

CHAPTER 7

ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY FROM A SOCIAL ECONOMY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of sustainability has been extensively studied in the literature and discussed at different levels of society. Accordingly, it has become an important issue in the modern society of the 21st century. When the definitions of sustainability are examined, it is observed that they are generally handled in three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. The concept of social sustainability deals with the human aspect of sustainability. Within organizations, social sustainability emphasizes the employee participation, employee cooperation, equal opportunity, employee development, health and safety, and external partnership, which are the organizational dimensions of social sustainability. Social, economic, and environmental crises increase social inequality and endanger social sustainability. Therefore, organizations also suffer from these crises. As a solution to this problem, social economy implications have emerged. Social economy consists of voluntary, non-profit sectors. Non-profit entrepreneurs contribute to sustainability in crisis situations by prioritizing social and environmental value. These initiatives, known as social economy practices, support sustainable economic development. From this point of view, this chapter will provide information about social sustainability, social economy, and the organizational dimensions of social sustainability from a social economy perspective.

Keywords: Social Sustainability, Social Economy, Organizational Dimensions

“We all need to work together, because there are no jobs on a dead planet; there is no equity without rights to decent work and social protection, no social justice without a shift in governance and ambition, and, ultimately, no peace for the people of the world without the guarantees of sustainability.”
- Sharan Burrow

Introduction

With globalization, the impact of humanity on the world has increased rapidly. This effect has given rise to the concepts of sustainability and social economy. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) has highlighted the global importance of the concept of sustainability in its Brundtland Commission Report, which defines sustainable development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of meeting the needs of future generations.”

Sustainability is based on a simple principle which emphasizes that people’s well-being directly or indirectly depends on their natural environment. When the definitions of sustainability are examined, it is observed that they are generally handled in three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. These three dimensions reciprocally reinforce one another and support economic growth, environmental protection, and social welfare. The concept of social sustainability deals with the human side of sustainability. Social sustainability includes concepts such as: equality, empowerment, accessibility, participation, sharing, cultural identity, and institutional stability. In terms of organizations, social sustainability is expressed with its organizational sub-dimensions, including: employee participation, employee cooperation, equal opportunity, employee development, health and safety, and external partnership.

The interrelationships between society, the environment, and economic/industrial development are an integral part of the concept of social sustainability. It will not be possible to achieve social sustainability without an adequate understanding of how social and industrial actions affect the economy, the environment, and the socio-cultural structure, or how today’s decisions may affect future generations. Therefore, social sustainability is also closely related to the economy. With the increase of moral crises underlying the global economic collapse, the increasing distrust in market capitalism, examples of unsustainability, over-consumption, and social unrest, the growing interest in social entrepreneurship, social solidarity, and global justice have suggested that the concepts of traditional market economy and social economy, which are the two sides of the economy, should be reconsidered.

The basic values of social economy are concerned with the prioritization of individual and social purposes over capital, democratic governance, and the reinvestment of profits in order to achieve sustainable development goals, services that concern members, and/or the priority of general services. Social economy is profoundly connected with the concepts of human, sustainable, and social development. In addition, social economic entities have values and principles that correspond to social, environmental, and ethical criteria.

Although there important literature on the economic and environmental aspects of sustainability exist, there are few studies on its social aspects. Both social sustainability and social economy have only recently taken their places in the management literature as a result of increased sensitivity to ethical issues in the developed world. Therefore, increased knowledge and awareness of both social sustainability and the social economy is required. The aim of this chapter is to examine social sustainability and the organizational dimensions of social sustainability from the perspective of social economy. For this purpose, social sustainability, social economy, sustainable development, and the organizational dimensions of sustainability are discussed.

1. Social Sustainability and Social Economy

Various challenges, such as globalization, climate change, resource depletion, and aging population, have revealed that the development of societies can no longer be achieved with quantitative economic growth, necessitating qualitative changes (Staniškienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018). In addition, many organizations have faced constant environmental changes in recent years, forcing them to adapt to sustainability in response to the pressure from laws and society implemented by governments (Cella-De-Oliveira, 2013). Since survival is the main goal of any organization or community, new pursuits such as sustainability for social sustainability and social economy are emerging in conjunction with competitiveness in an environment where limited resources exist.

Accordingly, the European Commission recognizes sustainability as one of the priority targets for today's projects and future investments. In recent years, sustainability has been at the top of the research agenda, from academic institutions to industrial organizations. For this reason, many businesses have begun to integrate sustainability into their business models (Popovic, et al., 2018). The inclusion of corporate sustainability in the business environment ensures that the enterprise is aware of its environmental, social, and economic capitals (Lopez, et al., 2017). The value of sustainability awareness, however, emerges by making use of information and facts. This value consists of various ways of defining how, why, and to what

extent stakeholders understand the concept of sustainability and its dimensions. Although business administrators (i.e., practitioners) understand the term sustainability very well, it appears that there is difficulty in understanding this term when it is used in society (Garbie, 2015).

These difficulties often add to the confusion about “sustainability”. Therefore, there is a huge awareness gap between society and industry, meaning that the implementation of sustainable development requires the participation of everyone in society. It is not possible to achieve the expected results from sustainability practices unless society is aware of how its daily activities and tasks work, as well as understand the meaning of sustainability and how it is practiced in everyday life, away from that of popular and influential people (Garbie, 2015). For this reason, this section will first emphasize sustainable development and the triple bottom line approach to better understand sustainability. Following that, the themes of social sustainability and social economy will be explained.

1.1. Sustainable Development and Sustainability

The doctrine of “sustainable development” stems from a discipline that has existed in the developing economy for almost 200 years. The debate over whether the world’s limited natural resources can continue to provide life support to humanity’s developing population began in the early 1800s, with the work of the British political economist Thomas Malthus. In the *Essay on the Principle of Population*, published in 1798, Malthus outlined the basic principle of environmentalism. According to Malthus, while the human population tended to grow in a geometric progression, the depletion of natural resources was inevitable, as prosperity could only grow in an arithmetic development, with population growth being controlled by human desire and misery. In this context, since the subject was first raised by Malthus in 1798, economists have tended to ignore the dilemma of resource depletion. Traditionally, they have only been concerned with the efficiency of resource use (Basiago, 1999).

After World War II, the rapid population and economic growth, which initiated concerns about the needs of future generations, resulted in apprehension about the conservation of non-renewable and natural resources. Besides economic growth, social problems were recognized as important dimensions of sustainable development as they represent the growth of human well-being. As this idea developed, it became clear that natural resources should be considered as capital rather than a source of income to meet the demands of future generations. In this direction, researchers argued that every development should have an approach that is compatible with defined sustainable vision and goals (Randhawa and Kumar,

2017). In line with these developments, the concept of sustainable development, which was first clearly formulated during the Third UNEP Program in 1975, was defined as “a desirable course of economic development that does not materially and irreversibly affect the human environment, does not harm the biosphere and does not lead to the disruption of the laws of nature, economy and culture” (United Nations, 1995). This definition has received a great deal of attention among researchers of various fields since its formation. The inclusion of economic issues in these definitions provided the basis for building a broader concept of sustainable development (Szopik-Depczyńska et al., 2018).

