CREATING SOCIAL VALUE USING THE HIGH-PERFORMANCE ORGANISATION FRAMEWORK

André de Waal

MSc., MBA Ph.D., Free University of Amsterdam, HPO Center, the Netherlands
andredewaal@planet.nl

Silka Patel

BA., University of Hertfordshire, Leidos, United Kingdom
Silka.Patel@leidos.com

Arend de Jong

EM, Free University of Amsterdam, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, the Netherlands
Arend-de.Jong@klm.com

Abstract

The research objective of this research is to theoretically identify the capabilities organizations need to have to create and sustain social value. We focus on multinational enterprises as this type of organization has much influence worldwide and in local communities. We use the High-Performance Organisation (HPO) Framework in our research as it provides the characteristics organizations need to have in order to achieve sustainable excellent results: results that should include the creation of social value. We find that theoretically the majority of the 35 HPO characteristics in the HPO Framework influence one or more of the social value components positively. In the next, empirical, stage of our research, we will investigate whether the positive relationship between HPO and the creation of social value in practice holds true. This will be evaluated in a follow-on pilot study at two multinational enterprises.

Keywords

Social Value, HPO, Organisational Capabilities, ESG, EDI, CSR

1. Introduction

Society increasingly looks at the business sector to create social value, as organizations in general possess the financial, technological, and managerial resources that can be used to deal with social issues (Hasan, 2018; Rygh, 2020). In addition, because of the various (financial and corporate) scandals in the business world during this decade, society increasingly expects businesses to no longer only focus on creating economic value for their shareholders (Samans & Nelson, 2022; Weissbrod & Bocken, 2017) but also on achieving social value for its many stakeholders (Adrian & Anggiani, 2020; Rygh, 2020).

One of the developments in this respect is the UK Government that now demands of its suppliers that these need to show in their product and service proposals how they are going to create social value in one or more of the themes of COVID-19 recovery (help local communities to manage and recover from the impact of COVID-19), tackling economic inequality (create new businesses, new jobs, and new skills; increase supply chain resilience and capacity), fighting climate change (effective stewardship of the environment), equal opportunity (reduce the gender and disability employment gap, tackle workforce inequality), and wellbeing (improve health and wellbeing, improve community integration) (Government Commercial Function, 2020). More governments worldwide are expected on short notice to follow the UK's example (Gidigah *et al.*, 2022).

Social value creation by multinational enterprises (MNEs) is of special interest because this type of organization has much influence worldwide and in local communities. The interest is reflected in calls for research such as of Rygh (2020) who states that it is important to study shareholder and stakeholder governance affects MNEs' social value creation strategies and outcomes. In order for MNEs to effectively create social value, they have to increase and strengthen their capabilities for social value creation (Riikkinen *et al.*, 2017; Sinkovics & Archie-Acheampong, 2020; Varga & Csiszárik-Kocsir, 2019; Wettstein, 2012). In fact, previous research has shown that when MNEs do not develop these capabilities to a sufficient level, their initiatives to create social value actually often fail, produce unintended (negative) consequences or even result in loss of social value (Bocken & Short, 2016; Sinkovics *et al.*, 2014; Sinkovics *et al.*, 2015;

Sinkovics *et al*., 2016). Thus, according to Van Tulder et al. (2021), is no longer the question of 'why' MNEs should develop social value, but rather a question of 'how'.

Unfortunately, in the current literature limited research can be found into the capability's organisations need to create social value but MNEs were not the topic of investigation. For instance, Weissbrod & Bocken (2017) conducted a case study into the connection between lean startup thinking, triple bottom line value creation, and organizational capabilities but in at a clothing company; Urban & and Gaffurini (2017) determined how different organizational capabilities are related to social innovation specifically in social enterprises; Da Silva et al. (2021) examined the role played by dynamic capabilities and business model innovation but in international social purpose organizations; Wójcik *et al.* (2022) investigated the micro-foundations of an organization's dynamic capability for social responsibility but specifically for a business-nonprofit collaboration; and Salim *et al*. (2019) made a systematic review of the internal capabilities for enhancing eco-innovation performance but strictly of manufacturing firms. Thus, Samans & Nelson (2022) conclude that commitment to the principles of social value creation is growing but that the practice of actually achieving social value is still developing. They state that the current gap between aspiration/commitment and implementation/ results has to narrow because otherwise organizations, including MNEs, will keep coming up short in their efforts.

