SDG#5 Gender Equality for Social Impacts via Transformations in Social Inclusion Strategies

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the elements of unnoticed areas from organizational culture and community perspective via the role of women in corporate structure and SDGxESG related activities for social impacts. By nurturing SDG related initiatives and empowering women communities, we can have more aspirations for the ways of improving ESG Score. A research was performed to analyze factors possibly related to CIIF Funded Projects (2020 Jan to 2025). One hundred thirty-eight articles published from 2020 to 2025 were discovered. By thoroughly delving into the articles, the top four factors: Implementation strategies on social inclusion, Service deliverables with behavioural changes,and Knowledge creation on social capital, and Measurable social impact.Through this paper, management of service organizations may explore the governance structure and decision-making process with the role of women with community engagement platform for social impacts.

Keywords: *Social Impacts, Social inclusion, Community Engagement, SDG#5 Gender Equality.*

Introduction

In a rapidly changing world, technology applications are the basic tools to streamline the process flow for productivity. However, culture and values have to be integrated with the technology applications to align with the mission of the organization and their workplace culture. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a foundation framework to tackle the most pressing global challenges. It is time to explore the missing link of technology applications; culture and values; and ESG scores for overall branding of an organization. The author (SY) recently published a series of SDG x ESG books which have opened up a new perspective of filling the gaps of the missing link via SDG#3 and # 9 with women empowerment to improve the ESG scores in SMEs. A few case study of this missing link has been mentioned without solid solutions implemented with impacts.

Based on a recent article of Deloitte, focused on opportunity for growth and innovation to solve toughest problems with their business knowledge mentioned that "In the current climate of economic uncertainty, the investment focus of High Net Wealth Indiviudal (HNWI)s is shifting towards alternative investments, such as art and other collectibles. Besides emotional and social value unique to art and other collectibles, this asset class has shown low correlation with traditional asset classes, and hence is an ideal hedge against inflation and an important part of a HNWI's portfolio diversification strategy.

Besides, Matthews & Foster (2014) mentioned that "Mindsets make a big difference to people's subsequent achievement and fulfillment. Those with a growth mindset have greater confidence and are more willing to take intellectual risks, and they're more successful academically and professionally than those with a fixed mindset. Those with a fixed mindset are more self-directed, more prone to negative judgements of themselves and others." (p. 20) It is time to re-think the ways of applying SDG x ESG for post COVID-19 periods to rebuild organizational image with new product development.

In an age defined by rapid technological advancements, the emergence of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) and the blockchain ecosystem represents groundbreaking opportunities for innovation across various sectors. The possibilities offered by Web 3.0, characterized by decentralized applications and increased user control, can substantially benefit organizational control with transparency and traceability. As the case of

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this study is a long standing organization in Japan on women apparel with offices in Hong Kong and Greater Bay area, it is interesting in exploring the values of Asian culture with organziational culture for cobranding via a team of committed staff with cross disciplinary knowledge and community engagement with technology. This paper is going to present some unnoticed areas from community perspective via identifying ways of presenting organizational culture with the role of women in corporate structure and SDGxESG related activities for social impacts. By nurturing SDG related initiatives and empowering women communities, we can have more aspirations for the ways of improving ESG Score, embracing SDG#3 wellness and SDG#5 gender equlaity for social impact improvements via building positive organizational culture for sustainability.

Trend of Integrating CSR into Organizational Management

Building quality into products and services for continuous improvement has been mentioned for scholars in total quality management in the past. Today, people started to explore integrating CSR and sustainability related elements into organizational strategy for sustainable business.

Deep (2007) mentioned that there was a growing number proponents of the 'stakeholder' or 'social responsibility' model of corporate governance holding that business was accountable to a broader populace who have a direct or indirect stake in the enterprise's activities. Although there is a lack of comprehensive evidence that CSR and sustainability lead to improving financial performance, awareness to environmental and social concerns from different stakeholders is needed for the progress of organizations.