In the report titled “Our Common Future” (Brundtland Report) prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, sustainable development was defined as “a development process that meets the needs of today, without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). As a whole and a widely accepted definition, sustainable development envisages the necessity of development rather than focusing on strategies to sustain existing conditions, and consequently concentrates on areas where development is most important. Subsequent international summits on the environment (such as Rio 1992 and Johannesburg 2002) further advanced the agenda for sustainable environmental management and global environmental protection (McKenzie, 2004).

The desired outcome in the report was to establish a society that could meet the human needs of today without undermining the integrity and stability of living conditions, resource use, natural systems, and the needs of future generations (Vivoda and Kemp, 2019). In this context, the Brundtland report is an interesting combination of radical and reformist elements. The radical aspect arose because of the clear link established between environmental and development problems. These two issues were discussed for the first time in the report, with the perspective that ecological sustainability cannot be achieved unless the problem of poverty is handled carefully on a worldwide scale. The radical consequences of the attempts of this proposal have not not exaggerated. Fundamentally, the Brundtland report advocated the integration of the broad and complex issue of environmental degradation with another equally broad and complex issue of human development and poverty, suggesting that both should be resolved simultaneously and in a mutually empowering way (Robinson, 2014). In this context, according to Elkington, “this could be a game of sustainability $2 + 2 = 5$ (or even 50). To achieve superior triple outcome (triple bottom line) performance, some sort of new, economic, environmental and social partnership is required.” (Elkington, 1998).

The reformist element of the Brundtland report is related to its human-centered structure. The writing of the previously mentioned report, in addition to being a sensitive development for producing a solution for over and under consumption and reducing environmental concerns, also initiated discussion which would encourage further human development. In this regard, the Brundtland Commission, with a formula that would later become very well acknowledged, called on world industry to ensure that the needs of the poor be met “5 to 10 times” more in the next century (Robinson, 2004). The Commission’s seminal definition emphasizes the interdependence between the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainability (Silvestrea and Tirca, 2019).

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992 helped transform the concept of sustainable development into legal and political formulations. The Rio Declaration has enriched the content and scope of the concept of sustainable development by making statements on sustainable use and integration, intergenerational and intra-generational equality, common but differentiated responsibilities, polluter pays, prudent approach, and environmental impact assessment. Therefore, the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have made significant contributions to the verification of the legal concept of sustainable development. The goals of the international conventions of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought in 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the International Agreement on Plant Genetics for Food and Agriculture in 2001 all included sustainable development (Prasad, 2018). Within this scope, the rise of sustainable development since the 1980s, both theoretically and practically in policy, reflects the dynamic relationships between science, technology, and social change and can be traced within the framework of a knowledge creation or discourse analysis (Grist, 2008).

Sustainable development is a dynamic process of adaptation, learning, and action, rather than a goal. It is about being aware of, understanding, and acting on the relationships between the economy, society, and the natural environment (Sala, 2013). In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly presented the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” consisting of 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets. The targets are based on the Millennium Development Goals and aim to fulfill the unfinished goals. The 17 goals in question are combined in three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, society, and environment. In addition, these goals are based on people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership, known as the 5Ps. In regard to “people” and “prosperity,” the goal of sustainable development is to provide appropriate regulations and establish special conditions that

promote sustainable economic growth, efficient resource allocation, collective prosperity, and a healthy working environment (Chamsa and García-Blandón, 2019). However, while the Millennium Development Goals apply to all countries regardless of the level of development, they are an open integrated framework designed to improve human and natural systems (Moyera and Bohl, 2019).

Despite some criticism of the framework, these goals dominate the sustainability and policy debates surrounding development today. In this direction, although some progress has been made towards the Millennium Development Goals, understanding of the interactions between the goals has remained limited. So much so that it is inevitable that so many goals and targets interact with each other. Possible interactions take many forms, from cancellation (achievement of one goal makes it impossible for another to progress) to indivisibility (success in one goal depends on the success of another) (Scherera et al., 2018).

Since the Commission report, alternative definitions of sustainable development, sustainable economies, and sustainable societies have been proposed (Gladwin, Kennelly, and Krause, 1995). According to Barbier, sustainable development is the simultaneous maximization of biological system goals (genetic diversity, resilience, and biological efficiency), economic system goals (meeting basic needs, increasing equality, and increasing useful goods and services), and social system goals (cultural diversity, institutional sustainability, social justice, and participation) (Barbier, 1987). According to Costanza et al., sustainability is the relationship between dynamic economic systems and larger dynamic, but normally more slowly changing ecological systems. In this context, in sustainable development: (a) human life can continue indefinitely, (b) human individuals can thrive, and (c) human cultures can thrive; however, it is a system in which the effects of human activities remain within certain limits in order not to destroy the diversity, complexity, and function of the ecological life support system (Costanza, Daly and Bartholomew, 1991). Campell (1996), on the other hand, sees sustainable development as the result of a process that provides a balance between the environment, the economy, and society, which are often fraught with tension. The author stated that in an effort to maintain this balance, it is necessary to promote economic growth, distribute this growth fairly, and operate within the limits of the biophysical environment. In this context, the basic idea of sustainable development is to protect and restore the environment while promoting peace and security, economic development, and social development. In other words, sustainable development redefines progress in a way that environmental protection or restoration is not something to be sacrificed to achieve these goals, but to be achieved in conjunction with other goals. Likewise, like traditional

development, sustainable development is geared towards achieving human freedom, equal opportunity, and quality of life (Dernbach, 2003).

According to Dernbach (2003), the biggest challenge faced in sustainable development in the coming years is to make it operational, to make it happen in communities and businesses all over the world, and/or to make an effective transition towards it. Sustainable development questions too many important issues (increasing environmental degradation, growing gap between the rich and the poor, etc.) that are intended to be addressed. Today, there is a deeper understanding that sustainable development is based on a set of principles that can profoundly affect national and international governance (Dernbach, 2003). According to Seuring and Muller (2008), while there are various scopes of sustainability, the central concept that helps operationalize sustainability, it is the triple bottom line approach, which aims to achieve a minimum performance across the environmental, economic, and society dimensions. Goosen (2012) states that the relationship between economic development, environmental management, and individual welfare stands out as a complex process that affects the quality and sustainability of the society that we live in. Overall, there is a growing awareness in practice by engineers, policy makers, environmentalists, and medical researchers that these three fields are interconnected.

