export varies across regions hence the need for a targeted audit approach and counter-trafficking data collaboration, which collects case data on victims of trafficking (Benstead, Hendry, and Stevenson 2020). The department for international development has been involved in various counter-trafficking interventions to tackle modern slavery in supply chains (Idris 2017). A unique action programme to counter trafficking in person and forced labor is needed to enhance the positive development of global supply chains (Taylor et al. 2017).

Recently, studies have focused on documenting the role of international agencies and NGOs in counter-trafficking programs, laws, and policies (Ford, Lyons, and van Schendel 2012). Figure 4 presents the six ways to prevent human trafficking within business supply chains. According to Kersten, Blecker, and Ringle (2017), counter-trafficking interventions require real-time monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of vulnerability to exploitation. Innovative approaches to eradicate modern slavery in supply chains, such as the implementation of policies into contracts with suppliers and businesses, certification of compliance by suppliers, validation of training and

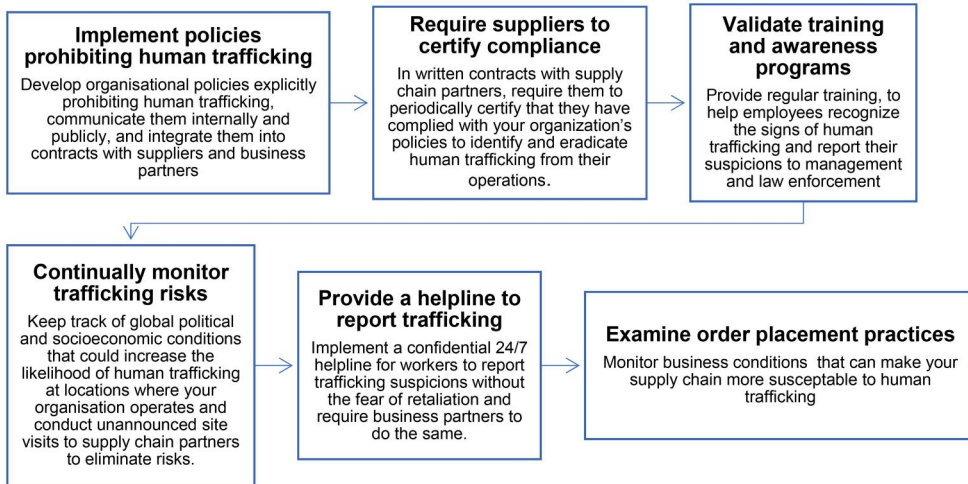


Figure 4. Six ways to prevent human trafficking within business supply chains.
Source: Authors work as seen in OSCE (2018)

awareness programs to employees to recognize signs of human trafficking, continual monitoring of trafficking risks and provision of helplines to report trafficking incidents (OSCE 2018). Accordingly, an effective response to trafficking at the border requires a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies to work together to share information and maximize their shared capability because the government and law enforcement agencies cannot tackle human trafficking alone (Ezeilo 2012).

Modern slavery disclosure measures

The growth of human rights disclosure and due diligence law around the globe is a welcome development in business and human rights. Chambers and Vastardis (2021) examined the role of regulatory oversight in ensuring corporate accountability through human rights disclosure and due diligence laws. The call for this due diligence law is in response to the intense civil society pressure and increased public awareness of dreadful human rights impacts of business, including working conditions amounting to modern slavery. However, the state has been making immense efforts to increase transparency for business and human rights in lead companies (Townsend, Watkins, and Hughes 2016). In addition, multinational enterprises that engage in international trade can prevent and mitigate unfortunate human rights impacts by employing due diligence laws and disclosure measures across their supply chains (Odia 2018). Although, several countries around the world have introduced new legislation that pressurizes organizations to increase the transparency of their supply chains, which should encourage the dissemination of sustainable practices up the chain (Stevenson and Cole 2018).

The introduction of disclosure measures, legislation, and commitments regarding modern slavery in the global supply chain has proven ineffective over the years (Lang 2018; Trautrimis 2020). Accordingly, disclosure legislation obliges companies to provide publicly available information on specified dimensions of their operations. Bernards (2017) examined the gaps and challenges of the existing legislation and the politics governing modern slavery in the global supply chains. Similarly, Villiers (2019) argued that disclosure measures introduced internationally and nationally only partially assist the effort to achieve sustainability. Vaughn et al. (2019) found that the available modern slavery disclosure has yet to attain its regulatory objective of ensuring corporate transparency and the prosecution of unscrupulous actors in supply chains. However, the increase in the cases of modern-day slavery in supply chains has attracted the provision of home-state

legislation for the prevention and management of modern-day slavery in corporate supply chains (Irving 2016; O'Brian and Martin-Otega 2020).