Idowu and Towler (2004 quoted in Yeung 2011) brought up the importance of "care" of organizations to the people and environment that they operate in. They mentioned that corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports were required in addition to traditional financial reports. They claimed organizations should make positive contribution to the society. This is the way to demonstrate that they do care people and environment in their operating environment. Hence, different kinds of social reporting systems emerge under this idea. Examples are Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), Environment Social Governance (ESG) and AA1000 (AccountAbility Principles Standard).

In the past ten years, a series of CSR-related awards occur in Hong Kong. "Caring Company" and "Total Caring Award" of Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) are successful ones. The scheme started in 2002 and in 2008, it added one more criteria - "Caring to Environmental" on top of "Caring to Community" and "Caring to Employees" to reflect the expectation of the society. More than that, there is another one started gaining public concern – HKQAA CSR Index held by Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency (HKQAA). This is the first structured and quantified CSR Index that is backed up by ISO 26000 Guidelines of CSR to measure organizations' maturity level of social responsibility practices in Hong Kong. From understanding the seven dimensions of ISO 26000, the following characteristics of quality management have been observed in a variety of industries across the West and the East:

- Consideration of all stakeholders, especially employees, consumers and community in business practices;

- Recognition of organizations' visions and practices;

- Establishment of quality culture and transparency; and

- Acceptance of benchmarking for continual improvement.

Sustainable Development (SD) and Higher Education

"Sustainability is a confusing concept that has evolved steadily over the last decades according to Faber et al. , 2005" (Bolis et al., 2014, p. 7). In past years, there are different definitions on sustainability and sustainable development covering different disciplines and perspectives of ecology, economics, sociology, biology, etc. Bolis et al. (2014) mentioned that "the concept of sustainability means many things to different

people, and this diversity of meaning tends to increase." According to the definition of Brundtland Commission (1992) of the United Nations, "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The basic element of sustainability is the economic aspect to support the business in short term. For business survival and expansion, issues relating to the customers, suppliers, organizations, and the community must be considered in strategic planning, strategy implementation, performance measurement and process review. Environmental considerations in the core and supporting processes may also definitely contribute to sustainable business.

During the 17th conference of UNESCO in Teaching and Learning, 2014, though educators realized that the future teaching mindset and pedagogy needed to be changed to match the needs of the community, the issues were the implementation of appropriate institutionalized policy to increase the relevancy of continual professional development of scholars, teachers, industry practitioners to understand the linkage between sustainability development and supply chain management in various kinds of industries. As a result, UNESCO, APEID co-organised with a tertiary institution in Hong Kong for the 1st forum in Sustainability Development in Higher Education on 21st July, 2015 to cover, but not limit, the following areas:

- Sustainability Development in Higher Education;

- Sustainability Development in Programme Design;

- Sustainability Development in Module Assessment with Lifelong and Life-wide Character

     Building;

- Sustainability Development in Learning Environments, e.g. campus design, college life; and

- Sustainability in industries.

Besides, the study of Louw (2013, p. 56) mentioned that UNESCO called for educational sustainable development in the coming 10 years with the four main goals identified in relation to education, that is, rethinking and revising education from nursery school to university to include a clear focus of current and future societies on the development of knowledge, skills, perspectives and values related to sustainability. In 2010, Ryan et al. uncovered that many initiatives were offered in the Asia-Pacific region about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to increase the understanding the different dimensions of sustainability. They also highlighted that there was a global trend in requesting more works on "promoting systemic change in educational arenas, particularly in terms of strategic integration within HE institutions. The Asia-Pacific contributions to this collection demonstrate the need to harness national policy, to develop local and regional initiatives and to work effectively towards more profound change in HE curricula and through collaboration with external communities and stakeholders."

From the above, more works are required to close the gap between policy and practices on education for sustainable development and innovation for corporate competitiveness. In order to fulfill the needs of UNESCO in improving the understanding of SD and increase the innovative capacity of organizations, it is time to explore the sustainability related literature in past years to identify the concerned areas for economic, social and environmental impacts.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

The study of Louw (2013, p. 56) mentioned that UNESCO called for educational sustainable development in the coming 10 years with the four main goals identified in relation to education, that is, rethinking and revising education from nursery school to university to include a clear focus of current and future societies on the development of knowledge, skills, perspectives and values related to sustainability. In order to fulfill the needs of UNESCO and increase the employability of learners, this paper focuses on exploring ways to

engage stakeholders to increase the awareness of good practices on quality education in relation to sustainable development with entrepreneurship and innovations for creating a better world for the future.