Some situations that take place outside the boundaries of organizations affect their power to acquire and use resources to build value. The mission of organizations is to nurture the awareness and competencies needed to ensure their employees are healthy and well-educated and to produce productive employees and proactive citizens who contribute to society (Chamsa and García-Blandón, 2019). Its role in job creation, improving social well-being, and reducing environmental impact has led to increased interest in researching sustainability (Moldavska and Welo, 2019). Thus, sustainable development is accepted as a model to be followed by many organizations and their stakeholders. For example, an increasing number of businesses today rely on their triple performance in the economic, environmental, and social fields and communicate with their stakeholders (Goosen, 2012). In this regard, sustainability is a new and very comprehensive concept for both businesses and society from an economic, social (including cultural), and environmental point of view.

1.2. Sustainability and Triple Bottom Line Approach

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of sustainability has been extensively examined in the literature and discussed at different levels of society (Assefa & Frostell, 2007), becoming an important issue in the modern society of the 21st century. So much so

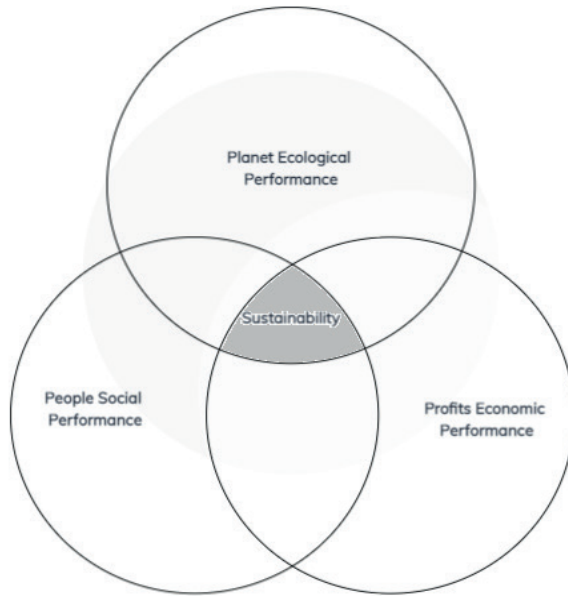
that it effects a wide range of issues, including the rapid growth of population all over the world, the development of technology, the change in relations between economies, population, poverty, health, oil and ecosystem protection, food, water, climate change, etc. (Bormane, et al., 2017). Sustainability issues like the increasing inequality and the degradation of natural livelihoods make the transformation to a more sustainable economic system increasingly attractive (Geissdoerfer, et al., 2018).

To realize this transformation, John Elkington introduced the “triple bottom line” framework to the sustainability literature for the first time in 1994. In the late 1990s, it was seen that the triple bottom line framework (TBL) became increasingly widespread in the relevant literature (Elkington, 2004). This approach addresses and balances economic, environmental, and social problems from a microeconomic perspective in three subcomponents (Gimenez, et al., 2012). In addition, the triple bottom line framework is an approach that reflects the commitment of organizations to foster financial, social, and environmental values. This includes being clear about the goal of the organization and considering stakeholder needs (Assaf, et al., 2012).

The triple bottom line approach suggests that businesses not only need to engage in socially and environmentally responsible behavior, but that positive financial gains can also be achieved as a result of their activities (Gimenez, et al., 2012). Therefore, the social, environmental, and financial reporting of enterprises is related to their obligation to foster economic prosperity (profit), while at the same time taking care of society (people) and the environment (planet) (Assaf, et al., 2012). Organizations need to consider stakeholders, flexibility, long-term goals, and current operations when evaluating their sustainability strategies. The TBL includes the basic components needed to evaluate the sustainability of an organization. This approach has been widely applied in many areas to promote sustainable development that provides mutual benefit (Kuo-Jui Wu, et al., 2018).

In this era, which is defined by the concepts of complexity, insecurity, economic instability, and ongoing turbulence, the sustainable development of civil society is endangered (Castiglioni, et al., 2019). In the context of eliminating this danger, sustainability is a normative idea about how people should behave towards nature and how they are responsible to each other and to future generations (Baumgärtner & Quaas, 2010). The protection of natural systems is not only to ensure social justice and economic vitality; it is a necessary component for the whole system to ensure economic, social, and environmental sustainability, where economic and social reforms are important (Basiago, 1999). Within this framework, the TBL developed by Elkington has been schematized by Jianguo Wu, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Triple Bottom Line



Jianguo Wu, "Landscape sustainability science: ecosystem services and human well-being in changing landscapes," *Landscape Ecol*, Vol.28, 2013, p.1002.

The TBL is a corporate responsibility approach that goes beyond the traditional economic and financial aspects of an organization. In addition, the TBL is an audit and reporting framework that requires the measurement of economic, environmental, and social performance (Rogers & Ryan, 2001).

1.2.1. Economic Sustainability

According to Anand and Sen, economics has never been the subject of just a certain discipline. For several centuries, commodity production, wealth, and financial success have remained the center of attention of professional economics. Many prominent economists, as well as businessmen and bureaucrats, preferred to focus more on the components of overall material success rather than poverty and human development within the economic system (Anand & Sen, 2000). Baumgärtner and Quaas, on the other hand, identified the four main characteristics of the emerging sustainability economy by interpreting the current economic system based on the general idea of sustainability (Baumgärtner & Quaas, 2010).

- Economic sustainability focuses on the relationship between man and nature.
- It gravitates towards a long-term and uncertain future by nature.

- The normative basis of the idea of justice focuses on the relationship between people, today's and future generations, and between people and nature.
- It is concerned about economic efficiency, which is understood as zero waste in the production and allocation processes of products and services.

Economic sustainability takes the efficient use of resources into account to increase the operational gain of organizations and maximize market value. At the same time, the use of natural materials in production for the reuse and recycling of man-made production resources is among the issues of interest to economic sustainability (Olawumi & Chan, 2018). A successful sustainability process should reflect their practices to meet economic needs and develop economic opportunities, as well as the cooperation of organizations, in order to protect the environment and natural resources. It is a widely accepted view among sustainability economists that organizations should meet social needs and develop fair relationships between different social groups. Yet, organizations that consistently fail to make a profit and cannot pay their employees mean that they cannot be a sustainable business, no matter how "green" their practices are (Bormane, et al., 2017). Economic sustainability, according to Baumgärtner and Quaas, is based on the idea of avoiding waste and achieving efficiency in the use of scarce resources to ensure justice between the present and next generation, in meeting people's individual needs, and in establishing human-nature relations throughout a long-term and undefined future (Baumgärtner & Quaas, 2010).

