

Sustainability adoption in project management practices within a social enterprise case

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Received 2 March 2018
Revised 15 May 2018
25 June 2018
Accepted 4 July 2018

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present the preliminary findings on the use of sustainable project management practices within social enterprise projects. The research gaps within this field have proposed the authors to address the challenges rising from lack of sustainable infrastructures in social-based projects both within for-profit and non-profit organisations. On the other side, behavioural needs and sustainable awareness of different stakeholders will be examined.

Design/methodology/approach – Secondary research consists of conducting a literature review clarifying the existing knowledge of the research topic within the body of literature. The stakeholders' behavioural needs towards acting and implementing sustainable practices led to the adoption of sustainable practices within projects which are managed across profit and non-profit organisations.

Findings – The lack of sustainable behaviour and its adoption within organisations is also highlighted. The limitation of the research is the importance of integration of sustainable development (SD) within social projects. Such projects were identified as the drivers towards educating the society towards future generations' sustainability awareness. However, if the adoption of sustainable practices is well established in some sectors (such as construction), literature tends to demonstrate a lack of information regarding other sectors, especially within social enterprises.

Originality/value – The novelty of the research is to develop an early understanding regarding linkages between sustainable practices and project management programmes within the social projects. The particular focus is given to corporate social responsibility and the comparative analysis has been made among for-profit and non-profit organisations in terms of SD metrics. The study results would be beneficial to the researchers and practitioners exploring within the same field.

Keywords Environmental sustainability, Corporate social responsibility (CSR), Social enterprises, Social projects, Sustainable project management

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

It has been evident through many past research studies that consumption and globalisation within organisations and that of the practices adopted are presenting a major environmental issue. In recent years, businesses around the world, especially SMEs have started giving credit to sustainable pillars in order to move towards continuous improvement and innovation. Enabling the adoption and improvement of the major organisational aspects such as economic, social and environmental performance is a major challenge for many companies, and hence, sustainability strategy is hugely important towards the transformation of the business and future prosperity (Shah *et al.*, 2017).

Due to the change in increasing population growth, a real transformation is required towards the preservation and better utilisation of natural resources that requires the proper use and implementation of environmental practices (Chavan, 2005). As suggested through research studies, sustainable major pillars seek to fulfil the current needs with the main elements of environmental, economic and social (Koukiasa, 2011). Currently, many countries

The authors wish to acknowledge the CSCC 2017 committee for the publication of the first part of this research studies.

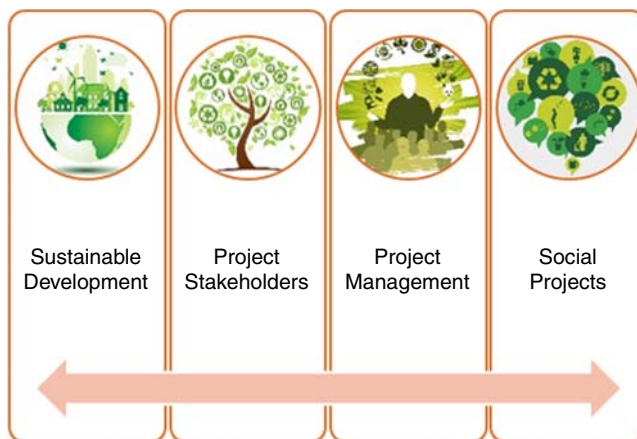


are seeking to enhance their business infrastructure in order to benefit their economy towards adoption of sustainable practices. However, even though the environmental sector is growing rapidly, this is a long and costly process which requires fundamental transformational changes at different levels of the organisation (Shah *et al.*, 2017). Hence, many gaps have not been explored towards the implications of the change and that of the effects of adopting better greener and environmental changes within the organisations. This area also lacks the insight from research and hence there is a gap in existing literature that highlights the measures. Moreover, the project management methods can benefit any incorporation and administration being applicable through every aspect of individuals' behaviours and daily routine. The adoption of new ways of handling and managing projects that integrate the concept of sustainability have an overall impact on many of the aspects highlighted above (Shah *et al.*, 2017).

This further allows the improvement of raising awareness and guidance which integrates the adoption of sustainability practices on any daily activities and tasks carried out. There has been a huge focus of this within the construction projects, considering the advantages of sustainability adoption within building and construction sectors (Hodges, 2005). Within the criteria of this research, the literature review seeks to find out the sustainable development (SD) application and status in other sectors and specifically social-based projects. A significant goal of this research is to explore the gaps and barriers towards the journey of sustainability implementation within social projects in order to extract appropriate recommendations for its future success. Moreover, the secondary resources and that of review of literature shed some lights on hybrid organisations as a reliable channel between non-profit and for-profit organisations (Haigh and Hoffman, 2012). Based on a clear direction and its different research focus (as shown in Figure 1), this research will be focussing on SD and project management within social projects based on case investigation and survey analysis at two different types of environments as Company (A) and (B) (Shah *et al.*, 2017).

2. Literature review

The purpose of literature review is to explore the conceptual framework of the study by evaluating different angles, key points, barriers and opportunities regarding the application of sustainable approaches within projects, specifically the social enterprises which tends to oversee the inclusion of social project environments. Hence, the research's main focus is towards this specific area and as highlighted in below sections (Shah *et al.*, 2017).



Source: Adopted from Shah *et al.* (2017)

Figure 1.
Research focus of
sustainability and
social projects

2.1 Overview of sustainable development

Sustainability has been considered as an essential element towards companies' strategic direction as it enables the need for ensuring the future success of people, process and the planet (Loongoni and Cabliano, 2015). The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) first developed and define the meaning of SD as "development that meets the needs of the present without the compromise of the abilities of future generations to meet their own needs". Therefore, the study's main focus is towards the investigation of some of these sustainable practices that are adopted within project management environments with the key focus on social project within social enterprises. Therefore, SD has been allocated a special attention within this study, necessitating a deep perception regarding different stages of its development and implementation. It has been stated that the term "sustainability" is gradually becoming an influential concept within both industrial and business world. It comprises three main factors called triple bottom-line of business (triple P or triple pillars) including people, planet and profits (Shah *et al.*, 2017).

Research studies also suggest that a well-adjusted vision to all the three elements with proper use of natural resources is the way to achieve better sustainable results for companies (Koukiasa, 2011). To achieve this balanced approach there are different practices existing. For instance, Sustainable practices can be associated with the key activities of SD such as pollution, waste and recycling, climate change, corporate social responsibility (CSR), cultural dimensions, globalisation and many more; these were defined as the notion of practices (Whittington, 2006). Hence, this study is aiming to identify all the existing sustainable approaches adopted within the projects. To start with this research study, authors tend to explore the significant aspects of CSR and social awareness (Shah *et al.*, 2017).

