



Social responsibility pressure as a motivator for organizational sustainability: Evidence from the fast-food sector in KSA

Mohamed Hassan Jaouadi *

HRM Department, College of Business, University of Jeddah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 November 2024

Received in revised form

8 May 2025

Accepted 22 May 2025

Keywords:

Social responsibility

Sustainability pressure

Organizational practices

Stakeholder expectations

Employee engagement

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of social responsibility as both a source of pressure and a motivator for organizations to achieve sustainability in their internal operations. It examines key dimensions, including stakeholder expectations, regulatory compliance, competitive advantage, cost savings, efficiency, and employee engagement and retention. A quantitative approach was adopted, with a self-administered questionnaire distributed to managers in the Saudi fast-food sector. Data analysis using SPSS included mean analysis, standard deviation, multicollinearity tests, and multiple/linear regression analysis. The findings confirmed the study hypothesis, revealing that social responsibility drives organizations toward sustainability, with stakeholder expectations exerting the highest pressure. The study recommends implementing comprehensive training programs to enhance employees' awareness of sustainability initiatives, organizational goals, and individual responsibilities. These findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of how social responsibility influences sustainable organizational practices.

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1. Introduction

Internal operations in the fast-food industry mainly focus on activities within the establishment, including business processes, efficiency, service quality, standards, and the overall image presented to customers. According to Rezaei et al. (2022), managing internal operations is essential for handling various tasks related to food preparation, order processing, food delivery, and customer service. Efficiency supports smooth business operations by improving service delivery, helping outlets respond quickly to customer needs (McDougall et al., 2022). Well-organized internal processes help reduce waste, control costs, and increase profitability. As a result, fast-food companies can enhance their internal operations and stay competitive in this highly demanding market (Ng and Sia, 2023).

In addition, internal efficiency is crucial for maintaining food hygiene and quality, as well as complying with legal requirements designed to

protect consumers (Rezaei et al., 2022). The fast-food sector operates under strict health regulations to prevent foodborne illnesses and ensure food safety. Protecting employees and customers requires the implementation of clear food handling procedures, high standards of cleanliness, proper staff training, and consistent food safety practices (Hanaysha, 2022a). By focusing on internal practices that control food-related risks, fast-food businesses can improve customer trust, reduce health risks, and maintain a strong reputation for delivering safe, high-quality food (Al Yami et al., 2022).

Handoyo et al. (2023) argued that the efficiency of organizational internal operations must be sustainable for several reasons. First, activities that have sustainable internal processes enable firms to use natural resources sparingly, emit less greenhouse gases, and generate less waste. Sustainability initiatives like energy consumption, waste minimization, and sustainable procurement are achieved within organizational operations for environmentalism and fighting climate change (Ausat et al., 2023). It also corresponds to global sustainable developments and promotes company responsibility for environmental conservation, hence improving the image of the company. Sayem et al. (2024) also noted that sustainable internal operations cause cost advantages and operational advantages to organizations. By using resources efficiently, minimizing energy usage, and

incorporating green supply chain management, firms can cut costs, increase profitability, and productivity. Typically, sustainability strategies can translate into tangible improvements of the company's bottom line for the long term as operational expenditure on the use of utilities, disposal of wastes, and reinforcement of processes are optimized (Hoai et al., 2022). Sustainability investments aimed at creating sustainable internal environments not only reduce internal costs but are also effective in the long-term development of organizational competitiveness and organizational activity that helps them adapt to current and future changes in environmental conditions and standards (Naveed et al., 2022).

According to Stahl et al (2020), socially responsible pressure could serve as an important stimulator for companies to take control of measures and spare efforts to ensure sustainability in the internal sphere of their activities. Zainee and Puteh (2020) noted that when community actors like shoppers, employees, investors, and the community of residents put pressure on the organization to become more purposeful towards the environmental and societal impact, the company aims to address the same. This pressure, however, is of an amortizing nature, rotating around the need of organizations to perform responsibly and find solutions that truly make a difference for society and the environment. Here is one viable solution to this problem. I propose introducing the concepts of carbon reduction, optimization of resource consumption, ethical sourcing, and fair labor practices. Newman et al. (2020) argued that social responsibility pressure adopted by organizations acts as a driving force by affecting their beliefs, practices, and choices, eventually leading these institutions to adopt sustainable methods for their in-house affairs. Through integration of green practices, it remains possible for organizations to deliver faithfully to

expectations of stakeholders, composite reputation, risk reduction, appreciation through more environmentally knowledgeable customers, and real with a more sustainable future (Le, 2023).