The latest global economic crisis, which began with the collapse of the Wall Street financial institutions in 2008, has once again drawn attention to economic sustainability all over the world. With the ongoing global recession, consumers and society continue to experience the insecurity of governments and public programs due to widespread business losses and are closely interested in economic sustainability for fear of financial risk. There are two aspects of the economic dimension of sustainability: the processes related to traditional financial performance such as cost reduction and the living standards related to economic interests such as the broad development of external stakeholders. In this context, this approach is important as the focus is no longer a single business, but rather a business operating in the community. Hence, society considers both the financial performance of a business and its contribution to society (Choi & Ng, 2011).

Labuschagne et al. propose four criteria to evaluate economic sustainability. These criteria are as follows (Labuschagne, et al., 2005):

- **Financial health:** This criterion includes aspects that evaluate the financial stability of a business and traditional financial sub-criteria, such as profitability, liquidity, and solvency.

- ***Economic performance:*** This criterion takes the perceived business value into account from the perspective of shareholders, senior management, and the government. It also includes sub-criteria, such as share profitability, gross domestic product contribution (GDP), and market share performance.
- ***Potential financial benefits:*** It includes financial benefits other than profit, such as national and/or international subsidies based on environmental, social and/or technological developments resulting from commercial initiatives, and projects that are potentially suitable for financing a clean development mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol.
- ***Trading opportunities:*** In this criterion, the fragility of the business' commercial network and the risks that the network is exposed to are evaluated, considering the number of national and/or international businesses in the commercial network.

Economic sustainability encompasses the environment and social aspects to stay in the market for a long time, as well as the general elements of the organization, such as “innovation and technology,” “cooperation,” “information management,” “processes,” “purchasing,” and “sustainability reporting.” Instead of focusing solely on those aspects that indicate financial results, management should also consider these points to achieve economic success. Therefore, these general elements should also be included in the economic dimension of corporate sustainability (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010). Economic sustainability is often comprehensively evaluated by researchers and practitioners. At the same time, sustainable economic principles are applied in reducing production or production costs at the enterprise level. However, definitions of environmental and social sustainability are not yet clear in practice (Gimenez, et al., 2012). The environmental approach to sustainability has emerged largely due to the perceived inadequacies in the dominant economic criterion regarding the natural resource allocation of businesses (Foy, 1990).

1.2.2. Environmental Sustainability

The environmental approach focuses on the establishment of safe minimum levels of natural assets to ensure the sustainability of economic systems. The rationale for a safe minimum protection standard was developed by Ciriacy-Wantrup in 1968 to deal with the problem of the extinction of living things. Species represent a potential resource pool for humanity. Extinction irreversibly reduces the potential resource pool, destroys life forms, and limits the development potential of society. The safe minimum standard needs to be adopted in which suitable habitats are protected to prevent extinction (Foy, 1990). Therefore,

environmental sustainability has recently come to the fore as a solution to serious natural environmental and social problems. In the past, environmentally friendly products or services were perceived as a source of unnecessary additional costs rather than a source of competitive advantage. With the increase in the world population and the irrecoverable degradation of the natural environment, as well as the ruthless use of nature, economic development has become unsustainable. Meanwhile, it has also caused the new generation to be powerless in the near future. Symptoms related to this situation, such as the greenhouse effect and the loss of biodiversity due to air, water, and soil pollution, have been quite notable in recent years (Chen, et al.,).

Environmental sustainability is about limiting human activities to the carrying capacity of the ecosystem (e.g., raw materials, energy, soil, and water) and emphasizes human quality of life (air quality and human health) (Olawumi & Chan, 2018). In addition, environmental sustainability includes ecosystem integrity, transport capacity, and biodiversity. It also aims to maintain natural capital as an economic source of input and a disposal for waste. Consequently, natural resources should not be consumed faster than they can be replenished. Also, waste should not be thrown into nature faster than it can be decomposed by the environment (Basiago, 1999). Therefore, environmental development towards sustainability basically aims to minimize environmental pollution, the uncontrolled consumption of valuable resources, as well as the production and use of harmful substances called “environmental substance use.” To achieve these goals, various concepts have been developed that attempts to determine how much of a country/region is used by different social/spatial entities and to come up with reasonable suggestions on how this use can be reduced. According to environmental sustainability, the use of the environment should be distributed more evenly among all humans.

1.2.3. Social Sustainability

Sustainability depends on the contribution to the overall development and society as well as to the environment and the economy. This means that a fundamental element of the thoughts and actions of sustainability is also society (Bormane, et al., 2017). The social dimension of sustainability is concerned with the well-being of people and communities as a *non-economic form of wealth*. The issue of sustainability relates to finding a balance between personal and societal “needs” and nature’s capacity to support human life and ecosystems. This social dimension of sustainability has become more apparent as companies do more for social welfare, alongside public distrust of business practices, exemplified in the scandals surrounding Enron and Exxon Oil. While the social dimension reveals the tension

between the interests of the business and the society, it is also possible to look out for the interests of society with the sustainability practices of the businesses. Therefore, from a micro perspective, when organizations respond to sustainability, they also respond to a macro-level societal concern in terms of habitat and quality of life. That is why significant efforts have been made in the academic literature to examine the social dimension of sustainability (Choi & Ng, 2011).

Economists still focus on the maximization of wealth, regardless of its impact on human life and no matter how rich society is. On the other hand, this approach remains profoundly limited and flawed so long as it neglects other important factors that contribute to the well-being and freedom of individuals, such as public care and social organization (Anand & Sen, 2000). In this direction, when referring to the concept of sustainable development, a broader definition of sustainability should be considered, not only in terms of the ecological and economic environment, but also to improve the quality of life of each person (Castiglioni, et al., 2019). In fact, in addition to the environmental and material needs that can be met through economic development, people also need social development to promote social justice, equality, and security (Liu, 2009). While the concept of sustainable development generally refers to the establishment of a balance between the environment, economy, and social bases of sustainability, the meaning and related purposes of the social basis remains unclear in the literature. In this context, social sustainability performance for many years has been relatively neglected and much less improved than the discourse surrounding the economic and environmental dimensions (Kamali, et al., 2018; Omann & Spangenberg, 2002; Hussain, et al., 2018; Lee and Jung, 2019). John Elkington, the founding researcher of the “Triple Bottom Line” approach, wrote in the Harvard Business Review in 2018 and in his article titled “25 years ago I coined the phrase ‘triple bottom line.’ ‘Here’s why it’s time to rethink it,’” that he reproached this phenomenon and stated that *he had withdrawn the “triple bottom line” approach.*

However, in recent times, social sustainability has gained great importance in business life because the awareness of stakeholders to the issue has increased. Awareness includes not only where products are made and distributed, but also how and under what conditions products are produced and distributed (McCarthy, et al., 2010; Lee and Jung, 2019). Also, many businesses today are required to report certain aspects of corporate social sustainability (Hussain, et al., 2018), and therefore, the importance of the subject in business life has increased considerably. This situation requires a clarification of the framework and measurement criteria of the concept of social sustainability to pave the way for its applicability in business life by increasing the number and quality of academic studies.