Organisations are beginning to realise the uncaptured economic potential of green and sustainable practices (Hodges, 2005). However, the literature also underlines that the aim of SD of a project or an organisation is not always the economic return, but also the overall satisfaction of other human needs. Social and environmental concerns must be considered as primary objectives on the same scale as the economic gains to a project (Doloi, 2012). Recent literature also outlines the fact that organisations are increasingly paying attention to the social dimension of SD (Brent and Labuschagne, 2007). This would be due to the arising public pressures as businesses are currently experiencing a shift regarding their stakeholders' environmental and social concerns. However, this is still much contradicted as different authors, such as Doloi (2012), has also recognised that social sustainability (SS) does not play a prominent part in the business practices. Indeed, research states that social and environmental factors often take a back seat in the overall strategy of the organisations (Hodges, 2005). Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight the growing concept of CSR in the past two decades. Indeed (Murray *et al.*, 2010) declares that "the CSR agenda has entered the parlance of global businesses". However, according to a quantitative study based on systematic analysis of SD indicators, it is revealed that the social factor of SD is less considered during 2000–2009 in Lithuanian SD programmes (Ciegis *et al.*, 2011). Instead, the environmental and economic aspects were given a great attention, for instance the economic development index had been increased by 72 and 75 per cent. However, it is suggested that all the triple pillars of sustainability need to comprise an equal weight in calculating the sustainable indexes (Ciegis *et al.*, 2011).

2.2 Project stakeholders

Within this research, the authors aim to discover the influence of sustainability pillars on project stakeholders (Shah *et al.*, 2017). As a result of literature studies, it has been put forward that there is a close association between involvement of projects stakeholders and that of the SD and project management. In other words, towards the scope of SD, the stakeholder management would be remarkably increased. It can be also interpreted that

towards satisfaction of stakeholders' requirements, projects need to be managed in a sustainable manner. The involvement of project stakeholders within SD can be achieved through two different techniques; enhancement of stakeholders' mind sets and demand to adopt sustainability and also sustainable enhancement through stakeholders' involvement (Shah *et al.*, 2017). Research studies have been widely argued that environmental sustainability implementation and adoption present many benefits such as company image and increased stakeholders loyalty that provides competitive advantages in future (Battilana and Dorado, 2010).

According to Ebner and Baumgartner (2006), CSR is now often assimilated into the new way of managing stakeholders. CSR is concerned with treating the stakeholders of an organisation in a socially responsible manner. Nevertheless, recent literature also outlines that sustainability was not mandated at the managerial level; it was the stakeholders' demand (both internal and external) that acted as an incentive for introducing sustainability within organisations (Stoughton and Ludema, 2012). The same applied to the adoption of CSR within projects. It is mostly the pressure of stakeholders that motivated project management to implement sustainable practices within its discipline. This is why it is essential to engage with the project stakeholders. Indeed, literature identifies that stakeholders are whether the integral part of the project or will be influenced by the project (Doloi, 2012). Therefore, the smallest change towards sustainable practices can influence the stakeholders' satisfaction with projects and affect the overall success of the project (Hodges, 2005). Nevertheless, even if the literature highlights the increasing demand of the stakeholders concerning SD, lack of understanding of how their behaviours influence sustainable practices is still remaining (Ayuso *et al.*, 2011). The study also identified that the engagement with stakeholders is a valid way for promoting sustainable innovations within an organisation. Their findings demonstrate that engaging with both internal and external stakeholders provides positive effect on sustainable innovation orientation within the organisation. Indeed, engaging with internal stakeholders will help to achieve a strong commitment and participation from them to advance towards sustainability (Ayuso *et al.*, 2011). Engaging with external stakeholders might be more complex, however, their recognition is required in order to achieve SD innovations.

CSR seems to be very controversial and critical within the academic literature which makes it difficult to be defined precisely (Mysen, 2012). There is also a growing importance which many other researchers have attempted to define, such as the explanation of CSR as a concept integrating wide range of issues involving relationships between an organisation's actions and those that are highly affected by these issues (Murray *et al.*, 2010). Another study explains that achieving CSR is addressing and meeting the needs of the stakeholders. The research also clarified the concept through the expression for many other types of issues that needs to be covered while dealing with CSR such as, employee relations, human rights, corporate ethics, community relations and the environment (Moir, 2001). Moreover, studies outline the different key principles which organisations need to follow in order to achieve CSR. These are as follows (Business Impact, 2000):

- to treat employees fairly and equitably;
- to operate ethically and with integrity;
- to respect basic human rights; and
- to sustain the environment for future generations.

It is also claimed that CSR is the main factor for the organisations towards their journey to SD in order for them to value ethics and social responsibility as a vital aspect of sustainable pillars (Moon, 2007). This is also agreed by Talero (2004) who declares that SD can be achieved through CSR programs. However, in reality many organisations are at the start of

experiencing the benefits and advantages of sustainable integration within the economic and social aspects of their businesses. Hence, it is important to highlight that addressing the economic value to corporate social actions is considered widely as reducing the moral validity. Similar studies have argued that trying to achieve higher profits through social initiatives prevents the main principles of CSR (Ketola, 2007). Environmental awareness has been defined as the attentiveness of natives regarding the environmental issues and its impacts on our earth. Research studies have been defining environmental awareness as the individual's vigilance in noticing environmental problems and beliefs about the potential consequences. It is also stated that SD inspires the engagement of individuals and various communities towards taking an active part in achieving SD (Swanson and Zhang, 2012). All the efforts and approaches towards increasing environmental awareness is gradually leading the companies and communities towards effective and applicable plans towards adoption of sustainable approaches especially within protection of environment (Chavan, 2005). However, this has been disputed by different authors, where some of them agree with the growing public awareness about environmental issues but highlight the lack of adequate environmental knowledge (Talero, 2004). Other study highlights a lack of awareness of sustainability and even reluctance to its integration (Abidin and Pasquire, 2005). In both cases, this could lead to a failure towards achieving a sustainable future. Indeed, most of the researches confirm that community awareness and participation is vital for fulfilling the aim of achieving SD (Talero, 2004). Current literature has also demonstrated the existence of gaps in current sustainable practices. Indeed, several barriers to integration have been identified. They can be divided into two categories: practical barriers and behavioural barriers. Absence of guidelines is one of the gaps currently existing. Without guidance, the integration of sustainability is a challenge that not every organisation is likely to experiment. Literature also asserts that the lack of awareness of sustainability is one of the behavioural barriers that prevent a good understanding of the importance of achieving sustainability in projects (Abidin and Pasquire, 2005). These can be highlighted as some of the reasons for not including the related issues to environment and social aspects within the scope of projects.