UNESCO identifies Education for Sustainable Development with the following features:

• Education that allows learners to acquire the skills, capacities, values and knowledge required to ensure sustainable development;

• education dispensed at all levels and in all social contexts (family, school, workplace, community);

• education that fosters responsible citizens and promotes democracy by allowing individuals and communities to enjoy their rights and fulfil their responsibilities;

• education based on the principle of life-long learning;

• education that fosters the individual's balanced development.

In sum, "ESD is a vision of education that seeks to balance human and economic well-being with cultural traditions and respect for the earth's natural resources. ESD applies trans-disciplinary educational methods and approaches to develop an ethic for lifelong learning; fosters respect for human needs that are compatible with sustainable use of natural resources and the needs of the planet; and nurtures a sense of global solidarity."

Community Engagement

Flora et al. (2013) mentioned that "Community development is much broader than economic development. Indeed, once could argue that economic development is often antithetical to community development, for two reasons: Economc development does not necessarily involve collective agency, and economic development may not result in an improvement in the quality of life." (p. 364, 2013). After the emergence of COVID-19, people are more concerned on health and wellness, emotion and the use of colors in commumity caring. Flora et al. (2013) also highlighted that the major approaches for the Models of Community Development are: "technical assistance, power (conflict) models and self-help models." (p. 365)

For "Technical Assistance Model", it takes a problem-solving approach using an 'expert' model:

• Identify the problem based on feld needs.

• Anayze its causes.

• Identify the solution, often from the outside.

• Implement the solution." (p. 366)

"The power approach to community change thas both rural and urban origins in the United States. "(p. 370)

Robinson & Fear (2019) mentioned that "From a technical assistance position, the scientific method is highly valued, advances in technology are considered signs of progress, and rational planning in the decision-making process is a corollary of the scientific method. Indeed, planning is a prized process, and the collection and analysis of data are important elements in that process. It is assumed that all situations can be analyzed objectively and that bad decisions are frequently a result of poor planning." (p.2). It is

recommended to have technical support in the early stage of planning and involvement of key stakeholders from the community.

For "The power approach", it assumes that power is never given away; it always has to be taken with Change - movement means friction; friction means heat; heat means controversy' . The goal of the power approach is to build a peopl's organization to allow those without power to gain it through collective action. Because organizations of the powerless do not have access to significant monetary resources, they must rely on their numbers. Their numerical strength is only realized through organizational strength." (p. 372/ 373) Based on the change of movement and community development, community engagement to achieving SDGs and ESG with women participation and workplace occupational health and safety in the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and corporate social responsibility have been increasingly recognized, especially within frameworks like the S&P ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) score. Yeung and Chui (2017) explore how commitments to sustainable development and UN initiatives can influence corporate performance and returns, emphasizing the significance of social factors, including community engagement and occupational health and safety, in achieving lasting corporate success.

Hence, community engagement is integral to a company's social responsibility strategy and is increasingly evaluated in the S&P ESG scores. Engaging effectively with local communities can enhance a company's reputation, foster goodwill, and establish trust. As highlighted by Yeung and Chui (2017), businesses that actively participate in community development tend to experience improved operational environments and customer loyalty. This engagement can take many forms, including philanthropic initiatives, partnerships with local organizations, and outreach programs that respond to community needs.

Furthermore, companies that prioritize community engagement often find that it leads to a more sustainable business model. For instance, by understanding and addressing local issues of inclusion and diversity, women empowerment (SDG#5) and removal of inequalities (SDG#10), companies can develop socially responsible and environmentally upcycled products, services and processes to educate the community on choices, driving green selection with innvoations and transformations from a new perspective with market relevance. The research underscores that organizations demonstrating a commitment to social engagement via cobranding with selected icon, sharing the vision of organizations to empower women with inclusion and diversity, which aligns well with the findings of S&P ESG scoring that highlight the interplay between strong social practices and industry success.