Social sustainability focuses on how societies, communities, and individuals live and refers to social values such as equality, basic needs, working conditions, human rights, participation, fair pay, and cultural diversity (Rajak & Vinodh, 2015; Lee & Jung, 2019). According to Elkington, social sustainability is found in organizations that provide equal opportunities, promote diversity, and promote connectivity within and outside of society (Elkington, 1994; Lee & Jung, 2019).

Social sustainability, as a fundamental element, includes the right of each citizen to participate actively in their own society. Physical, legal, educational, and participant access to the relevant resources of society is the prerequisite for this (Omann & Spangenberg, 2002). According to Basiago, social sustainability involves the concepts of equality, empowerment, accessibility, participation, sharing, cultural identity, and institutional stability. Social sustainability attempts to protect the environment through economic growth and poverty reduction (A.e., Basiago, 1999). While social sustainability focuses on personal assets, such as education, skills, experience, consumption, income, work/employment, it also includes the active physical, legal, educational, and participant access of each citizen to the resources and services of society (Omann & Spangenberg, 2002). Dempsey et al. have stated that social sustainability is based on: education, social justice for generations, participation and local democracy, health, quality of life, people's well-being, social inclusion, social capital, society, security, equitable distribution of income, social order, social solidarity, communal solidarity, social connections, social interaction, sense of social belonging, employment, settlement stability, active community organizations, and cultural traditions (Dempsey, et al., 2011). According to McKenzie, social sustainability is a life-improving situation within communities and a process within communities that can achieve this condition. The following elements are indicators of social sustainability and constitute the process for the implementation of social sustainability policies (McKenzie, 2004):

- Equality of access to key services (including health, education, transportation, housing, and recreation,
- Equality between generations, that is, future generations should not be disadvantaged due to the actions of the current generation,
- Establishment of a system of cultural relations in which the positive aspects of different cultures are evaluated and protected, and cultural integration is supported by individuals and groups when desired,
- Citizens' participation not only in elections, but also in other areas of local political activity, especially at the local level,

- Establishing a system that conveys the awareness of social sustainability from one generation to the next,
- Developing a sense of responsibility towards society to maintain this transmission system,
- Existence of mechanisms to collectively identify the strengths and needs of a community,
- Establishing mechanisms that can meet the needs of a community as much as possible,
- Existence of political defense mechanisms to meet needs in situations that cannot be met by community action.

Social sustainability shifts the focus of organizations to both internal communities (i.e., employees) and external communities. Social sustainability means that organizations (and production facilities) provide equal opportunities for people, promote diversity, support connections within and outside of society, ensure quality of life, and provide democratic processes and accountable governance structures (Gimenez, et al., 2012). Social sustainability refers to actively supporting the creation and preservation of the talents of future generations, promoting healthy living, and supporting equal and democratic behaviors that allow for quality of life inside and outside the organization (Longoni & Cagliano, 2015). From a societal point of view, society today has become more sensitive to issues that affect human life, dignity, and rights, such as fair labor practices, social justice, and gender equality (Vivoda & Kemp, 2019).

Like the concept of sustainability, social sustainability is neither absolute nor fixed. Social sustainability should be thought of as a dynamic concept that will change over time (year by year/decade by decade) somewhere. While there is a scarcity of literature which focuses specifically on social sustainability, there is broader literature on the overlapping concepts of social capital, social cohesion, social inclusion, and social exclusion. Social sustainability is a comprehensive, multidimensional concept that seeks answer to the question, “What are the social goals of sustainable development?”, which is open to many answers and has no consensus on how these goals are defined (Dempsey, et al., 2011).

To embrace the concept of sustainability, a community needs guiding principles. When considering these principles, a community should consider the following points (Rogers & Ryan, 2001):

- It improves the nature’s ability to respond to human needs over time without damaging its functioning ability,

- Ensures the well-being of its members by offering and promoting tolerance, creativity, participation, and safety,
- Shares responsibility with people, educates people who have the capacity to influence decisions that affect them, provides equal opportunities, expertise, and access to information,
- Consists of businesses, industries and institutions that invest in the local community in various ways, which are competitive, collaborative, environmentally responsible, financially viable, and socially responsible at the same time.

As can be seen, social sustainability is concerned with the human side of sustainability. Social sustainability includes the impact of organizations on the social systems in which they operate and the relationships with various stakeholders. Since long-term survival, especially in commercial life, depends on meeting the expectations of stakeholders, managing organizational relations with them has been accepted as a means of connecting organizational strategy to social and ethical issues. This has led to greater awareness while improving the image of stakeholders who reflect the effective management of positive and negative effects on people and society (Hussain, et al., 2018).

Hicks et al. stated that there are four basic indicators for measuring social sustainability: welfare, values, institutions, and social inequality. These indicators, which are quite comprehensive in terms of the topics they address, can be briefly summarized as (Hicks, et al., 2016):

- **Well-being:** (1) OECD's "how to live" framework. Quality of life (i.e., health status, subjective well-being); economic conditions (i.e., income); sustainability of well-being over time (i.e., human, economic, social, and natural environment). (2) Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2003 "*Voice of the Poor*". Material well-being (i.e., adequate food); bodily well-being (i.e., health); security (i.e., civil peace); freedom of choice and action; social well-being (psychological well-being, self-respect and dignity, peace, harmony, and good relations). (3) Universal skills: Life; physical health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination, and thinking; feelings; applicable common sense; connection; other species; game; controlling one's environment (i.e., political and economic).
- **Values:** (1) Human values: The individual's openness to surpass, change, and develop himself/herself. (2) World values: being able to express oneself to survive.

(3) Cultural dimensions: from individualism to collectivism, uncertainty avoidance; social hierarchy; from masculine to feminine; long-term adaptation; from addiction to self-restraint.)

- **Agency:** (1) Moving away from the institutional ladder of power that causes poverty: Transforms one's self-power into a hypothetical ladder. (2) Institution and delegation: Reflects asset endowments (e.g., psychological, informative, organizational, economic, social, financial, and human). (3) Demographics and health research: Personal income, partner income, personal health care, large household consumption, daily household consumption, and family visits.
- **Inequality:** (1) Gini coefficient: It measures the degree of deviation of income distribution from full equality. (2) Social mobility indices: Measure the movement of individuals, families, households in a social stratum (changes in income levels, education levels. (3) Fractionalization indices: Measure social heterogeneity and conflict in a group.)