Based on the above argument, this current research study seeks to answer the following question: How can social responsibility play a role as a Motivator and Pressure source for organizations to achieve sustainability in their internal operations within the Saudi fast-food sector?

The importance of the study stems from its theoretical associations with operations and social responsibility, the latter depending on the operation of the former. It emphasizes the fact that internal operations, rather than external acts, are primarily responsible for promoting sustainability initiatives. Additionally, it gives an insight into how social responsibility pressures tend to perpetrate policies, procedures, and decision-making in line with sustainability

This current research is based on achieving the following set of objectives:

- Identify the concept of social responsibility in a business environment.
- Focus on internal operations in organizations and their effect on the environment.
- Connect between social responsibilities as a pressure to achieve sustainability in the internal operations of organizations.
- Draw the fine line that gathers between the two concepts from an academic and empirical perspective.

To shed light on the relationship between variables, we have built a model from which study hypotheses were extracted based on by Umair et al. (2023), Padilla-Lozano and Collazzo (2022), and Silva et al. (2023) (Fig. 1).

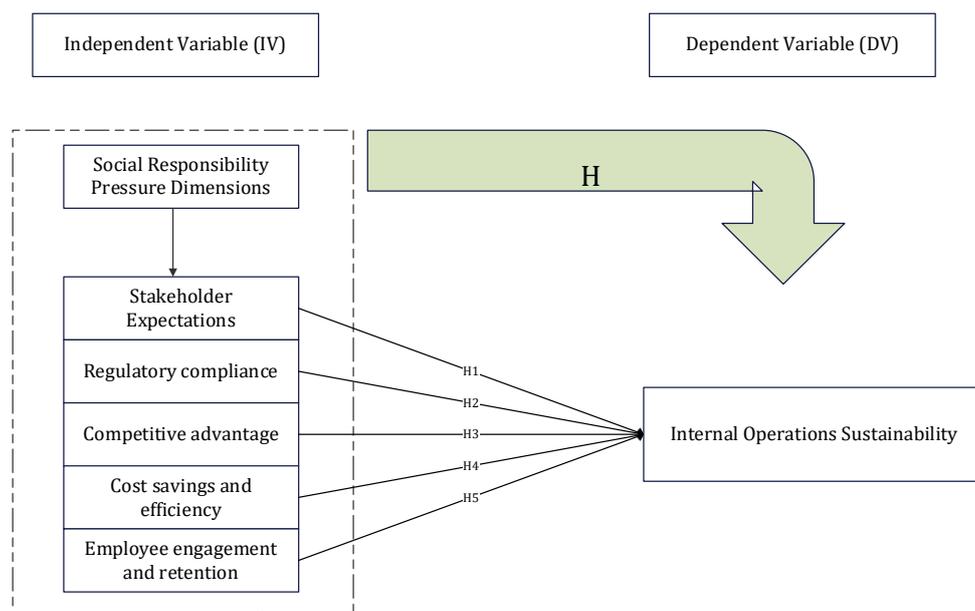


Fig. 1: Study model

From the model in Fig. 1, the following set of hypotheses was extracted:

H0: Social responsibility pressures organizations to maintain sustainability in their internal operations.

H1: Stakeholders' expectations pressure organizations to maintain sustainability in their internal operations.

H2: Regulatory compliance pressures organizations to maintain sustainability in their internal operations.

H3: Competitive advantage pressures organizations to maintain sustainability in their internal operations.

H4: Cost savings and efficiency pressures organizations to maintain sustainability in their internal operations.

H5: Employee engagement and retention pressure organizations to maintain sustainability in their internal operations.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social responsibility

Aguinis et al. (2024) stated that social responsibility means the right conduct and the right course of action of the stakeholders in relation to the society in which they find themselves. It covers the responsibilities to perform activities that are for the welfare of society in addition to the legal obligations (Coelho et al., 2023). Mainly, social responsibility includes the potential consequences of a firm's activities on society, customers, employees, communities, and the environment. It reaches social and environmental concerns as well as providing a positive impact on society (Velte, 2022).