Our research objective, therefore, is to identify the organizational capabilities MNEs need for creating and sustaining social value. For the identification process, we will use the high-performance organization (HPO) framework (de Waal, 2012a+b, 2020), which is a scientifically validated framework (Do & Mai, 2020) with which an organization can evaluate the capabilities it needs to achieve excellent results. An HPO is defined as an organization that achieves financial and non-financial results that are exceedingly better than those of its peer group over a period of five years or more by focusing in a disciplined way on that what really matters to the organization (de Waal, 2021). As creating social value can be seen as a category of organizational results, our proposition is that becoming an HPO will aid in creating social value. In addition, the HPO Framework has been used in earlier research to study the relation between capabilities, high-performance organizations, and organizational performance (Al-Shummary *et al*., 2016; de Waal, 2012b; Honyenuga *et al.,* 2019; Mukif *et al*., 2020; Pattanasing *et al*., 2021, 2022). It has also been applied in the context of MNEs (de Waal, 2012b; de Waal & Hanna, 2016; de Waal & Schreurs, 2017). In this article, we will theoretically link the HPO Framework to the various components of social value, to show that there are many links between the two. In a follow-on study, we will empirically test these connections at several pilot MNEs. The contribution of our research is

therefore initially theoretically as it will expand the literatures on social value, high-performance organizations, and MNEs.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. In the next two sections, the concepts of social value and social value creation are described and the HPO Framework is introduced. This is followed by a section describing the results of the matching between the HPO Framework and the components of social value. The article ends with a conclusion, limitations of the study, and future research opportunities.

2. Literature Review: Social Value and Social Value Creation

'Social value creation' can be defined as the process that results in the creation of something of value for society (Dietz & Porter, 2012) or providing solutions to social problems (Dacin *et al*., 2011) while altering existing social structures (Mair & Marti, 2006). The definition of 'social value' itself is a bit more controversial as there currently is not a universally accepted one (Gidigah *et al*., 2022; Rygh, 2020). This is because the social value is a complex concept with a subjective nature (Choi *et al*., 2014): its definition basically lies in the eyes of the beholder (Russel, 2013). For example, Farag and McDermott (2015) consider the social value to be a soft non-financial benefit of work and investments (which includes individual and community well-being); Oanh (2019) adds that it is the value created through human activities aimed at benefiting disadvantaged and marginalized people and the community at large. In the same vein, Westell (2012) sees social value as a positive social change that prevents negative social changes in the life of people. Opoku and Guthrie (2018) stress the sustainability aspect of social value, in the sense of creating positive social, environmental, and economic impacts on a community and the people who live in that community. Russel (2013) explained social value as the benefit of activities performed by an organization for its stakeholders, while Halloran (2017) and Daniel & Pasquire (2019) look broader at the concept by stating that a community and its inhabitants obtain social, economic and environmental benefits from organizations operating in that community. Another explanation, by Awuzie *et al*. (2018), is that social value is the outcome of publicly funded investments and programs aimed at local communities such as employing local suppliers and workers. Going in a different direction, Sinkovics et al. (2015) reconceptualize social value creation as the alleviation of social constraints that prevent individuals from achieving the three development values of sustenance, self-esteem, and freedom from servitude. Finally, a nice summary is provided by Jain *et al.* (2019) who state that social value is expressed in changes in

the lives of (groups of) individuals when tangible and intangible resources are employed at the grassroots level by social actors, ultimately creating social change within society.

In this research, we use the definition given by Samans & Nelson (2022, p.20) for sustainable enterprise value, which we have slightly adapted to cover social value (by replacing their term 'sustainable enterprise' with the term 'social'): "Social value creation means generating sustained value for all of the organization's principal stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, governments and communities. This includes creating economic value as well as respecting people's rights, building their human and social capital, and protecting and restoring natural capital, thereby reinforcing the strength of the social and environmental ecosystems in which the organization operates and hence its own performance over particularly the medium to long term." We have chosen this definition as it is not only a very recent one (2022) but also seems to be encompassing all elements of importance for social value. As Samans & Nelson remark (2020, p.20): "These three aspects—the creation of sustained and shared direct value for the firm's stakeholders as well as wider societal value—are important in their own right, but they are also mutually reinforcing. Together they give effect to the three-dimensional meaning of sustainable in this context: value creation that is at once financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable."

3. Literature Review: The HPO Framework

The HPO Framework (de Waal, 2012a+b) is a conceptual, scientifically validated structure that organizations can use for analyzing how high performing they are and to decide which capabilities need to be strengthened in order to improve organizational performance and make it sustainable (de Waal and Goedegebuure, 2017). The framework was developed after an extensive review of 290 academic and practitioner publications on high performance. For each of the 290 studies elements that the authors indicated as being important for becoming an HPO was identified and categorized. Because different authors used different terminologies, similar elements were put in the same category. The resulting 189 categories were labeled 'potential HPO characteristic'. For each of the potential HPO characteristics, the 'weighted importance' was calculated, i.e., the number of times that it occurred in the examined studies. Finally, the characteristics with the highest weighted importance were considered the HPO characteristics. These 89 characteristics were subsequently included in an HPO survey which was administered worldwide and encompassed over 3,200 respondents. In this survey, the respondents were asked to indicate how well they thought their organizations were performing as to the HPO

characteristics (on a scale of 1 to 10) and also how the results of the organization they worked at compared to those of peer groups.

The data of the respondents were statistically analyzed (de Waal, 2012a, 2020), yielding five factors all correlated with competitive performance. These five HPO factors are (in Table 1 the HPO characteristics are listed):

- *Continuous Improvement and Renewal*. An HPO compensates for dying strategies by renewing them and making them unique. The organization continuously improves, simplifies, and aligns its processes and innovates its products and services, creating new sources of competitive advantage to respond to market developments. Furthermore, the HPO manages its core competencies efficiently, and sources out non-core competencies.