There is a reasonable consensus at the point of reducing social inequality by increasing prosperity and strengthening institutions on these indicators. However, there is a concern that extreme values will damage sustainability goals, which will make it difficult to determine a desired direction of change for values. Nevertheless, it is thought that these concepts will make great contributions to the formation of social sustainability goals and policies because the development of strong measurement systems is critical to the implementation, interpretation, and evaluation of social sustainability.

1.3. The Importance of Social Economy in terms of Social Sustainability

As mentioned in the other relevant sections of this work, the term social economy was first used by the French economist Charles Dunoyer (Nouveau feature d'économie sociale) in 1830 (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005). Thanks to Charles Gide and later Leon Walras (Etudes d'économie sociale, 1896), the term social economy gained full academic and institutional acceptance. Charles Gide defined social economy as "the study of all efforts to improve the human condition" (Gide, 1912, s. 10).

Global challenges in socio-economic development and environmental sustainability led to increased efforts to find alternative strategies for development. The concept of social economy emerged as a way to provide alternative solutions to the increasing inequalities in social, health, economic, and environmental conditions and the perceived failure of globalization

(Arruda, 2008). According to some authors, social economy emerged as a way of responding to the traditional private or public sector failure to meet needs in times of socioeconomic crisis and is claimed to be linked to times of crisis.

In summary, social economy constitutes a wide range of actions that have the potential to provide opportunities for local people and communities to participate in all stages of the local economic renewal and job creation process, from identifying basic needs to operationalizing initiatives (Molloy et al., 1999). In a general sense, the term social economy refers to the universe of practices and forms of mobilizing economic resources to meet human needs that are not met by for-profit businesses and the public sector (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005).

Social economy is the fastest growing sector in Europe, and this context is an efficient basis for initiating many new initiatives locally. Social economy initiatives are based on principles that deal primarily with people's needs. Therefore, success criteria are also distinctive. The criteria for success in social economy are: the benefits of projects for the wider society in terms of the number of jobs created, the number of people volunteering or involved in the learning capacity, benefits to producers and users, and the ability of a project to generate income for a community. This all refers to the effective cooperation, mutual dependence, and active participation of citizens in the social and economic welfare of society. Social economy is interested in bringing about an equalitarian, inclusive, and more fully democratic society that supports social justice, fundamental equality, and equal opportunity (Molloy et al., 1999).

Despite the growth of this movement, it is necessary to produce the necessary environment to support the development of social economy organizations and to include the sector in economic and social policies by maximizing its impact on the economy. Hawken (2008) defines the concept of social economy based on the idea that citizens can collectively succeed in challenging issues such as environmental sensitivity and social justice, and citizens can recreate society as whole by working together. Thousands of social and environmental organizations worldwide are leading the social economy movement and are challenging the unsustainable and unjust paradigm of the future. There is no doubt that a new social and economic paradigm is a necessary step towards achieving a global sustainability that encompasses the full range of economic, environmental, and social goals. In this respect, we can say that social economy has an important place in terms of ensuring social sustainability.

Social economy attracts widespread attention, both in the academic field and in the field of practice, due to its contributions to socio-economic development and sustainability (Tremblay, 2009). As mentioned above, social economy is a sector that operates for social purposes. It

consists of self-financing and sustainable activities. It also includes activities for the benefit of the people involved in the execution of these activities and for reducing social inequality. In a way, social economy promotes the welfare of society and aims to strengthen the connections within society. On the other hand, Elkington's triple bottom line approach to sustainability, which is widely accepted in the literature, addresses and balances economic, environmental, and social problems in three sub-components from a microeconomic perspective (Gimenez, et al., 2012). Additionally, the triple bottom line approach is an approach that reflects the commitment of organizations to foster financial, environmental, and social values. This includes being clear about the purpose of the organization and considering stakeholder needs (Assaf, et al., 2012).

Social economy, on the other hand, can be an effective mechanism for empowering people, institutions, and communities. For individuals, it represents the opportunity to become independent individuals who earn income from labor. It gives organizations the ability to produce their own resources for their own activities (Frączak and Wygnański, 2008). Finally, it provides societies with the ability to formulate independent growth strategies based on their own resources. With these aspects, social economy contributes to the development and sustainability of society. Both social economy and social sustainability operate in businesses and in society for social purposes. The priority of both is to meet the needs of people and society, to increase the level of life and welfare, and to ensure its development and sustainability. One of the most important conditions for ensuring social sustainability in enterprises and society lies in the dissemination of social economy practices at the enterprise and society level by being supported by state policies and incentives.

2. Organizational Dimensions of Social Sustainability

The number of organizations that put the issue of sustainability on their strategy agenda has increased in the last few years. Although sustainable development is becoming more important, the debate on sustainability measures also continues. The environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability can be evaluated more easily with clearly expressed quantitative indicators. A proper social sustainability measurement, however, requires a balance between quantitative and qualitative indicators (Staniškienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018). In order for businesses to make decisions that support all three bases of sustainability, there is a need for tools and methods that relate their decisions to sustainability impacts, including societal impacts. However, before such methods can be established, social sustainability needs to be measured (Hutchins, et al., 2019).

In this regard, Staniškienė and Stankevičiūtė developed a measurement system that can evaluate social sustainability from the perspective of an employee at an organization in the study titled “Social Sustainability Measurement Framework: Perspective of Employees in a CSR Affiliated Organization” in 2018. The dimensions of social sustainability at this scale are compliant with laboratory practices and the good business aspect of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). It was developed together with the sub-themes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) as well as the criteria for employee and external stakeholder participation. These dimensions incorporate a total of six headings as: *employee participation, employee cooperation, equal opportunity, employee development, health & safety, and external partnership* (Staniškienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018). The meaning and function of these dimensions in social sustainability are mentioned below.

2.1. Employee Participation

Emphasizing the importance of employee participation as a business strategy dates back to the late 1920s and early 1930s. Hawthorne Research have obtained important results on the impact of the human factor on productivity, with the human relations approach having emphasized the importance of communication between employees and their superiors. Empirical evidence presented by academic studies conducted since the 1930s demonstrates that employee participation increases efficiency and productivity within the organization, increases employee loyalty, and reduces audit costs at the same time (Cabrera, et al., 2004). Employee participation is one of the critical issues in the context of workplace sustainability (Staniškienė & Stankevičiūtė, 2018). In short, increasing employee participation in organizations increases employee motivation, loyalty, productivity, and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, with the participation of employees, assertive individuals are expected to have a higher identity, feel more confident in the decisions made, and ultimately to do a better job. At the same time, employees involved in decisions can more effectively balance production and, as a result, eliminate bottlenecks or interruptions in the production process (Zwick, 2014). Also, many studies on employee participation have shown that the participation of employees in the decisions taken within the organization will positively affect product quality and financial performance (Park, 2012). In this respect, increasing the participation of the employees will affect the employee performance positively, and the overall performance of the organization, as well. Increasing the participation of employees in organizational decisions, while positively affecting employee motivation and performance, is thought to increase social sustainability in the long run by reinforcing corporate belonging and commitment to the workplace.