Mandating disclosure of basic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainable labor practices allows the downstream supply chain to know how seriously companies take their obligation of not contributing to the worst form of modern slavery (New 2015; LeBaron and Rühmkorf 2017b; Lang 2018). However, the problem with the existing transparency mechanism is that in the absence of regulatory requirements on verifiability, the organization only respond when it runs into trouble. Hence, there is a limitation on what counter-trafficking intervention works best to tackle modern slavery in business supply chains. Hsin et al. (2021) analyzed the accountability, monitoring, and effectiveness of Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act. Correspondingly, Odia (2018) examined the challenges of existing legislation and mandatory disclosure to ascertain transparency in business supply chains. Table 1 presents modern slavery and the Due Diligence Disclosure Act to provide guidelines for the prevention of modern slavery, including forced labor, child labor, debt bondage, domestic servitude, sex slavery and human trafficking (Odia 2018; Christ, Rao, and Burritt 2020).

Responding to the impact of modern slavery on the global supply chain

The UNGPs expect industry, multi-stakeholders or other collaborative initiatives based on human rights standards to provide a procedure whereby victims of modern slavery can raise grievances accordingly and ensure remediation of any harm that a business organization might have caused or contributed to a worker in their supply chains (Curtze and Gibbons 2017; Benstead, Hendry, and Stevenson 2020). In addition, Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX) (2018) explored a new model for tracking labor abuse in global supply chains, including a worker-driven social responsibility. Accordingly, scholars and policymakers are trying to strengthen labor standards in supply chains and tackle the rise of indecent work, especially the business practices commonly described as forced labor. Finally, Sherman (2021) emphasized that to meet its responsibility to respect human rights under the 2011 UN Guiding Principles and Business and Human Rights, a corporation must conduct human rights due diligence.

Grievance mechanism for victims

A *grievance mechanism* is a critical means by which an affected person or stakeholder can raise a human rights concern and lodge a complaint with a business enterprise to seek remedy (Crane

Table 1. Ongoing modern slavery disclosures shaping the global supply chains.

Year	Title	Journal Publication	Reference
2010	California transparency in supply chain act	An International Journal	New (2015)
2010	The US Dodd-Frank act	Accounting, Organizations and Society	Islam and Van Staden (2018)
2015	The UK modern slavery act	Socio-Economic Review	LeBaron and Rühmkorf (2017b)
2016	Germany's National Action Plan	Journal of Undergraduate Research Creativity	Buck (2019)
2017	The French corporate duty of vigilance	Business and Human Rights Journal	Cossart, Chaplier, and Beau De Lomenie (2017)
2018	Australian modern slavery bill	Journal of Modern Slavery	McGaughey (2021)
2019	Dutch child labor due diligence law	Ropes and Gray	Kerstholt (2019)
2021	Supply Chain Due Diligence Act	Journal of Business Ethics	Islam and Van Staden (2021)

Source: Author's own illustration.

2013). However, providing a grievance mechanism will reduce factors that make people vulnerable to human rights abuses—essentially increasing awareness among vulnerable individuals in society about the indicators of modern slavery, including building and enhancing networks that aim to share best practices, resources, and information on modern slavery.

An effective grievance mechanism can help a business identify its involvement in modern slavery practices, supporting human rights due diligence. The Focus on Labour Exploitation (2017) suggested the development of an app with accessible information to workers and possibly a function to track hours and wages and report noncompliance anonymously. Where appropriate, using worker reporting technology can effectively monitor the condition of the worksite (Flynn 2019). For instance, the media has helped expose the conditions in Boohoo's Leicester garment factories, the forced labor of Uyghurs in China's cotton industry, and child labor in Uzbekistan's cotton industry (Bhat 2013).

Remediation to victims

Businesses not only have the responsibility to prevent human rights abuses in their supply chains, but they also need to ensure that remedies are available to victims of harm (Benstead, Hendry, and Stevenson 2020). Similarly, Hofmann, Shleper, and Blome (2018) drafted remediation guidelines for victims of exploitation in Extended Mineral Supply Chains. However, it is vital for international organizations, especially those that source products from developing economies, to create an effective remedial action beyond tier one of the supply chains (Buck 2019). For example, in the North of England, an 'Integration Support Programme' has been built on a long-standing commitment to providing services to victims and survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking beyond the limits of the National Referral Mechanism (Gardner 2017).