Peinado-Vara (2022) noted that modern globalization also implies social responsibility as an increasingly important factor for companies that want to act honestly and effectively. Today's organizations are also required to achieve financial objectives while promoting stakeholder welfare. Such activities are pro-market strategies like corporate charity, corporate volunteers, ethical buying, corporate responsibility for the environment, and corporate social responsibility to labor. In this paper, social responsibility is considered as the way for improving organizational relationships with stakeholders, creating value for the company and society, and growing the company's reputation (Al-Shammari et al., 2022).

From the perspective of Zatira and Suharti (2022), social responsibility not only applies to business but also to people and nations. Examples of social responsibility that individuals can engage in include volunteering, making donations to special causes, SMEs, and organizations, consuming environmentally friendly products, and speaking for particular social causes (Bannier et al., 2022). Governments have huge relevant responsibilities to foster social responsibility by implementing corporate policies as well as regulations and

launching various social responsibility programs, initiatives, etc. In essence, social responsibility is one of the most important processes that can be undertaken to ensure that society is improved through solving social problems and ensuring the help of individuals, organizations, and institutions (Fatima and Elbanna, 2023).

2.2. Sustainability in organizations

From the perspective of Sancak (2023), corporate responsibility may be defined as the ethical actions that vested corporate entities undertake for the improvement of their functioning and their consideration of the impact of their decisions on several social aspects. The process is not limited to simple legal obligations that cover pertinent laws and regulations, but is also enhanced by direct participation in the betterment of the communities, shareholders, the environment, and all the other stakeholders. Organizational social responsibility (OSR) is a concept in which an organization incorporates ethical values into its strategic plans, strategies, methods, and processes with a view to making a positive social, environmental, and economic impact (Cavagnaro and Curiel, 2022).

Another social responsibility that clearly applies to organizations is environmental responsibility. Corporations are increasingly pressed to adopt environmentally friendly operations, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and cut down on the amount of waste produced (Bilderback, 2024). Energy and waste conservation and sustainable procurement policies will go a long way, as an organization will play a part in conserving the environment and reducing climate change impacts. Sustainability also proves environmentally friendly and cyclical, which positively reflects on the organization, ignites environmentally concerned customers' interest, and ensures the organization sustainably exists for a long time (Zacher et al., 2023).

Mostepaniuk et al. (2023) noted that social responsiveness in organizations encompasses ideas of social concern and ethical operation of business. This entails the respect of labor rights, acknowledgement of diversity, support of the local populace, and corporate giving. It is crucial to stress that the management of social responsibility brings a range of benefits both to the organizations and their stakeholders: Credibility creation creates more commitment among the employees. Many stakeholders are likely to be loyal customers (Zhao et al., 2023). Issues of ethical supply chains, fair compensation, and ethical marketing communication all point to a high level of corporate integrity and ethical conduct that leads to improvement of corporate image, which is the key element in sustainable business development (Assoratgoon and Kantabutra, 2023). In conclusion, therefore, social responsibility in organizations has a critical function of enhancing organizational performance with respect to sustainability, equity as well as

emphasizing the social policy of organizations in the business world (Al-Zyadat et al., 2022).

2.3. Sustainability in internal operations

According to Thiele (2024), sustainability zones in corporate operations refer to internal practices and procedures of an organization meant to uphold sustainability in its internal processes, resources and usage, and overall stability. Sustainable internal operation refers to the process of implementing environmentally friendly systems, socially responsible practices, and economic factors into the activity of a business. Companies need to work towards sustainability within organizational activities because integration of environmentally sustainable policies will help organizations to save expenses, thereby decreasing the effect of their involvement with the environment, besides the improvement of a sustainable environment in hopes of a more sustainable future (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022).

Measures of change within a company for sustainable internal management activities are, for instance, energy efficient measures, waste management and minimization, sustainable purchasing, and supply chain management buy (Sanchez-Planelles et al., 2022). By acquiring energy-efficient technologies, applying recycling strategies, and using supplies from sustainable resources, an organization will be able to reduce emissions, waste production, and consumption of available natural resources. Another internality of sustainable operation is increasing employee participation, developing sustainability-training programs for workers, and advancing organizational commitment to environmental sustainability (Ahmadi-Gh and Bello-Pintado, 2022).

Lim et al. (2022) argued that environmentally responsible internal activities can provide diverse advantages for organizations, such as reduction in expenditures, increased effectiveness of their image, and better relationships with stakeholders. In this case, resource efficiency means fewer costs must be incurred that could have been used to provide output, hence leading to increased efficiency as well as value for sustainable practice. Committing to sustainability in organizational operations also increases organizational credibility, appeals to sustainability-conscious customers, and provides an edge over other firms (Ludwig and Sassen, 2022; Ali et al., 2023).