2.2. Employee Cooperation

Employee cooperation is the opposite of employee rivalry (Staniškienė, Stankevičiūtė, 2018). Employee cooperation is needed within organizations because when an individual is performing an interdependent task, knowledge, resources, expertise, and coordination with other employees are also required. Cooperation is a very important social behavior in the workplace, especially when things are interdependent. It is a key mechanism for employees to find solutions to work-related problems with the support of their colleagues. In addition, cooperation enables employees to achieve their goals easily by establishing a friendly relationship with their colleagues (Pitafi, et al., 2018). Within this framework, Symon et al defined cooperation as “*the act of managing the interdependencies between the activities performed*” (Symon, et al., 1996). Cooperation here is conceptualized as the extent to which employee efforts contribute to the successful completion of organizational tasks and the extent to which collaborators intervene to support each other (Harris, et al., 2005).

Moreover, cooperation in organizations with social sustainability is a concept that occurs not only between employees, but also between management and employees. From this aspect, cooperation can take various forms, including, but not limited to: the involvement of union leadership in organizational decision-making processes, the formation of workforce management committees, mutual gains in wage bargaining, and implementation of work-life programs (Deborah, et al., 2012). In addition, teamwork and cooperation increase trust among employees (Harris, et al., 2005). From this point of view, it can be stated that social sustainability practices can be more easily adopted by employees as a culture within organizations where employee cooperation takes place. Therefore, in organizations with a high level of implementation of social sustainability policies, employees are also expected to cooperate more.

2.3. Equal Opportunity

Ensuring equal opportunity in organizations includes tolerating differences, adopting a management approach based on human rights, and developing policies to increase the rate of women and minorities in senior management (Sharma, 2016). An equal opportunity policy is the commitment to employment practices that ensure equality between individuals of different groups or genders in order to achieve a full, productive, and freely chosen employment structure within the organization. In this context, providing equal opportunities to organizations has many positive contributions, such as: reducing the shortage of labor supply, increasing employee loyalty and morale, reducing labor turnover rate, and increasing revenues (Riley, et al., 2013).

Equal opportunity is an ideal situation in which everyone has the opportunity to participate and succeed in any aspect of organizational activities (Johnsen, et al., 2015). Organizations that implement successful equal-opportunity policies (i.e., those that promote equal opportunity) hire advanced employees, employ advanced personnel, can increase business productivity and/or profit through the number of processes, such as increased employee morale and loyalty, greater employee diversity, and customer approval of organizational policies. However, continuing to develop equal opportunity policies increases training and dissemination costs (Riley, et al., 2013). In addition, equal opportunity policies cause other types of costs in organizations. Within this framework, organizations with social sustainability practices are willing to venture to afford the short-term costs by assessing the long-term contributions of the equal opportunity policy.

2.4. Employee Development

Employee development is vital to maintaining and developing the skills of both employees as individual and the organization as a whole. The base of perceived investment in employee development is enabling conditions that allow employees to believe their organization values their contributions and cares about their employability. This enables employees to take more responsibility for the organization and accordingly, make the employees more willing to work hard to increase the effectiveness of the organization (Lee & Bruvold, 2003).

Additionally, employee development activities are also highly important for employees because they indicate that the institution attaches importance to its employees and wants them to develop (Hameed & Waheed, 2011). Jacobs and Washington defined employee development as an integrated set of planned programs delivered over a period of time to help ensure that all individuals have the necessary competence to reach their highest potential to support the organization's goals. Employee development encompasses the learning of all individuals in organizations, including front office workers, professionals, or managers, and can be delivered through a range of approaches, such as off-the-job and on-the-job training programs, seminars, job rotations, self-study materials, and mentoring programs (Jacobs & Washington, 2003). Investment in employee development gives the organization a competitive advantage as a whole by providing employees with a continuous learning experience to develop their existing skills and acquire new skills that they can then adapt to and effectively fulfill (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). In this regard, the implementation of employee development policies is inevitable for organizations with corporate social sustainability.

2.5. Health and Safety

Managing healthy and safe work environments is one of the most important challenges faced by organizations. Every day, millions of people enter work environments that threaten their health and safety. Biological, chemical, physical, and radiological hazards pose a danger to many professionals. While the monetary costs of occupational accidents are at record levels, public awareness of workplace risk continues to grow at the same time (McLain, 1995). Within this framework, the issue of fostering a certain safety climate in organizations began to be discussed about 30 years ago. Health and safety refer to an organizational climate that aims to prevent individual safety behaviors by predicting industrial accidents and damage to physical health. In this sense, the safety climate is related to the commitment and performance perceptions of the employees regarding the safety policy, procedures, and practices of the organization. One of the important points here is that, despite the existence of an effective managerial background regarding the physical health and safety of employees, the approach to the issue regarding psychological health and safety is limited (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). For instance, working with hazardous substances and doing other physically hazardous jobs can adversely affect significant proportions of the workforce exposed to such conditions. In this situation, in addition to trying to limit the possibility of physical harm in such positions, there is also an imperative to find ways to reduce the psychological trauma experienced by such workers (McLain, 1995). Social sustainability is concerned with the psychological health and safety of employees as well as their physical health and safety.

Elements related to the existence of a safety environment in organizations, that is, safety-related policies, procedures, and rewards, must be noticeable to employees. Health and safety policies in organizations with a higher safety climate must ensure that employees believe they are valuable within the organization (Griffin & Neal, 2000). Other dimensions of social sustainability also have significant effects on health and safety. For example, the job satisfaction that social sustainability practices will establish within an organization have an indirect effect on worker health, both in terms of physical and psycho-social employment conditions. Thus, increases in job satisfaction over time can prevent employee health deterioration (Pouliakas, & Theodossiou, 2013). Accordingly, the health and safety dimension is one of the most effective elements of ensuring social sustainability in organizations.

2.6. External Partnership

Developing partnership outside the organization has many benefits in terms of improving the organization's human resources policy. For example, collaborating with a

recruitment agency in the hiring process helps the managers save time to plan for more efficient workforce. Hiring new employees within the organization increases productivity and performance. Recruitment processes with professional external stakeholders, such as universities, can reduce costs by shortening the orientation and training processes of new employees. Continuous professional external relations increase employee loyalty. Employees' organizational commitment and, as mentioned earlier, participation is crucial because loyal and committed employees identify themselves with the organization's system, culture, goals, and values (Jamil & Naeem, 2013).