Identifying human rights issues in tiers two and three of the supply chains requires effective remedial action for the affected workers (Anti Trafficking Monitoring Group 2012; Curtze and Gibbons 2017). A proactive approach, such as a working committee and human resource clinic, will prevent issues from escalating into potential instances of modern slavery. Although, lead companies should focus on stakeholder-centred remediation for human rights harms instead of using only conventional contract remedies such as termination (LeBaron et al. 2021). According to Ergon Associates, remediation for affected labor workers is essential in supply chains and operations with low visibility. Similarly, survivors' voices are central to understanding and addressing modern slavery issues through gathering information and implementing corrective and preventive actions (Peter and Daphne 2023).

Research gaps

Our study evaluates three critical assumptions: *ontological*, *epistemological*, and *axiological*, to identify potential research gaps that could serve as a helpful guide for future research. Human trafficking is a complex issue that demands collaborative anti-trafficking solutions. However, there is limited critical research on how digital technology has impacted the fight against labor exploitation in the global supply chain (Farbenblum, Berg, and Kintominas 2018). Most existing research focuses on responsible supply chains (Hoejmoose, Brammer, and Millington 2013), business ethics (Yusuf et al. 2014), manufacturing (Dubey et al. 2021), and distribution (Wichaisri and Sopadang 2014). A gap in the literature exists regarding the effectiveness of supply chain monitoring to identify the enablers of social sustainability and create an awareness model for detecting modern slavery in global supply chains, such as in factories, production, and manufacturing sites. Companies should improve their supply chain monitoring processes to address structural changes and specific compliance challenges related to human rights and labor standards. Research by Datta and Bales (2013) confirmed the lack of empirical data on the enablers of labor exploitation.

Developing a consistent quantitative means of tracking social issues in global supply chains is challenging (Alsamawi et al. 2019). Our research aims to identify data on the prevalence and patterns of modern slavery through an awareness model. For instance, a blockchain model can monitor product types, manufacturing plant details, production methods, locations, and time stamps, including private data on labor, working hours, and wages.

Theoretical implications

International Organization for Migration report shows that offenders exploit potential victims' desire to migrate, recruit, and gain initial control or cooperation, only to be replaced by more coercive measures once the victims have been transported to another country (LeBaron et al. 2018). Correspondingly, Ford, Lyons, and van Schendel (2012) highlighted the case of labor migration and human trafficking in Southeast Asia. In the same way, the increasing competitiveness of the global economy has placed new pressures on both private and public sector employers to minimize costs and to maximize the use of cheap and flexible labor, precisely the kind of disadvantaged labor migrants with no proper documentation can provide (Huq et al. 2016; Hasan 2019). The contemporary trend of traveling to developed countries in search of better jobs has created an avenue for traffickers to take advantage of the socioeconomic vulnerability of individuals. On a global level, adopting the UN protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in 2000 provided an impetus for world governments and civil society to take more collaborative action to address trafficking in human beings (Ezeilo 2012; Idris 2017). Therefore, unscrupulous third-party labor recruiters often recruit the victims of human trafficking through coercion, deceit, and threats with the promise of high-paying jobs (Benstead, Hendry, and Stevenson 2020). Liu 2010 examined how globalization has contributed to the utmost forms of exploitation that some migrant workers face. Therefore, the continued coordination and collaboration to tackle human trafficking remain vital (Sereni and Baker 2018).

Practical implication

The dynamics of contemporary supply chains shape most employment practices and working conditions through awareness models and capabilities (LeBaron 2021). For example, there have been reports about ongoing human rights abuse in the construction project for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar over the poor working conditions of migrant workers (Parrella 2019). In addition, any shift in consumer attitudes and intentions is influenced by the credibility of the information source. Similarly, technological development has had an important influence on the crime of modern slavery, presenting both challenges and opportunities (Heerden 2015). According to Datta (2014), perpetrators constantly use modern technology to groom victims for labor exploitation and human trafficking. However, Kersten, Blecker, and Ringle (2017) indicated that new technologies such as Industry 4.0 and Enterprise Resource Planning software have often revolutionized supply chain activities to mitigate modern slavery practices in lower tiers. According to Trautrim (2020), business corporations require more than just technology to eradicate modern slavery in their supply chains. However, technology will be a crucial enabler for tackling modern slavery". For example, technology can support managerial decisions, build communities, educate, enable transparency, connect workers' rights advocates, provide access to justice, and track products and workers along supply chains (Benton 2018). The Figure 5 (D-R) framework provides a comprehensive model for addressing modern slavery within supply chains. This model is designed to raise awareness and facilitate the detection of any form of slavery while also outlining the appropriate steps for taking remedial action. By implementing this framework, organizations and stakeholders can effectively combat and prevent modern slavery in supply chains.