Tumwebaze et al. (2022) stated that communicating sustainability practices to stakeholders, including employees, suppliers, and communities, can open the organization to transparent communication, hence increase trust, proper cooperation, and gain value for all the stakeholders. Altogether, sustainability management of internal business operations contributes to the pursuit of sustainable development, generating positive social and environmental change, the attainment of organizational long-term goals and

objectives, and exists as a general solution to today's volatile business environment (Bianchi et al., 2022).

2.4. Sustainability within fast food sector

Rezaei et al. (2022) highlighted important issues for sustainability within the food business area because of contributing massively to the deterioration of the environment and high utilization of resources, and social problems. Sustainability concerns in the food manufacturing cut across the supply chain process that includes sourcing, production, distribution, consumption, and waste management.

Looking at sustainability in the food sector, it is possible to identify sourcing and production as one of the key areas. Organic farming, agroecology, and regenerative agriculture are farming methods that seek to avoid most or any detrimental impacts on the natural world and lessen synthetic chemicals applied to crops (Kumar et al., 2023). Through the more conscientious purchase of raw materials, making less food waste, and rational organizing of production, the food industry will inevitably contribute to the preservation of the planet, stimulate demand for local produce, and offer consumers healthy products of accountable origin (Anastasiou et al., 2022).

Furthermore, responsibility also includes addressing food sustainability issues, such as ensuring food security, providing access to healthy, sustainable, and affordable food for everyone, and promoting social sustainability. Key components of creating improved food systems include enhancing food access, increasing the availability of nutritious food, and empowering local communities (Pushparaj et al., 2022). Food donation programs, community gardens, and liaisons with local farmers, are examples of ways this food waste can be minimized to decrease the instances that create food security (Sochenda, 2022). Furthermore, combating unfair trade practices, backing up small-scale producers, and guaranteeing that decent labor rights are respected for employees in the food chain also address social sustainability and good business practices in the sector. In general, sustainability in the food sector can be defined as the principles of building a more stable, fair, and environmentally sustainable food system for people and the Earth to meet the needs of the present and future generations (Alae-Carew et al., 2022; Hanaysha, 2022b).

2.5. Related studies

Meseguer-Sánchez et al. (2021) argued that the connections between sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) present a wider perspective and more ties among various fields of study, including global and multifactorial problems. From this view, the goal of the present study is to determine how CSR and sustainability are linked ideas in modern scientific literature and what future areas of research could come out of this issue. Results of the study indicated that there is a

significant rise in attention regarding the social dimension, specifically the circular economy. A study confirmed that social responsibility plays a role in increasing sustainability in organizations due to its ability to motivate organizations to adopt sustainability in their actions.

Usmani et al. (2022) noted that CSR is substantially associated with food companies because of the observable influence and the higher degree of an organization's dependence on the environment, economy, and society, known as the triple bottom line (TBL). The threats and opportunities of CSR-related scale have moved from individual organizations to the networks and supply chains of the food sector. In this regard, this study empirically examines CSR initiatives, and they have employed the Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) and Matrice d'Impacts Croisés Multiplication Appliqués à un Classement (MICMAC) technique. Thus, to derive an ISM-MICMAC-based framework, at the initial level, CSR initiatives were selected from the literature with the help of experts. Subsequently, the results of the MICMAC analysis revealed that employee trainings and workshops; and employee, welfare and empowerment are influential CSR activities that can assist CSR integration in the food segment of Pakistan; the CSR activities community improvement; and contribution to the economic development, on the other hand, are least influential in the model.

This study, therefore, suggests that food sector firms should encourage the use of employee-based strategy in their firms. Furthermore, the empirical evidence produced by this study can contribute to an improved understanding of CSR activities and their function in the execution of CSR in the food sector of developing nations.

Samaibekova et al. (2021) aimed in their study to focus on the link between social responsibility and sustainability actions. Through reviewing previous literature, the results of the study indicated that the private sector could bring about benefits to society and could offer new goods or services that could generate economic growth. Consequently, these long-term benefits create a conducive atmosphere for businesses to invest in product innovation, which leads to the delivery of more people-centered productions that, in turn, improve the well-being of the masses. In doing so, corporations are responsible for the social welfare of society and the supply of goods and services that enhance economic opportunities for society, from those who depend on the right jobs and key services. On the one hand, companies want to find other economic opportunities for themselves and restore the bad impression of society. In this regard, the multilateral values and money-making efforts are more and more crucial for those companies to support sustainable development and fight climate change.