Another important point about developing external partnership is the positive relationship between organizations with a culture of sustainability and organizational attractiveness. Sustainability practices increase the public's confidence in the organization and positively affect the demand of potential workers towards the organization. In other words, companies that build a reputation for sustainability have little difficulty attracting highly qualified candidates because they are considered as more reliable and better places to work (Bauer, et al., 2012). In this context, the more organizations with social sustainability practices develop foreign relations and cooperation and provide the opportunity to introduce themselves to the public, the more qualified workforce they are expected to have the chance to attract. Therefore, the organization's continuous development, management, and *maintenance* of its relations and external partnership as an open system provides it with critical strategic advantages in the long run.

Conclusion

Sustainability has become an important issue in the modern society of the 21st century. In 1994, John Elkington introduced sustainability literature to the "triple bottom line" approach for the first time. In the late 1990s, it was seen that the triple bottom line (TBL) became increasingly common in the relevant literature. This approach addresses and balances economic, environmental, and social problems from a microeconomic perspective along three subcomponents. In addition, the TBL is an approach that reflects the commitment of organizations to foster financial, social, and environmental values. This includes being clear about the purpose of the organization and considering stakeholder needs. The TBL includes three key components needed to assess the sustainability of an organization. This approach was widely applied in many areas to promote a sustainable development that provides common benefit. In this direction, it was discussed in the literature that a broader definition of sustainability should be regarded, not only in terms of economic and environmental aspects, but also to increase the quality of life of every person.

While the concept of sustainable development generally began with the discourse that a balance should be established between the environmental, economic, and social basis of sustainability, social sustainability performance was relatively neglected and developed much less than the discourses surrounding the economic and environmental dimensions. This is because the meaning and purposes of the social base have remained unclear. Social sustainability is concerned with the human side of sustainability. Social sustainability includes concepts such as: equality, empowerment, accessibility, participation, sharing, cultural identity, and institutional stability.

Although social sustainability does not affect the financial performance of the organization in the short term, a sustainability and leadership strategy presented systematically in the long term forms the basis for improving social security and business life together with the competence of social sustainability. Social economy practices likewise aim for sustainability in organizations by prioritizing human welfare. When examining the dimensions of social sustainability and social economy from an organizational point of view, in the dimension of employee participation, when employees participate in organizational decision making, their motivation to work will increase and they will be more willing to increase their contribution to the organization. Social economy practices also include practices to increase employee participation. Even though it consists of voluntary and non-profit organizations, democratization practices of social economy in organizations were adopted by other organizations.

Another organizational dimension of social sustainability is cooperation. Cooperation in organizations with social sustainability is a concept that occurs not only between employees, but also between management and employees. To this end, cooperation can take various forms, including, but not limited to: the involvement of union leadership in organizational decision-making processes, the formation of workforce management committees, mutual gains in wage bargaining, and the implementation of work-life programs. Social economy practices also include practices such as the conducting of trade union activities to protect employee rights.

An equal opportunity policy, which is the third organizational dimension of social sustainability, is the commitment to employment practices that ensure equality between individuals of different groups or genders to achieve a full, productive, and freely chosen employment structure within the organization. In this context, providing equal opportunities to organizations has many positive contributions, such as: reducing the shortage of labor supply, increasing employee loyalty and morale, reducing labor turnover rate, and increasing

revenues. In social economy, citizens in all segments of society are given the opportunity to have equal access to all services and rights offered.

The concept of employee development, which is another organizational dimension of social sustainability, means providing new knowledge and skills to employees. It can be used to ensure that people are ready to meet the expectations of new job requirements. In this regard, employee development refers to the learning experiences organized by the employer for the enhancement of the performance of the employees and their personal development. In this context, investment in employee development gives the organization a competitive advantage as a whole by providing employees with a continuous learning experience to develop their existing skills and acquire new skills that they can then adapt to and effectively fulfill.

Another organizational dimension of social sustainability is health and safety. Employed adults spend a quarter of their lives at work. As such, work pressure and demands can affect their physical and mental health. Working in a safe organizational climate under these changing unsafe working conditions has been one of the greatest needs of employees. Organizations with social sustainability practices attach importance to these needs of employees and continuously improve their healthy and safe practices. Social economy practices have generally been seen and adopted as a solution to ensure sustainability after crisis periods and blockages. Social economy, like social sustainability, puts human welfare at the center and intends for socio-economic improvement and development.

Finally, in the organizational dimension of developing external partnership, it is the positive relationship between organizations with a culture of sustainability and organizational attractiveness. Both the current workforce and the students, who are the potential employees, do not want to work for organizations that exhibit poor social behavior. Sustainability practices increase the public's confidence in the organization and positively affect the demand of the potential workforce to work in the organization. This shows that by developing a reputation that emphasizes sustainable development and ecological sensitivity, institutions can increase their attractiveness to potential candidates, as well as ensure that they have access to a wider and higher quality pool of candidates. In other words, companies that build a reputation for sustainability have little difficulty attracting highly qualified candidates because they are considered more reliable and better places to work. In this context, the more organizations with social sustainability practices develop foreign relations and external partnerships and provide the opportunity to introduce themselves to the public, the more qualified workforce they are expected to have the chance to attract.

Pandemics, climate change, and economic crises question the resilience of global economic models, costing societies and the environment significantly. Crises result in exacerbating existing inequalities. In such crisis situations, social economy actors first try to reduce the impact of crises on disadvantaged groups by offering vital products and services in niches and local markets. Social economic initiatives often prioritize solidarity as an integral part of economic activity and encourage local development. Social economy has the potential to produce more inclusive solutions to some of the world's most urgent problems because social economy actors are motivated to produce more inclusive and sustainable economic opportunities and act in line with this goal. This common goal has had positive effects on strengthening social economy actors and ensuring social, economic, and environmental sustainability in different economies of the world.

Social economy practices are focused on developing innovative solutions to social and environmental problems. They support the local economy by increasing employment opportunities in local markets. They contribute to a sustainable transition towards a green economy with their value-based approach. Social economy actors are accelerating an inclusive digital transition by democratizing and increasing access to digital tools. They also play an active role during crises and in reducing the negative effects of crises on society. From these aspects, the contribution of social economy practices is undeniable in terms of ensuring social sustainability both at micro level (in organizations/businesses) and at the macro level (in society). One of the most important conditions for ensuring social sustainability in organizations/businesses and society lies in the dissemination of social economy practices at the enterprise and society level, supported by government policies and incentives.

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