2.3 Project management theories

Earlier research studies have widely discussed the concept of project management as science as the increasing global growth of project management institutions and for wide number of research communities describing the theories of project management. Likewise, researchers have also classed it as an approach towards effective management of projects (Othman and Sirbadhoo, 2009). For this paper, however the key aspect of research is not towards multiple ways of defining project management theories, but to provide the linkage of these theories to that of SD concepts. The focus is towards the two key aspects of our research study namely CSR and that of community awareness as highlighted earlier within the paper. Thus, this research is aiming to evaluate appropriate methods of integration of sustainable practices within social projects. Earlier research has also shown a level of interest within the concept of environmental practices from the community, and hence stakeholder's demand is considered to be one of the key factors driving many of the project management organisations and researchers to develop this integration of sustainability more successfully. Many of the larger industries and that of government agencies have been at the forefront driving and demanding the use of this integration practices methods and practices (Pelham, 2011). However, it also has been discussed that the demand is going to get greater in the future due to the growing concerns of the nature and global pollution measures. The concept is described as "green project management" by various early studies. Research studies have also concluded that even though project management studies represent a wider cross disciplinary area across various sectors, many of the studies often

ignore the full extent of representation of project management theories. Hence, there may be a lack of research studies which specifically focusses towards the linkage of sustainability and that of project management practices (Artto *et al.*, 2011).

2.3.1 Green project management. The concept of green project management is quite novel practice within academic world (Labrosse, 2010). The concept was first developed with focus on incorporating organisation's environmental policies to that of the green project management processes. Researchers define it as "a model" aimed and designed for project managers to think green through the entire lifecycle of projects and while taking decisions that impacts the human activities towards the wider environment (Sholarin and Awange, 2015). The idea of applying green standards within projects is relatively new concept, as it aims to merge the environmental practices with routine project management methods that have not been studied before (Shah *et al.*, 2017). It aligns and integrates green concepts throughout the entire project and to make decisions to reduce any prospective impacts on the environment with the key intention to preserve it further. Another research study also highlights that one way to manage resources and develop sustainable ways is through the adoption of sustainable lifestyle similar to that of green project management. The method is one of the key techniques that can be used in ensuring project's sustainability and towards facilitating the challenges that are faced in incorporating green projects (Ning *et al.*, 2009). There is huge evidence towards project management and sustainability on separate fronts, but the linking of environmental and sustainability within projects has been lacking and one which has been identified by researchers within this paper. With the increasing demands for green project and sustainable practices within many industries, green thinking concepts in project management practices is deemed as the first step towards green projects. This is further achieved through focussing on practices and decision-making process that consider environmental impact thoroughly within the planning stages of the project (Al-Tekreeti and Beheiry, 2016). It has been suggested that project managers have to play an integral part towards the integration of sustainable design and technology concepts within the construction project processes. However, the main purpose for green project management is not only to convert all project focussed decisions to environmental friendly, but to account for the environmental and sustainable concepts within the decision-making process of all the projects (Al-Tekreeti and Beheiry, 2016). Research within the construction industry has incorporated "green" as one of the objectives of the project management practices. It had been noted by the research studies that the integration of green in project-based organisations is not easy due to its conflict between business wide change programmes and additional costs imposed upon on the routine operations within the business (Zhang *et al.*, 2015).

2.3.2 Corporate social responsibility within projects. As shown earlier through literature investigations, SS generally refers to CSR. Literature shows that SS is also strongly linked to CSR in the context of project management. Indeed, according to Doloi (2012), SS in projects is defined as "balancing the relationship between social and ecological systems and stabilising the whole system by satisfying the demand of stakeholders in the project". In fact, according to Servaes *et al.* (2012), a major component of achieving sustainability within projects is the inclusion of the community. This reiterates that stakeholders are playing a major role within the establishment of CSR. Research indicates that SS issues must be integrated in the planning and management during the lifecycle of projects (Brent and Labuschagne, 2007). They should be dealt accordingly throughout the whole process of the project management and not be treated as a radical element (Abidin and Pasquire, 2005). It is important that the project manager identifies those issues as part of the project objectives in order to inform the rest of the project team as well as the clients and all the stakeholders. In order to engage with the stakeholders and to promote SS throughout projects, project managers need a guide to follow

the process of applying CSR to their projects. Recent literature identifies the need to create a tool that allows diversity but still enables the evaluation of the sustainability of projects (Servaes *et al.*, 2012). However, such a tool has not been created so far and this, again, highlights the issue of guidance. People are resistant to change and without the appropriate directions, they probably will not achieve the expected results.

The main results of incorporation of the CSR initiatives to the company have been explained as reduction of the taxes to be paid to the government, greater employee motivation, improvement of company brand image through media, attraction of new talents and added value and efficiency to the supply chain (Idowu and Towler, 2004). In this regard, employees, customers and suppliers as the main stakeholders of any organisation can participate within application of such programmes, meaning that they play a vital role within implementation of CSR approaches and also within incentives of the top managers towards making investments, spending time and effort towards becoming more sustainable (Batista *et al.*, 2017).

Applying green project management means to engage with the project stakeholders; therefore, this enables them to be more aware of potential environmental impacts (Ten Step, 2008). To align this result to the scope of this research, the question is to know if integrating SS within projects has an impact on community awareness. Recent research has identified projects as an important social system for integrating SD principles (Eskerod and Huemann, 2013). Indeed, according to Musgrave (2011), project management is seen as a consumer facing industry. This means that the deliverance of sustainable principles through projects would impact on a large variety of people, allowing the awareness of sustainability to increase further. However, none of the latest literature has established any links between green projects and a potential impact on community awareness.

2.4 Social enterprises and social projects

Early studies have highlighted social enterprises as one that describes local economy based on the aim to improve the well-being for all within the society, and eventually the local economy can contribute towards the development of the community through social, economic and environmental friendly (Pearce, 2003). There is also a continuing expectation that social enterprises could create beneficial social changes at the same time generating sufficient surplus to sustain itself and hence providing economical delivery of public services (Kay *et al.*, 2016). However, research studies have suggested that social enterprises should be considering traditional business growth models in order to facilitate sustainability. Similar studies have focused towards examining the factors that facilitated the development of sustainable social enterprises, including the commercial orientation and growth of these enterprises (Jenner, 2016).