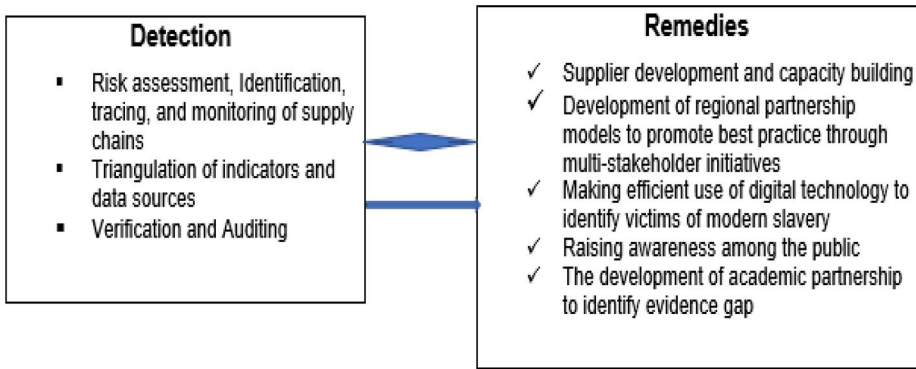


Figure 5. Awareness model to combat modern slavery in supply chain.
Source: Authors work

Managerial implication

Modern Slavery is a severe and often hidden crime in which people are exploited for economic gain. Abudu (1986) identified culture as an informal institution which play is a critical role in the contemporary business environment. Therefore, organizations require an Awareness Model for The Identification of Modern Slavery. According to Yawar and Seuring (2017), NGOs have developed mechanisms to trace supplier labor practices back to corporations to manage risk and reputation by monitoring portions of their supply chains. They do so through social or ethical auditing and collaboration with NGOs within multi-stakeholder initiatives like the Global Reporting Initiative, the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, and the Fair Labor Association (Quarshie and Salmi 2014; Yusuf et al. 2014; Gold et al. 2020). According to Idris (2017), effective interventions to combat modern Slavery must include prevention, protection, and prosecution.

Notwithstanding, it is high time to develop a government and law enforcement counter-trafficking database to combat modern Slavery and human trafficking due to the global politics of forced labor (Bernards 2017). For instance, when there is weak regulation or inadequate enforcement, there are limits to what business organizations can do on their own (LeBaron et al. 2018). Managers must uphold human rights principles in their business entity (Buck 2019). However, these measures seem ineffective due to insufficient monitoring and enforcement (Odia 2018).

European supply chain managers have adopted due diligence laws to regulate Environmental Social Governance (ESG) risk in their supply chains (Baharoglu et al. 2018; Duchon 2019; Iamandi et al. 2019). Recently, companies are beginning to do business with those that employ ESG criteria in their practices (Oncioiu et al. 2020). In addition, the European Union is working on human rights due to diligence laws that may affect many companies operating in Europe and worldwide. However, with the recently passed UN Sustainability Act, Germany and France are committed to enforcing human rights and environmental due diligence obligations along the international supply chains. In addition, the government and regulators worldwide are increasingly focusing on ESG practices to protect consumers and foster more sustainable behavior by companies and investors (Engle et al. 2019). However, Friede, Busch, and Bassen (2015) insisted that the knowledge of the economic effect of the ESG criteria needs to be more comprehensive.

Implications for policy

The study's findings suggest that there is a pressing need for a comprehensive approach to tackle human trafficking and slavery. To effectively address this issue, policymakers must consider implementing a wide range of strategies, including but not limited to legislative measures. Some of the recommended policy options include strengthening law enforcement efforts, increasing

public awareness campaigns, providing support for victim, and improving international cooperation to prevent and prosecute these crimes. Governments and organizations must work together and take a collaborative approach to combat human trafficking and slavery effectively.

