

# **BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABILITY IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN AND THE ADDED IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

*Susan L. Golicic, College of Business, Colorado State University, 212 Rockwell Hall, Fort Collins CO 80523-1275, [susan.golicic@colostate.edu](mailto:susan.golicic@colostate.edu).*

*Pavlina McGrady, School of Business, Southern Oregon University, 1250 Siskiyou Blvd., Ashland OR 97520, [mcgradyp1@sou.edu](mailto:mcgradyp1@sou.edu)*

## **ABSTRACT**

Sustainability has been receiving increased attention in supply chain management over the past two decades with many studies examining what contributes to its adoption. Many of the variables that can enable the implementation of sustainable practices in purchasing, operations, and logistics can also be an obstacle if they are lacking in some way. We hypothesize that (a lack of) financial and human resources, firm governance, and leadership can all be barriers to implementing sustainability. Our outcome is explored through the Prism of Sustainability, which is a four-dimension construct that includes institutional sustainability in addition to the economic, environmental, and social factors.

To test our research hypotheses, we conducted a survey in 2021 with professionals familiar with sustainability in their companies. The respondents represented various levels of management and sizes of companies as well as different industries and economic structures in the United States. Data collection and analysis followed standard procedures. The survey also asked open ended questions about if and how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted sustainability practices in the firms as we believed this might be a potential moderator to implementation. Preliminary analysis shows that there is a significant negative impact from the proposed antecedents to the sustainability outcomes. Thirty eight percent said they had to alter their practices due to the pandemic with some interesting shifts, some of which were positive and anticipated to continue. More detailed results testing our hypotheses using structural equation modeling, examining control variables, and running post-hoc analysis on the respondents that described changes due to the pandemic will be available for the presentation. This study is expected to expand the growing literature in sustainable supply chain management and add a more comprehensive sustainability lens which includes the institution. The results will also contribute to theory and practice about how disruptions can further derail improvement efforts in the supply chain.

Keywords: sustainability implementation, barriers, supply chain, disruption impact

References available upon request