Within this research, authors will be concentrating on social aspect of sustainability, its development and application within social projects, as well as comparison of the sustainable practices utilisation within both profit and non-profit based companies due to the growing concerns towards this major issue. This is in the situation that previous studies have not comprehensively explored these themes (Shah *et al.*, 2017). SS is mainly referred to as actively supporting the preservation and creation of skills, as well as the capabilities for future generations, which aims to promote health and supports equal and democratic treatments allowing good quality of life and work practices both internal and external to organisations (Loongoni and Cabliano, 2015).

As identified through earlier research studies, the pressure from stakeholders has led organisations to make commitments regarding SD. In fact, it has become necessary for organisations to deal with sustainability in order to maintain customers as well as their employees (Chavan, 2005). Recent literature shows that this could be done through different policies or strategic plans. Indeed, according to Mysen (2012), some organisations not only

focus on obtaining economic goals but also aim to deliver environmental and social benefits. Latest research disagrees with Mysen (2012), demonstrating that only a few firms have really incorporated sustainability into their strategic thinking (Hong *et al.*, 2012). In addition, according to Swanson and Zhang (2012), sustainability is differently interpreted within different organisations. Some of them rethink their business model towards a real commitment to sustainable practices when others feel they are constrained to do it in order to survive in the future. The research also states that these individuals who think sustainability is only a financial obligation are the least knowledgeable about the concept of SD; they leave the impression that they manage responsible businesses when they obviously do not. Aligning this to the scope of this study, a major research question to be addressed is towards understanding the reasons for different behaviours varying according to the nature of businesses (whether they are for-profit or not for-profit). Recent literature proves the evidence that both for-profit and non-profit sectors are making a shift towards achieving sustainability and adopting more sustainable methods (Chavan, 2005). It is a common assumption that the nature of non-profit organisations leads this sector to a real commitment to sustainable practices. Whereas the nature of profit organisations is to make superior profit, therefore it is typical to think they would focus less on SS and be part of those organisations constrained to incorporate it as a financial obligation. However, none of the current literature can validate this hypothesis.

As mentioned above, non-profit organisations would be more likely to integrate SD as it is the right way to go according to their ethics and mission, however, they might believe that they have not enough money to invest in it. Indeed, research draws the attention to the higher cost of most of the sustainable practices relative to traditional practices (Hodges, 2005). Studies reveal that lack of capital is reported as a significant barrier to adopting sustainable practices (Labrosse, 2010). Overall, the perception of most organisations on being more sustainable is that it is more expensive but also that it will cost a lot in terms of taking time to acquire the knowledge needed (Pelham, 2011). This bias shows sustainable practices are still not very well implemented within organisations. It also suggests that non-profit organisations may be more reluctant than profit organisations to adopt sustainable practices as they do not have access to significant capital. Another potential factor in the failure of organisations to achieve sustainability is the absence of guidelines already mentioned several times throughout this review. Indeed, research also shows that the absence of formal guidelines for sustainability is a challenge (Abidin and Pasquire, 2005). It also states that some organisations could have their own internal guidelines for achieving sustainability. However, this again requires a high cost that non-profit organisations can probably not afford to invest in.

Another research investigated ten different cases of social non-profit based enterprises in Australia concluding the necessity to develop sustainable approaches from strategies to operations levels further leading them towards evaluating and gaining social entrepreneurship theories (Weerawardena *et al.*, 2010). As part of the survey questionnaire, the CEO and senior managers of the company interviewed and three propositions were generated accordingly. First, the environmental changes (climate change) were forcing the company towards adopting sustainable approaches. Second, financial benefits directed them towards adopting appropriate strategies and operational decisions well-suited with sustainability. Third, the broad range of sustainable bottom-lines and the need for balance between them, provided the company with the opportunity to satisfy the whole idea of organisational sustainability (Weerawardena *et al.*, 2010). Likewise, another example for-profit organisation was highlighted where the influence of stakeholder's pressures towards environmental sustainability were conducted within an adhesive manufacturing company, and competitive advantage played an important part as a critical motivator towards achieving sustainability (Shah *et al.*, 2016). Factors such as business image, profitability and availability of quality management standards, minimising environmental impacts and governmental regulations, customer demands and staff awareness

were the key factors that were addressed in the adoption of environmental practices within the company. It is also highlighted that in current global competitive market place, higher competition and the stakeholder's inspiration were the most influential factors for environmental management systems. The key challenges of company shareholders were factors such as financial performance, energy and water consumption, and recycling as a business challenge and therefore preventing them towards the adoption of more environmental friendly and sustainable practices within their environment (Shah *et al.*, 2016).

Social projects are considered as projects that promote ethical principles while working closely in society towards a common goal. Common terms for social projects include charitable projects, voluntary projects, community projects or humanitarian projects, for example (Leszczynska, 2012). Recent literature has identified social projects as more focussed on the benefits of the project itself regarding its impact on the society (Doloi, 2012). Given that the social aspect is one of the three main factors of SD (Koukiassa, 2011), the integration of sustainable practices within social projects should be obvious and expected. But none of the recent researchers have identified such integration thus proving existing gaps within the literature. Studies also highlight that social enterprises tend to be viable businesses through making surpluses on the basis of trading activities, allowing them to achieve better financial sustainability to support the social and environmental requirements. Many of the social enterprises face significant challenges within the macro environments and through limitations in spending. Researchers have been highlighting that many of these institutional changes influence the growth of social enterprises and limits them towards making required changes towards the sustainability practices within the environment (Mswaka *et al.*, 2016). Nevertheless, it highlights the relevance of this research topic that focuses on social projects mostly because the current sustainable practices within this sector have not been well established yet. Some of the key literature gaps identified for this study are as follows:

- lack of guidance towards adopting sustainable practices within organisations and projects;
- lack of research concerning the linkage between green projects and a potential impact on community awareness;
- lack of understanding of how stakeholders' behaviour influence sustainable practices;
- lack of understanding of how sustainable practices differ from a for-profit to a non-profit organisation; and
- lack of research concerning the integration of SD within social projects.