Managing global supply chains is a challenging task for economic management, particularly regarding social, labor, and environmental standards. However, gaps in legislation, enforcement, and access to justice allow noncompliance with international labor standards in global supply chains (Alliance 8.7, 2019). Crane et al. (2019) highlighted the issues of the governance gap and the need for effective solutions to eradicate forced labor from global domestic supply chains. This governance gap has led to modern slavery, specifically in developing nations (Phillips 2016; Odia 2018). However, a lack of legislation, political willingness, and commitment to enforcing existing legislation obstruct social sustainability (Plant 2007; Bernards 2017). LeBaron et al. (2018) support this claim by indicating that the governance gap exposes vulnerable populations to human rights abuses by transnational corporations. In international governance debates, Phillips and Mieres (2014) explored the root causes of forced labor in the global production network. However, the effectiveness of governance initiatives depends on understanding the root causes of modern slavery (O'Brian and Martin-Otega 2020).

Legislation is one of the most effective tools to combat modern slavery because it defines the crimes, sets penalties, and has shared goals of prosecuting offenders and protecting the victims (Bernards 2017). According to the UN guiding principle, which contains the protection, respect, and remedy framework, the state must protect against human rights abuses, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and the state and corporate duty to ensure an effective remedial action judicial non-judicial (Martin-Ortega, Outhwaite, and Rook 2015). Additionally, the European Commission has supported the fight against human trafficking by funding prosecution efforts by national authorities, increasing law enforcement capacity, and creating alliances between stakeholders for a multi-agency approach to tackle crime (Chuang 2015). Despite this, measures such as disclosure, legislation, and commitments regarding modern slavery in the global supply chains have proven to be ineffective (Lang 2018; Odia 2018; Trautrimis 2020). Bernards (2017) examined the gaps and challenges of the existing legislation and the politics governing modern slavery in global supply chains. Villiers (2019) argues that the disclosure measures introduced internationally and nationally only partially assist in achieving sustainability. Nevertheless, due to the increase in cases of modern-day slavery in supply chains, home-state legislation has been enacted to prevent and manage modern-day slavery in corporate supply chains (Locke, Rissing, and Pal 2013).

Conclusion

This study provides an overview of the current literature on modern slavery in the global supply chain and aims to identify the factors that enable a socially sustainable supply chain. The study employs an awareness framework to identify instances of modern slavery within the supply chain. By analyzing existing literature, the study identifies various aspects of modern slavery within the supply chain and proposes an awareness framework to manage the relationship between different constructs. The study also highlights the existing gaps in research and recommends future studies on raising awareness about modern slavery. The literature analysis delves into how different aspects of modern slavery within the supply chain interact at various levels, facilitating a better understanding of the practices and enablers of modern slavery in the global supply chain. The study advocates for a collaborative approach between governments, businesses, NGOs, academia, and social activists to address the challenge of modern slavery within the supply chain. Both the private and public sectors need to play an active role in identifying and eliminating hidden modern slavery practices within the supply chain. Furthermore, it suggests that supply chain researchers should focus on comprehensive, data-driven empirical research to tackle this issue. Finally, it

emphasizes that policymakers should establish a data-driven platform to promote awareness and encourage inter-regional cooperation, as well as the sharing of best practices to combat modern slavery within the supply chain.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Barnabas Jossy Ishaya is a Ph.D. research student at Liverpool Logistics, Offshore and Marine Research Institute (LOOM) Liverpool John Moores. He is currently in the final year of his programme and the area of his research is on a performance evaluation on the prevention and management of modern slavery in global supply chains. Barnabas hold a higher national diploma (HND) in Nautical science from South Tyne side college south shields Newcastle. A degree in Nautical science from Liverpool John Moores University and A master's degree in international Transport and logistics from Liverpool John Moores University.

Dr Dimitrios Paraskevadakis is a Senior Lecturer Maritime Transport and Logistics at Liverpool John Moores University and Chairman of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport group for Merseyside and Warrington. He is a hybrid logistics manager and academic with many years of industrial experience in manufacturing and retail supply chains—also a very experienced project manager in flagship EU and UK funded research projects in multimodal freight transport.

Dr Alan Bury is a lecturer in Maritime Science. He has industrial experience as both a Merchant Navy deck officer and a consultant on infrastructure construction projects.

David Bryde is Director of Research & Innovation in the Faculty of Business and Law, Liverpool John Moores University. He is also a Professor of Project Management. Professor Bryde is particularly interested in relational/ psycho-social aspects of project operations, with a focus on understanding how different members of the supply chain/ network work together effectively and efficiently to deliver beneficial outcomes. A major application of his research is in improving effectiveness in the management of clinical research projects.

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