Zu (2023) examined the gap between corporate expectations and how business owners implement sustainability strategies, identifying the key reasons behind this mismatch. The study highlights how CSR

and sustainable practices contribute to achieving the United Nations' 2030 SDGs. It also compares the SDGs with the earlier Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), noting both similarities and differences.

The author explores possible solutions to bridge the gap between business practices and societal expectations, emphasizing the need to redefine the role of businesses and institutions in promoting sustainability. This includes establishing new systems and frameworks that support—and eventually require—sustainable behavior.

In its final section, the study outlines a path toward building a resilient and inclusive world through system transformation. By adopting a systems thinking approach, both individuals and organizations can better understand and address the root causes of unsustainability, ultimately leading to the development of more sustainable and robust systems. This, in turn, supports both human well-being and environmental health.

Shah and Khan (2020) investigated how customers' perceptions of CSR initiatives influence both affective and continuance commitment. The study specifically examined the direct impact of relationship duration on the link between CSR and customer commitment in the banking sector of developing countries. The findings reveal that customers' expectations regarding CSR, particularly in relation to emotional engagement and long-term commitment, positively affect both affective and continuance commitment. Additionally, the results show that the length of the customer-bank relationship strengthens the link between CSR and continuance commitment, but does not significantly affect the relationship between CSR and affective commitment.

3. Methods and materials

This study will employ a quantitative research methodology, which involves the collection and analysis of numerical data in alignment with the study's objectives. This approach is justified by the argument that quantitative methods enable the collection of primary data from a larger sample, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings. A questionnaire will be developed to collect primary data, drawing on previous studies such as Meseguer-Sánchez et al. (2021), Usmani et al. (2022), Samaibekova et al. (2021), Zu (2023), and Shah and Khan (2020), along with other relevant sources as needed. The questionnaire will consist of two main sections. The first section will gather demographic information about the participants, including age, gender, educational qualifications, and work experience. The second section will include items related to the study's sub-variables: stakeholder expectations, regulatory compliance, competitive advantage, cost savings and efficiency, and employee engagement and retention. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire will be reviewed by a panel of academic experts in the relevant field. A five-point

Likert scale will be used for the responses, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The study population consisted of 132,383 individuals employed in the fast food sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To recruit participants for the questionnaire survey, the researcher contacted the Human Resources (HR) department of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority. An initial email was carefully drafted in a professional tone, clearly outlining the study's objectives, the importance of HR's involvement, and the potential benefits to the organization. Following this initial communication, the researcher awaited a positive response confirming HR's willingness to participate. Upon receiving approval, the researcher collaborated with HR to determine the most effective method for distributing the questionnaire to eligible employees. It was agreed that the questionnaire would be made available through a secure online link using Google Forms. Throughout this process, the researcher maintained close communication with the HR department, offering support by responding to inquiries and providing updates on the questionnaire's distribution and completion status.

A simple random sample of 385 individuals was selected to represent the population. From this sample, 297 fully completed questionnaires were collected, resulting in a statistically acceptable response rate of 77.2%. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to deal with the collected primary data. Cronbach's Alpha test (α) was run to check the reliability and consistency of study tools. As was shown in Table 1, all variables and contents of the questionnaire appeared to be reliable and consistent, as all of them scored higher than 0.70. Other statistical tests of the current study's analysis included mean and standard deviation, frequencies and percentages, multiple and linear regression.

Table 1: Alpha value

Variable	α
Stakeholder expectations	0.933
Regulatory compliance	0.906
Competitive advantage	0.944
Cost savings and efficiency	0.927
Employee engagement and retention	0.903
Internal operations sustainability	0.912

In the present study, several methodological strategies were implemented to reduce bias and enhance the external validity of the findings. To mitigate potential bias, a structured approach was used in participant selection. After designing the questionnaire, the researchers contacted the HR department of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority to obtain a list of potential participants. By clearly defining the analytical objectives and maintaining a professional and neutral relationship with the HR department, the researchers aimed to minimize bias in assessing participants' attitudes. Furthermore, a random sampling technique was employed to select participants from the target population, thereby increasing the generalizability of the study's results. A large number of participants working in fast-food companies across Saudi Arabia were recruited to

strengthen the external validity of the study. To ensure the reliability and consistency of the research instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by academic experts in the field. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the collected data. The resulting alpha coefficients indicated high reliability, supporting the credibility of the study's findings. Finally, statistical measures such as mean, standard deviation, and regression analysis were used to further reinforce the internal validity and overall reliability of the research.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Demographics results

Frequencies and percentages were computed to describe the demographic characteristics of the study participants. As shown in Table 2, the majority of respondents were over 40 years of age, accounting for 35.7% of the sample, and most held a Bachelor's degree, representing 50.8%. Additionally, the results indicated that the largest proportion of respondents had more than 11 years of work experience, comprising 42.1% of the total.