3. Methodology

Research focusses on the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods through company visit and investigative expert interview analysis. The researcher also examined the extensive public available information and material through internal and external documents within the company. The researchers aim to identify qualitative information from the interview process and hence the interviews were recorded and transcribed for thorough analysis. In order to achieve the aforementioned goals of this research, the data analysis will be based on the collected data from document research and industry association data from the interviews, therefore it would be a descriptive research (Shah *et al.*, 2017). Most of the survey questions took the form of Likert scale questions, while the interview questions were open-ended in order to include more flexible and comprehensive answers. The use of Likert-type scale was purely because it is an unidimensional method of measuring responses (Harry and Boone, 2012) and basically referred as a technique for the measurement of attitudes (Likert, 1932). The results of the Likert-type scale questions will then enable authors to interpret the results with the form of

quantitative analysis. Utilising mixed method of qualitative and quantitative analysis is also an approach to fulfil different demand and dimensions of this research. For the purposes of this research, the authors received 240 responses from two case studies (Figure 2).

The key objectives of this research study are (Shah *et al.*, 2017):

- (1) towards understanding the project stakeholders' behavioural needs and requirements on acting and implementing sustainable practices;
- (2) to compare and contrast the use and benefits of identifiable sustainable practices and towards its adoption within both the profit and social enterprises; and
- (3) to identify the relevance, importance and key benefits of the adoption of SD within social projects, mainly in social enterprises.

The researchers of this study are seeking to describe the key characteristics on the adoption practices of sustainable methods within social projects. Through the analysis and findings based on case study and expert interviews, including analysis of some of the governmental, environmental and sustainability regulations and policies, the study will provide further understanding within this research focus. The population of this study focuses on Company (A) and (B) that consisted of shareholders and senior management of the firms. The key research questions identified for the qualitative data collection is as shown below in Table I from the possible given 18 questions within the survey.

The second part of analysis was carried out through the use of expert interviews on two case studies as following. This study's main focus area is on the use of expert interviews and analysis for developing the further understanding on ways which organisations are behaving towards the adoption of SD; and integrating SD which undertaking projects. The survey consisted of 240 respondents across the two case studies (Figure 3).

The key focus for this case interviews which were explored within this study are as follows:

- concerns over environmental issues;
- social Progress and CSR;
- SD and integration;
- integration of SD within Projects;



Figure 2.
Research overview

Source: Adopted from Shah *et al.* (2017)

No	Question	Description	Ref.
Q5	Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable development (SD)?	To investigate if respondents (as potential project stakeholders) are aware with the concept of sustainable develop	Abidin and Pasquire (2005)
Q7	How aware are you of environmental issues?	To investigate if the respondents are aware of environmental issues	Chavan (2005)
Q8	I consider environmental issues as a priority in today's world	To investigate extend the resp. agree with statements in order to understand if they consider environmental issues as a priority in today's world and if they feel like their actions as an individual impact on the environment	Chavan (2005)
Q13	I refuse to deal with an organisation that does not consider sustainable development	To investigate extend the respondent agree with statement if they would refuse –or deal with an organisation does not consider SD	Stoughton and Ludema (2012)
Q11	Rank the following five characteristics in order of importance to you when buying a product	Investigate what are the priorities of the respondents when buying a product	Ayuso <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Q14	Some Organisations are promoting their involvement in SD. How does this impact on your behaviour?	To understand the impact of promotion of Org. Involvement in SD on the respondents (potential stakeholders)	Ayuso <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Q15	As a stakeholder, do projects integrating SD. Increase your environmental awareness?	To investigate if projects integrating SD. Increase the respondent's environmental awareness	Ten Step (2008)
Q17	How do you consider the integration of SD within social projects compared to other projects?	This question aims to gain the respondents' opinions on the relevance of SD within social projects	Business Impact (2000)
Q20	Was sustainable development integrated into social projects?	This questions seeks to investigate if sustainable practices were implemented into social projects	Ning <i>et al.</i> (2009)

Table I.
Key survey questions

Source: Shah *et al.* (2017)



Figure 3.
Industry experts survey analysis

- cost of implementing SD; and
- future integration within projects.

4. Key results and findings

As highlighted in previous section, the research is focused towards the use of survey analysis methods to achieve better understanding on the behavioural needs of the stakeholders within the organisation. The survey has been carried out across diverse groups for the results of the findings to be fully representative of the population within the organisation. The survey

consisted of 240 respondents across the two case studies. The authors present the key findings from the analysis of the survey later within the paper focusing towards the adoption and implementation of sustainable practices within project environments (Shah *et al.*, 2017).

4.1 Sustainable development and stakeholders

The first part of the survey intended to tackle the concept of SD, asking the participants about their knowledge about the concept together with their environmental and social awareness. They were then given statements or questions which intended to enable the researchers understanding their behaviour towards the concept of SD together with their interactions with organisations promoting this concept. Therefore, this section will analyse the key questions which show significant results on the themes stated above.

4.2 Sustainable development knowledge and awareness

The following section describes the key question of the survey on awareness and knowledge of SD practices from the participants. As shown below in Figure 4 for Q5, it represented that 90 per cent of the respondents (number of respondents = 240) were familiar with the concept of SD against the 10 per cent who were not aware of the concept (Shah *et al.*, 2017). The findings are significant and demonstrate the increasing awareness of people towards the concept of SD, as identified through literature studies towards the three components as economic, social and environmental (Koukiasa, 2011).

According to the results and findings of the study, some propositions have been extracted from every case study question in order to guide researchers through the journey of future studies. The following propositions can be further analysed and tested to find out if they need to be approved or rejected:

- P1.* Increase of stakeholders' awareness and knowledge of SD will help organisations towards implementation of doing so.

In this survey the respondents were also questioned about their environmental concern. Being given a definition of environmental issues, the next question sought to investigate to what extent the respondents were aware of these issues. According to the analysis of the data and as outlined in Figure 5, the majority of the respondents considered they are aware of environmental issues (52.9 per cent) together with another 43.8 per cent considering themselves very aware of these issues. Overall, 96.7 per cent of the respondents (number of respondents = 240) are either aware or very aware of environmental issues. This means that only a very few number of respondents are not aware of these issues (3.3 per cent).

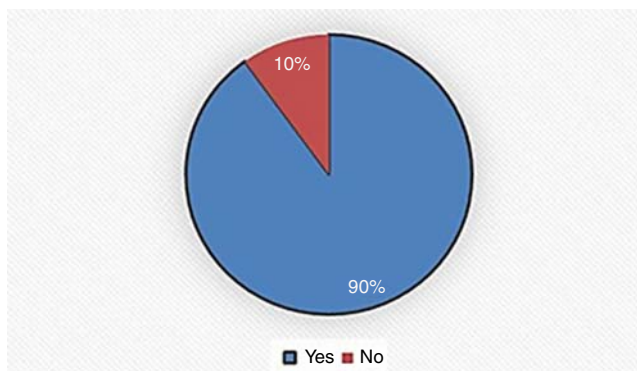


Figure 4.
Q5: analysis towards familiarity of sustainable development concept)

Source: Shah *et al.* (2017)

This result is, once again, significant. Aligning this with the fact that the respondents of this survey varies from all ages, situations and gender, this demonstrates a real shift towards environmental concern and awareness within the whole society. Nevertheless, awareness does not necessarily mean knowledge:

P2. Increase of Stakeholders' awareness regarding environmental issues will help organisations towards implementation of doing so.