Reflection on Role of Women in IT Industry

Women entrepreneurs play a vital role in creating innovation, social impact and sustainability, yet they encounter structural barriers that limit their full potential. Despite their natural ability to drive transformative change, female entrepreneurs often face cultural constraints, gender bias and discrimination. Many women entrepreneurs encounter bias in boardrooms, client meetings, and investor discussions, requiring them to prove their expertise with extra efforts than their male counterparts and thus hindering their growth. In the current global situation where sustainability has become a critical business imperative, there is a need to champion and support women leaders to create equitable and lasting impact.

While these challenges are common across industries, they are particularly challenging in corporate environments, where leadership positions remain predominantly male. Based on author JC's 20+ years tenure, working for multinational corporations in the IT industry, she witnessed encounters on how male dominance in executive positions often excluded women from key decision-making processes. Despite the industry's emphasis on innovation and strategic growth, leadership structures frequently undermine female leaders, undervaluing their perspectives and contributions.

Throughout my career, author JC observed how women's soft skills—such as emotional intelligence, collaboration, and adaptability—were critical assets for fostering inclusivity, problem-solving, and business success. However, these skills were often considered as secondary to the traditional corporate leadership style, which prioritized **hierarchical authority and aggressive negotiation tactics.

One example occurred during a critical organizational restructuring at one of the global IT firms author JC worked for. Despite extensive experience managing cross-functional teams and driving strategic initiatives, author JC found that leadership discussions primarily took place within closed-door meetings dominated by male executives. Women leaders, who had invaluable insights into workforce dynamics, operational efficiency and customer-centric strategies were either consulted last or not included at all. The result is that the key business decisions lacked the balance needed to drive sustainable, forward-thinking outcomes.

Additionally, the absence of women in top leadership roles reinforced a cycle of exclusion, where few mentorship opportunities existed for rising female leaders in the organization. Without visible representation, young women professionals found it difficult to envision themselves in executive positions, creating long-term gaps in leadership diversity.

This experience deepened my understanding of why women's leadership must be actively championed in corporate environments. Organizations must recognize that gender diversity strengthens innovation, decision-making, and enhances workplace culture. As companies strive toward transformative business models, leveraging the unique strengths of female leaders will enable equity and inclusivity to ensure that business decisions reflect a broader spectrum of perspectives leading to more sustainable, resilient corporate strategies.

Methodology and Content Analysis

Communication is to send textual messages - verbal and non-verbal for co-ordinating, integrating, controlling and persuading purposes. Hence, textual messages are tools for persuading people's minds to accept ideas. Organizational behavior is to understand, predict and control others' behavior. Management is to manage resources within an organization for achieving organizational goals. These three principles – business communication, organization behavior and business management bear an inter-related relationship.

Textual messages are data for conducting content analysis during the process of grounded theory which helps us to induce a concept for generalization and future prediction. From the following quotation, we can realize that content analysis is a technique to enable researcher to study human behavior in an indirect way. It is analysis of written contents drawn from a certain kind of communication paper, like textbooks, essays and articles from newspapers. Through analyzing these written work of people, the researcher can:

- understand the behavior of people and organizational patterns

- infer attitudes, values and cultural patterns in different countries or organizations

- gain ideas of how organizations are perceived

- can see the trend of certain practices

- differentiate practices among certain groups of people

"Content analysis as a methodology is often used in conjunction with other methods, in particular historical and ethnographical research. It can be used in any context in which the researcher desires a means of systematizing and quantifying data. It is extremely valuable in analyzing observation and interview data." (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003)

Content analysis is a systematic and objective analysis of selected text characteristics. This includes counting the number, frequency of words, finding out the characteristics of themes, characters, building relationship among items, paragraphs, finally establishing meaningful concept. It is not simply a quantitative research method but also a qualitative one as the purpose of the writing is also reflected through the analysis.