Table 2: Demographics

	Frequency	Percent
Age		
22-27	24	8.1
28-33	80	26.9
34-39	87	29.3
+40 years	106	35.7
Education		
Diploma and below	111	37.4
Bachelor's degree	151	50.8
High studies	35	11.8
Experience		
2-4	20	6.7
5-7	51	17.2
8-10	101	34.0
+11 years	125	42.1
Total	297	100.0

4.2. Questionnaire analysis

Mean (μ) and standard deviation (σ) were used to analyze the responses to the questionnaire, as presented in Table 3. The results show that all survey items received average scores of 3.00 or higher, indicating a generally positive attitude among participants. These values suggest that respondents held favorable perceptions toward the factors examined in the study. From a statistical perspective, all variables under investigation achieved mean scores exceeding the neutral midpoint of 3.00, reflecting an overall positive response.

4.3. Multicollinearity test

To assess the presence of multicollinearity, the independent variables were subjected to VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) and Tolerance analysis. These computations can be connected to the possible developments in Table 4. With no VIF values below

10 and no Tolerance values beyond 0.10, the data does not reveal any indications of multicollinearity (Gujarati and Porter, 2009).

Table 3: Questionnaire analysis

Statement	μ	σ
We prioritize achieving the expectations of stakeholders, including customers, investors, and communities.	3.707	1.170
We always try to be motivated to make sure that our stakeholders are satisfied.	3.842	1.182
We try to align our internal operations with our stakeholders' values.	3.623	1.179
We thrive through building trust and enhancing relationships with our stakeholders.	3.889	1.173
We implement sustainable practices as a response to stakeholders' expectations.	3.704	1.165
Stakeholder expectations	3.753	1.043
We try to mitigate legal risks by sticking to regulations.	4.205	.831
Avoiding penalties and adhering to regulations is our way of maintaining our reputation.	3.966	.972
Ethical standards and committing to norms are a part of regulatory compliance.	4.141	.776
We hold our responsibility to sustainability to gain better social responsibility.	4.108	.938
We are committed to responsible business conduct.	3.983	.790
Regulatory compliance	4.081	.738
We adopt social responsibility as a sign of competitive advantage.	4.152	.919
We try to differentiate ourselves by adopting sustainable practices in our internal operations.	4.155	.932
We try to attract environmentally conscious stakeholders.	4.024	.872
We value sustainability as a part of being responsible for both social and environmental.	4.155	.971
Through adopting sustainability, we ensure long-term viability and success.	3.842	1.046
Competitive advantage	4.049	.874
We always try to identify cost-saving opportunities.	4.209	.950
We are aware that identifying cost-saving chances can enhance operational efficiency.	3.943	1.062
Reaching operational efficiency can guarantee a good level of sustainable practices.	3.906	1.093
Being sustainable means reducing waste and improving energy efficiency in our internal operations.	3.886	.916
Cost-saving opportunities can lower costs and increase profitability.	4.236	.821
Cost savings and efficiency	4.036	.856
Our employees are our stakeholders.	3.828	.893
Driving sustainability in employees means better sustainability in our internal operations.	4.024	.995
We always make sure that our employees understand concepts of sustainability.	4.148	1.009
We always promote a positive workplace culture and enhance employee morale and satisfaction through sustainability.	4.152	.901
Our sustainability plans are based on innovative ideas and commitment to the organization.	3.862	1.071
Employee engagement and retention	4.003	.829
We are aware of the influence of sustainability on environment.	3.929	1.138
Being sustainable means we are ethical in our business operations.	3.721	1.159
When we are sustainable, we guarantee more involvement from the community.	3.987	1.130
Internal sustainability means gaining more trust.	3.822	1.138
We thrive to have a social impact.	4.263	.845
Through adopting sustainability, we guarantee a good level of community support.	4.044	.970
Being ethical through sustainability means gaining more employee retention.	4.219	.755
Internal operations sustainability	3.998	.833