Therefore, question intended to establish the average knowledge of the concept of SD amongst the participants. As a result of the analysis, the average knowledge happened to be 3.3 on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. This means that some progress could be made towards the education of an increasing concern. The least knowledgeable seem to be the youngest and the oldest (under 20 and over 60 years old). A participant suggested that "the integration of sustainable development [should be taught] as a subject throughout the whole schooling". Another one advocated that "educating young generations and informing the general public towards sustainability is crucial".

4.3 Sustainable development and stakeholder behavioural analysis

As evident from earlier analysis for Q5-7, the research further investigates the reasons towards the increasing awareness and knowledge of SD impacts on stakeholder's behaviour. The findings from Q8 are further compared to questions 11 and 13. The further analysis from the findings from question 8 showed that there is a significant number of respondents that considers environmental issues as an important factor within their organisation (Shah *et al.*, 2017). The results showed 60.8 per cent (number of respondents = 146) strongly agreed and 36.7 per cent (Number of respondents = 88) agreed with the statement "consider environmental issue as a priority in today's world" (Figure 6):

P3. Significance of environmental issues among the stakeholders motivate organisations towards implementation of doing so.

This finding validates the prospect of increasing environmental awareness within the society with 97.5 per cent of stakeholders ($N = 234$) considering environmental issues as a priority in today's world. But, this is not well reflected within the behaviour of employees within the organisation, which is further examined in Q11 and Q13, respectively. This part of the analysis investigates towards the extent to which respondents were likely to adopt a behaviour responding towards acceptance of environmental concerns. Out of the population only 2.5 per cent ($N = 240$) felt no need to deal with an organisation that wouldn't consider SD. However, 18 per cent would prefer easily to deal with organisation that does not consider SD, in addition to 19 per cent suggested that it didn't matter to them as an organisation. Therefore, the results outlined in Figure 7 do not meet these expectations with

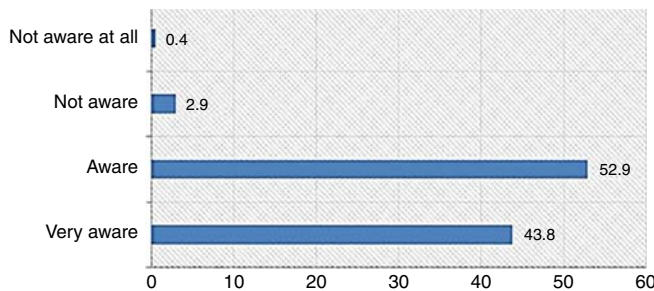
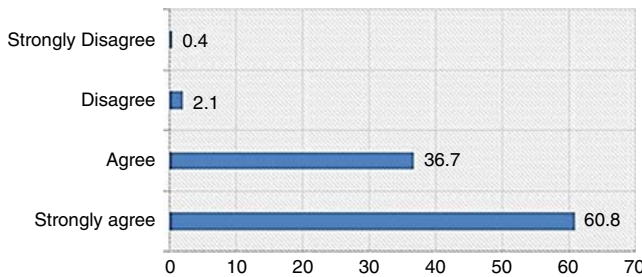


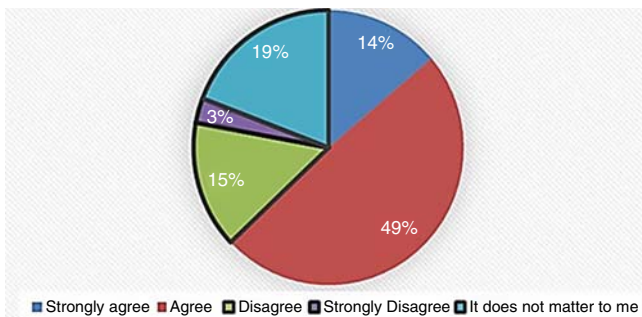
Figure 5.
Q7: results of awareness of environmental issues

Note: $N = 240$



Source: Shah *et al.* (2017)

Figure 6. Q8: consideration of environmental issues



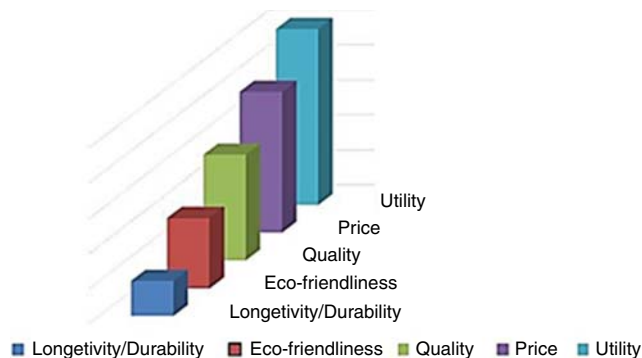
Source: Shah *et al.* (2017)

Figure 7. Q13: adoption of behaviour towards environmental concerns

only 63 per cent of the respondents being in keeping with their concern. Furthermore, the results of the analysis of question 11 also indicated that stakeholders do not put what they think into practice (Shah *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, it was asked to the participants to rank five characteristics by order of importance for them when it came to buying a product:

P4. Adoption of environmental behaviours will help companies towards implementation of doing so.

As summarised in the figure below, in the overall ranking the characteristic of “eco-friendliness” comes to the fourth position (Figure 8). This is in contradiction, once again, with the significant



Note: N=240

Figure 8. Q11: key characteristics of importance when buying a product

result of question 8 which outlined the priority of environmental issues for 97.5 per cent of the respondents ($N = 236$). Further investigation towards the behaviour of the stakeholders shows that even if they are aware of the concept of SD and consider environmental issues as a priority, they do not adopt the appropriate behaviour which would aim to reflect on this way of thinking. Therefore, stakeholders are aware of SD and practices but they do not act towards these themes. One of the participant shared that “[she considered] sustainable [as] an important factor but as an individual, it does not affect [her] behaviour”:

P5. Significant factors for stakeholders’ buying patterns are different to their attitudes regarding sustainable factors.