Key Findings

A research was performed to analyze factors possibly related to CIIF (Community Investment and Inclusion Fund) Funded Projects (2020 Jan to 2025). One hundred thirty-eight articles published from 2020 to 2025 were discovered. By thoroughly delving into the articles, various relatable factors are identified to the topic, including Implementation strategies on social inclusion, Service deliverables with behavioural changes, Knowledge creation on social capital, Measurable social impact, Measurable governance on stakeholder engagement and Measurable environmental impact. To further determine their relationship to the topic, by using Nvivo, a text search was performed for the mentioned keywords. The search result showed that a few of the factors such as Implementation strategies on social inclusion and Service deliverables with behavioural changes were cited relatively more frequently with 528 and 424 times correspondingly, while the rest were cited less frequently. (Table 1).

Table 1. Findings of the Keywords Search

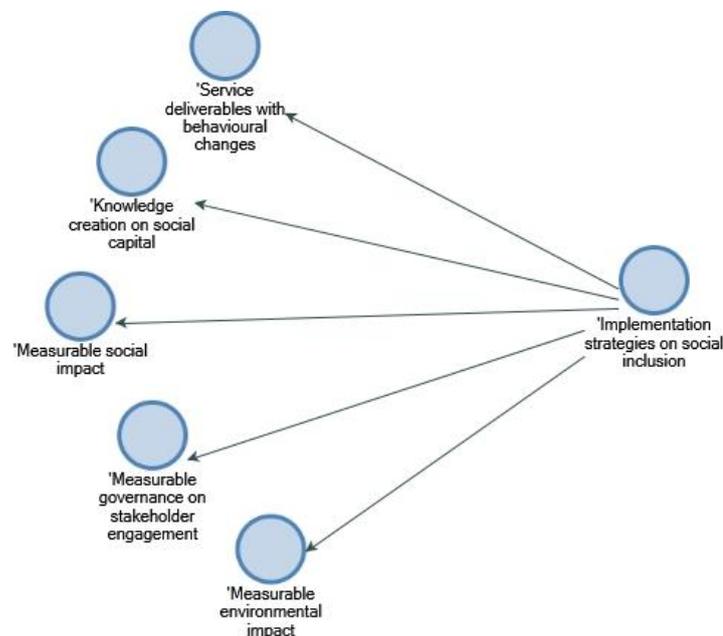| Factors	Sources	References
'Implementation strategies on social inclusion	132	528
'Service deliverables with behavioural changes	135	424
'Knowledge creation on social capital	87	323
'Measurable social impact	84	228
'Measurable governance on stakeholder engagement	91	187
'Measurable environmental impact	5	9

Figure 1. Model on the Factors

Conclusion and Discussion

Through this research, the key factors identified for the role of women in co-creating social impacts via nvivo analaysis related to CIIF Funded Projects (2020 Jan to 2025) and rticles published from 2020 to 2025, various relatable factors are identified to the topic, including Implementation strategies on social inclusion, Service deliverables with behavioural changes, Knowledge creation on social capital, Measurable social impact, Measurable governance on stakeholder engagement and Measurable environmental impact which are related to SDG#5 gender equality, #13 climate change, #16 institutional peace, and #17 partnership.

Besides, the following recommendations are worth to be considered for companies pursuing opportunities with strategies to support women by establishing initiatives of:

- Corporate governance practices that prioritize the diversity of women leaders especially those contributing to sustainability.

- Policy and Regulatory Support from Governments can proactively implement equity and inclusion policies that create equal business opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

- Networks and Mentorship Programs for women-focused business that foster mentorship, collaboration and industry connections to empower female entrepreneurs.

- Leveraging Technology and Innovation to streamline internal process and allow more resources for Digital transformation.

Last but not least, the researchers recognized that content analysis used in this research may have limitations in the availability of texts. In addition, subjective interpretation of the selected texts may also be a limitation. Future quantitative research could expand on this study with a focus group interview for confirming the elements identified for social impacts creation with the role of women and governance structure with institutional peace.

In conclusion, it is strategically important to champion women's leadership in today's fast pace and changing business environment. Women leaders often bring collaborative, empathetic, and adaptive approaches that add to the dynamics of the organization. Diverse leadership teams make more balanced and risk-aware decisions. Women leaders are more committed to reshaping corporate culture by prioritizing inclusivity, sustainability, and employee well-being. This shift help companies to attract top talent, young professionals and also boosts retention.

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