Table 4: Multicollinearity test results

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Stakeholder expectations	.519	1.926
Regulatory compliance	.521	1.920
Competitive advantage	.195	5.128
Cost savings and efficiency	.218	4.589
Employee engagement and retention	.247	4.054

4.4. Hypothesis testing

At the 0.05 level of significance, the results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that the overall model is statistically significant, as shown by the F-value. The findings suggest that social responsibility places pressure on organizations to adopt sustainable practices within their internal operations. A strong positive correlation was found, with a correlation coefficient of 0.883. This means that 78% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables.

Furthermore, as presented in Table 5, the regression coefficients indicate the following:

- Stakeholder expectations significantly influence organizations to maintain internal sustainability, with a beta value of 0.453 and a significant t-value.
- Regulatory compliance also significantly influences sustainability in internal operations, with a beta value of 0.184.
- Competitive advantage has a significant positive effect on internal sustainability, with a beta value of 0.147.
- Cost savings and efficiency contribute significantly to internal sustainability, with a beta value of 0.133.
- Employee engagement and retention also significantly support sustainability within internal operations, with a beta value of 0.114.

Table 5: Hypothesis testing

Predictor	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	Standard error	Standardized coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.242	0.136	—	1.779	0.076
Stakeholder expectations	0.362	0.030	0.453	11.876	0.000
Regulatory compliance	0.208	0.043	0.184	4.839	0.000
Competitive advantage	0.140	0.059	0.147	2.365	0.019
Cost Savings and efficiency	0.129	0.057	0.133	2.249	0.025
Employee engagement and retention	0.114	0.056	0.114	2.052	0.041

Model summary: R = 0.883 and R² = 0.780; Hypothesis: Social responsibility pressures organizations to maintain sustainability in their internal operations

4.5. Discussion

This study aimed to examine the role of social responsibility as both a source of pressure and a motivational factor for organizations to achieve sustainability in their internal operations. The dimensions of social responsibility considered included stakeholder expectations, regulatory compliance, competitive advantage, cost savings and efficiency, and employee engagement and retention.

A quantitative methodology was employed, and data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed to managers in the Saudi fast-food sector. The data were analyzed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), multicollinearity testing, and multiple linear regression analysis.

The results supported the main hypothesis, showing that social responsibility exerts significant pressure on organizations to maintain sustainable practices internally. Among the examined variables, stakeholder expectations emerged as the strongest influencing factor ($\beta = 0.453$). Today's stakeholders—including customers, investors, employees, and local communities—are increasingly aware of environmental issues and demand responsible practices. These findings are consistent with [Usmani et al. \(2022\)](#), who emphasized the importance of trust, reputation, and stakeholder relationships for organizational sustainability. Organizations that ignore stakeholder expectations risk public backlash, loss of support, and reputational damage.

The second most influential factor was regulatory compliance ($\beta = 0.184$). Compliance with environmental laws and sustainability regulations helps organizations avoid penalties, legal disputes, and reputational harm. This aligns with the findings of [Meseguer-Sánchez et al. \(2021\)](#), who argued that legal frameworks act as structural forces compelling organizations to adjust their internal systems to meet evolving environmental standards.

Competitive advantage ranked third ($\beta = 0.147$). Adopting sustainable practices can help organizations differentiate themselves in the market. As consumer demand for environmentally friendly products and services grows, businesses that integrate sustainability are more likely to attract loyal customers and build a strong market position. Ongoing sustainability efforts can position organizations as industry leaders and promote long-term success.

In fourth place was cost savings and efficiency ($\beta = 0.133$). Implementing sustainable practices such as reducing waste, conserving resources, and improving energy efficiency leads to lower operational costs and improved productivity. These findings are supported by [Zu \(2023\)](#) and [Shah and Khan \(2020\)](#), who noted that cost reduction through sustainability strengthens financial performance.

Lastly, employee engagement and retention had the lowest influence ($\beta = 0.114$). Nonetheless, involving employees in sustainability initiatives is

crucial, as they are key agents in implementing sustainable practices. Engagement enhances morale, productivity, and loyalty while reducing turnover. Companies that integrate sustainability into their operations foster a positive workplace culture. This is in line with [Samaibekova et al. \(2021\)](#), who highlighted that employee involvement in sustainability contributes to a positive organizational climate and attracts top talent.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study confirmed that social responsibility exerts pressure on organizations to maintain sustainability in their internal operations. This finding highlights the growing importance of ethical and socially responsible practices for organizations globally. As businesses become increasingly accountable to society, the call for them to remain financially viable while also serving as models of sustainability becomes more urgent and well-defined.