4.4 Promotion of sustainable development

Comparing findings from Q7 to that of Q11 and Q13, it demonstrates the awareness of SD by stakeholders and their behaviours towards responding to the concerns. Hence, further analysis to understand the reflection of their behaviour, researchers compared Q12 and 14 respectively. It asked the respondents on “how likely they were to make themselves aware of an organisation’s responsibility towards sustainability”. The findings suggested that 18 per cent would be very quickly to do so; 26 per cent were unlikely to or would not make them aware of their responsibility towards SD. Focusing on these results and findings, the researchers then compared this to the outcomes of question 14 which aimed at “understanding the impact of an organisation’s promotion of SD on the stakeholder’s behaviour” (Figure 9).

The results from three main responses are as shown below:

- (1) 28.2 per cent felt aware of environmental issues ($N = 137$);
- (2) 25.9 per cent would like every organisation to act in a similar way ($N = 126$); and
- (3) 16.5 per cent were more willing to get involved with particular organisation ($N = 80$).

The results showed project stakeholders may not participate towards the awareness of organisation’s responsibility for SD; however, its promotion from the organisation itself will have positive impacts on the stakeholder behaviour. Hence, comparing results in the conclusion by the researchers that the organisation’s promotion of their involvement in SD is method to promote it:

P6. Organisations’ promotion of SD mostly attracts customer and increases the awareness of stakeholders regarding environmental issues.

4.5 Project management and sustainable practices

The paper now highlights the reasons for the integration of SD within projects. Survey participants were asked to provide their views on the integration of SD within projects



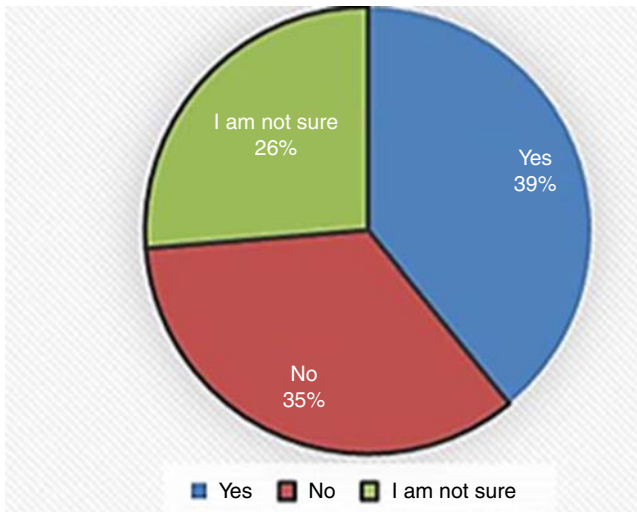
Figure 9.
Q14: impact of organisation’s promotion of sustainable development on the stakeholder’s behaviour

Source: Shah *et al.* (2017)

together with their own understanding of the CSR. The researchers examined to see if projects integrating SD increased the awareness of environmental concerns:

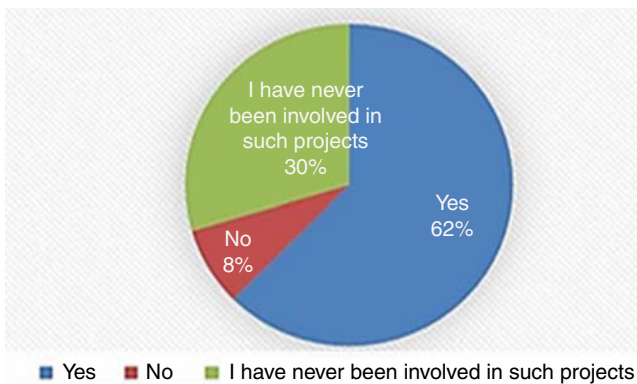
P7. Projects integrated with SD increase the environmental awareness within the organisation.

As seen, majority of respondents believed that sustainable projects increase their environmental awareness with 70.4 per cent ($N=169$) (Figure 10). This highlighted to the researchers the relevance of the adoption of sustainable practices within projects. However, it also showed that 30 per cent ($N=71$) were never involved within such as project, and hence it demonstrated that adoption is not always well-established factor within the project and that is an area for improvement in future application (Figure 11) (Shah *et al.*, 2017). The respondents who already participated in a social project were asked about the integration of SD, and only 39 per cent of population had ever been involved in



Source: Shah *et al.* (2017)

Figure 10.
Q20: sustainable development integrated into social projects



Source: Shah *et al.* (2017)

Figure 11.
Q17: sustainable development in social projects

such social projects that integrated SD. In addition, 26 per cent were unsure about SD's integration within projects:

P8. SD is important within any type of projects especially those adopted social projects.

This demonstrated a lack of proper communication methods within the project team integrating sustainable practices to wider project stakeholders, which again shows the awareness of SD and that of the behaviours adopted by individuals within the project teams. Finally, researchers acquired the respondents' opinions regarding the importance of integration of SD within social projects and results provided 66.3 per cent ($N=159$) identified that the integration was very important compared to some of the other projects, whereas 18.3 per cent ($N=44$) believed that such integration is more important within social projects compared to other types of projects. The following are three explanations of respondents which justify their answers:

- (1) SD within social projects will help to produce generations of people who will be more sustainably aware and able to take that influence into other types of projects;
- (2) the ultimate purpose of SD is the sustainability of humankind and wider natural environment, so it seems logical that social projects (which are primarily focused on people) should take as much – if not more – account of the SD theme; and
- (3) If you practice sustainability within social projects I believe that value will then filter into other types of projects - it is about educating the public who can carry the message into their field of work/employment.

The results of Question 17 indicate that majority of respondents consider SD methods to be associated with all sorts of projects. Furthermore, the results also revealed that the application and linkage of sustainability pillars are more sensible within social projects because of their main principle and nature (Shah *et al.*, 2017).

4.6 Expert interview analysis

This section presents the overall analysis of the expert interview-based case studies and aims to provide a summary of the key points which were tackled with the use of structured questions for the research study. The testimonials of the experts will also be included within the analysis in order to support the discussion towards the results and key findings of this research.

4.6.1 Organisational behaviour towards the concept of SD. Both organisations feel very concerned about environmental issues and are trying to minimise their environmental impact through different ways. Company (A) focusses on minimising the impact of climate change on vulnerable communities and reduce its environmental footprint. Company (B) innovates to find better solutions for sustainability. Both organisations are also committed to social responsibility. For example, Company (B) CSR includes respect and development of employees, local commitment together with business ethics and client relationship improvement. Whereas Company (A) sole purpose is to advance better health and social outcomes for vulnerable people and is working with a vast range of sectors. Therefore, Company (A) “influences a broader commitment to social responsibility beyond the not for-profit sector”.