Social responsibility encompasses a broad range of considerations, including social, economic, environmental, ethical, and community-related factors that influence a company's reputation. Encouraging organizations to adopt socially responsible practices contributes to positive social and environmental change and strengthens credibility among key stakeholders such as customers, employees, investors, and society at large.

Recognizing social responsibility as a motivating force for internal sustainability aligns with societal values and expectations, while also offering strategic benefits, including value creation and competitive advantage. Businesses that incorporate social responsibility into their core operations are better positioned to engage with a growing market of socially conscious customers, employees, and investors. Moreover, they are more likely to build sustainable relationships with communities and regulatory bodies.

Practicing social and environmental responsibility within internal operations enables organizations to promote public welfare as part of their corporate mission. It also reduces exposure to risks such as legal penalties and reputational harm associated with neglecting corporate and social responsibility.

Based on the results and discussion, and particularly the identified role of employee engagement and retention in supporting internal sustainability efforts, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Organizations should provide comprehensive training programs to raise employees' awareness of key sustainability initiatives, the company's sustainability vision and mission, and their individual responsibility in contributing to these goals. Employees can be actively engaged in sustainability efforts by encouraging participation

in activities such as waste management, energy conservation campaigns, and environmentally conscious purchasing. Recognizing and rewarding employees who contribute to sustainability practices will help foster a culture of sustainability within the organization.

- Sustainability objectives should be clearly aligned with employees' individual goals, responsibilities, and key performance indicators (KPIs). Incentives such as bonuses, promotions, or other rewards should be linked to employees' contributions toward the organization's sustainability targets. This approach not only motivates staff to pursue sustainable solutions but also reinforces the company's commitment to sustainability. Furthermore, it demonstrates organizational appreciation for employees who prioritize sustainability in their roles.

5.1. Theoretical and practical implications

The current study was built on the hopes of realizing theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, the study might help to explain the impact of customer, employee, and regulatory expectations on the organization's decision on sustainability practices. From a practical perspective, the findings of the study may prove to be useful for fast food firms in KSA to understand how they may respond to social responsibility pressure for increasing sustainability in their operations. These may include recommendations of how best to put sustainable practices into operation, how to involve stakeholders, the legal requirements in relation to sustainability, and how sustainability may be used as a source of competition in the local market. This could support organizations in increasing the level of their sustainability performance, increasing the positive image of the company, and fitting the expectations of the stakeholders.

5.2. Future studies

Future research could further investigate how various forms of stakeholder pressure—such as those from customers, investors, and regulatory bodies—relate to an organization's social responsibility and influence the adoption of sustainable business practices. By employing case studies or administering questionnaires across different industries, such research could identify the strategies organizations use to interpret and respond to these pressures in ways that promote environmental sustainability and ethical labor practices. Understanding how social responsibility functions both as a motivational force and an external pressure may offer a more comprehensive view of the complex factors shaping organizational sustainability initiatives.

Moreover, future studies could examine the moderating role of organizational culture in the

relationship between social responsibility, stakeholder pressure, and sustainable internal operations—particularly from environmental and ethical labor perspectives. Such research could provide valuable insights into how a culture that emphasizes social responsibility may enhance or hinder sustainability efforts within an organization. Utilizing a combination of research methods, including questionnaires, interviews, and potentially longitudinal designs, future work could explore how socially responsible organizational cultures contribute to sustainable practices both internally and in broader societal contexts.

5.3. Limitations of the study

One of the notable limitations of this study is the potential overgeneralization of the findings, as the research was conducted solely within the fast-food sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the results may not be applicable to other sectors within the country or to organizations in different international contexts. Another limitation relates to the nature of the data and the access constraints. The study relied on self-reported organizational data, which may include confidential information and could impact the accuracy and consistency of the findings, potentially reducing the overall coherence and reliability of the study.

Funding

This work was funded by the University of Jeddah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, under grant No. (UJ-24-SHR-20784-1). Therefore, the authors thank the University of Jeddah for its technical and financial support.

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the University of Jeddah and adhered to the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their responses were kept anonymous.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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