Overall it seems to be clearly established that both organisations are not committed to SD for the same purpose. Company (B) clearly states that “sustainable development has grown into a major strategy for the organisation”. It was implemented mainly to improve and maintain its corporate image as well as used as a competitive advantage. On the other hand, Company (A) feels “definitely committed to sustainable development” with board level policies and strategies that commit the organisation to work in long term sustainable ways, now planning on ten or fifteen-year timeframe. Its high commitment towards sustainable

principles is due to the values of Company (A): “it is part and parcel of what they do”. On the opposite, the reason behind the commitment of Company (B) is “a way to maintain or develop market shares in some markets segments”.

4.6.2 *Sustainable development integration in projects*. Overall, Company (A) explains that they are “getting better at integrating SD into projects”. A new framework was developed ensuring the incorporation of SD throughout the whole project management lifecycle. This again shows the overall deep commitment of Company (A) towards the integration of sustainable principles. The two organisations were questioned concerning the possible lack of guidance which could prevent them from acting effectively towards the integration of such a wide concept.

However, none of them are suffering from potential lack of guidance. Company (A) even suggests that “there are a range of tools and resources that enable programme managers to assess, plan, design, monitor and implement sustainable projects” thanks to their dedicated quality and effectiveness teams towards Environmental Policy. Company (B) mentions that existing guidance includes but is not limited to documentation, in-housing consulting and seminars. If none of the two organisations suffers from lack of guidance, Company (A) does face a main barrier to integration. Indeed, it is suggested that it is extremely challenging to fund SD projects as it requires a long term commitment. Towards implementation of SD initiatives, an important point to mention is the support of governments for the organisations. Such support can be provided within different forms such as increasing the sustainability knowledge and awareness, capital investments and also employing professional bodies and relevant university graduates to assist companies within the early stages of such projects. Such investments can be difficult for the government to provide with, but considering the long term benefits for the society, environments and companies’ prosperities that can start planning and strategizing towards it (Table II).

5. Conclusion

This research focussed on the significance of linkages between sustainable practices and project management within the social projects. The main research objectives were moving towards fulfilling the main aim. The paper investigates the common sustainable project approaches considering social awareness and CSR. Besides, gaining a better perception of different entities of the project, the behavioural requirements of stakeholders were explored along with comparison of application of various sustainable approaches and their implementation in profit and non-profit organisations. Through the study it was identified CSR as a critical sustainable practice within projects as it engages with the project stakeholders and can be a way of achieving sustainability. Sustainable projects are a way of promoting and raising environmental awareness within the community. Nevertheless, this study also linked the literature studies to some of the survey and interview-based case studies analyses in order to provide real life examples and opinions towards these identified practices. Literature studies were conducted in the initial research stages, stressing the improvement of environmental awareness of the project stakeholders, whereas still there is a lack of understanding to what extent their decisions influence the sustainable practices adoption. It identified the lack of research on the integration of SD within social projects. Further analysis of the data presented the lack of integration of sustainable practices within social projects. The paper provides a brief exploration of the literature, highlighting the necessity for the businesses to move towards sustainability along with maintaining their key project stakeholders. However, due to the shortage of secondary data comparing the adoption of sustainable projects, this research attempted to carry out an interview-based survey. Survey results highlighted the lack of possibility of mobilising sustainable behaviour through the organisations’ contribution of their engagement in sustainable enhancement.

Key concept	Analysis and findings
Introducing the survey panel	Analysis demonstrated the diversity of the panel which enhances the accuracy of survey findings
Stakeholders and sustainable development	In all, 90 per cent ($N = 216$) of the respondents are familiar with the concept of SD together with 96.7 per cent ($N = 232$) being either aware or very aware of environmental issues. The analysis demonstrated the significant increase of awareness towards sustainable development. Even if 97.5 per cent ($N = 234$) of the respondents consider environmental issues as a priority in today's world, they do not adopt the appropriate behaviour which would aim to reflect this way of thinking. They are aware of SD principles but not implement them. The analysis demonstrated that the organisation's promotion of their involvement in sustainable development can be a way of mobilising sustainable behaviour.
Sustainable development and project management	In all, 89 per cent of the respondents believe that sustainable projects increase their environmental awareness, highlighting the relevance of the adoption of sustainable practices within projects. Analyses demonstrate a real lack of knowledge towards the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility with a total of 51.3 per cent ($N = 123$) respondents who have never heard about it.
Sustainable Development and social projects and enterprises	The analysis shows that the integration of sustainable development within social projects is not well-established: only 39 per cent ($N = 52$) of the social projects which the respondents participated to integrate sustainable development. Relevance of sustainable development within social projects is considered as more important than other types of projects for 18.3 per cent ($N = 44$) of the panel.
Organisational behaviour	Analysis derives Company (A) and (B) not committed to SD for the same purpose; (B) seeks the commitment to sustainability as a major strategy for the organisation whereas, (A) commitment towards sustainability is due to its values and their work.
Integration – sustainable development in projects	Analysis shows that Company (B) does not face any barriers to implement SD practices in projects yet its integration is limited. On the opposite, (A) developed new framework to incorporate SD through the project management lifecycle; yet they suffer from the challenge of funding sustainable projects.

Table II.
Summary of key
research concepts

It is revealed that for-profit and non-profit organisations are not dedicated to SD to the same level and purpose; hence, a real commitment to SD results in a better adoption of sustainable practices within projects. However, the non-profit businesses (i.e. social enterprises) operations seem to be more parallel with the sustainable approaches, since one of their main purposes is to provide products or services without financial gains. Hence, the for-profit organisations require adopting more strategic decisions and organisational cultures in order to enhance the personnel attitudes towards the sustainability practices and being eco-friendlier. Moreover, the hybrid organisations would effective environments with unique characteristics which could create a fair linkage benefit for-profits and non-profit businesses and benefit from the good features of both rather than operating within a limited framework. Future research investigations could further enhance the development of the economic elements of sustainability than just focussing towards the environmental and social factors of SD within project management environments. This allows researchers to focus on investigating the role of social projects towards educating society regarding sustainability practices, as this was one of the key findings identified through this study towards the integration of sustainability and education. Moreover, different factors towards sustainable practices comprising environmental pillars as air pollution, waste management

and recycling, climate change challenges and globalisation concerns could be more focused within the future research studies. This study has been based on both qualitative data and therefore there is a need for future research to be more focused on empirical studies based on quantitative data in order to provide with different insights regarding application of SD within social projects. Relevant hypothesis can be derived from the quantitative data to be further tested within the research.

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