- *Openness and Action-Orientation*. An HPO has an open culture, which means that management values the opinions of employees and involves them in important organizational processes. Making mistakes is allowed and is regarded as an opportunity to learn. Employees spend a lot of time on dialogue, knowledge exchange, and learning, to develop new ideas aimed at increasing their performance and making the organization performance-driven. Managers are personally involved in experimenting thereby fostering an environment of change in the organization.

- *Management Quality*. Belief and trust in others and fair treatment are encouraged in an HPO. Managers are trustworthy, live with integrity, show commitment, enthusiasm, and respect, and have a decisive, action-focused decision-making style. Management holds people accountable for their results by maintaining clear accountability for performance. Values and strategy are communicated throughout the organization, so everyone knows and embraces these.

- *Employee Quality*. An HPO assembles and recruits a diverse and complementary management team and workforce with maximum work flexibility. The workforce is trained to be resilient and flexible. They are encouraged to develop their skills to accomplish extraordinary results and are held responsible for their performance, as a result of which creativity is increased, leading to better results.

- *Long-term Orientation*. An HPO grows through partnerships with suppliers and customers, so long-term commitment is extended to all stakeholders. Vacancies are filled by high-potential internal candidates first, and people are encouraged to become leaders. An HPO creates a safe and secure workplace (both physical and mental), and dismisses employees only as a last resort.

The HPO research shows that there is a direct and positive relationship between the five HPO factors and competitive performance: the higher the scores on the HPO factors (HPO scores), the better the results of the organization, and the lower the HPO scores the lower the competitive performance.

4. Research Approach

In order to achieve our research objective to identify the organizational capabilities MNEs need for creating and sustaining social value, the social value concept and the HPO framework have to be related. We do this by following the same methodology as used by de Waal & Orcotoma Escalante (2011) when they related the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) with that of the HPO. For this, we first broke down the concept of social value into its components: environmental (which includes net zero carbon), social and governance (ESG); corporate social responsibility (CSR); and equality, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI). Then, we constructed an impact matrix in which we combined the social value components with the individual characteristics of the HPO framework. For each of the social value components, we analyzed how they could be impacted by each of the HPO characteristics. The lead author made the first draft of the impact matrix because he had prior experience in making such a matrix (de Waal & Linthorst, 2020). Subsequently, the other authors reviewed the impact matrix and made changes where they saw fit, each building on the review work of the previous person until all authors had given their input. The lead author was then able to finalize the impact matrix. Table I summarizes the results of the matching.

Table 1: *Matching the HPO Framework with The Components of Social Value*

HPO factors/characteristics	ESG	CSR	EDI
Continuous Improvement and Renewal			
The organization has adopted a strategy that sets it clearly apart from oth organizations	X	X	X
In the organization processes are continuously improved.	X	X	X
In the organization processes are continuously simplified.	X	X	X
In the organization processes are continuously aligned.	X	X	X
In the organization everything that matters to performance is explicit reported.	X	X	X
In the organization both financial and non-financial information is reporte to organizational members.	X	X	X
The organization continuously innovates its core competencies.			
The organization continuously innovates its products, processes, an services.	X		
enness and Action Orientation			
Management frequently engages in a dialogue with employees.		X	X
Organizational members spend much time on communication, knowledg exchange, and learning.	X	X	X
Organizational members are always involved in important processes.	X	X	X

HPO factors/characteristics	ESG	CSR	EDI
Management allows making mistakes.			
Management welcomes change.			
The organization is performance-driven.	X	X	X
nagement Quality			
Management is trusted by organizational members.		X	X
Management has integrity.		X	X
Management is a role model for organizational members.		X	X
Management applies fast decision-making.			
Management applies fast action-taking.			
Management coaches' organizational members to achieve better results.	X	X	X
Management focuses on achieving results.	X	X	X
Management is very effective.	X	X	X
Management applies strong leadership.			
Management is confident.			
Management is decisive with regard to non-performers.			
ployee Quality			
Management always holds organizational members responsible for the results.			
Management inspires organizational members to accomplish extraordina results.	X	X	X
Organizational members are trained to be resilient and flexible.	X	X	X
The organization has a diverse and complementary workforce.			X
g-Term Orientation			
The organization maintains good and long-term relationships with stakeholders.	X	X	
The organization is aimed at servicing the customers as best as possible.	X	X	X
The organization grows through partnerships with suppliers and/customers.	X	X	
Management has been with the company for a long time.			
The organization is a secure workplace for organizational members.	X	X	
New management is promoted from within the organization.			X

(Source: Self)

In the next sections for each of the matching results (i.e., where an 'X' has been placed in the Table) an explanation is given of the way the specific HPO characteristic influences the social value component positively.

4.1. *HPO Factor Continuous Improvement and Renewal*

1. The organization has to incorporate all components of social value in its strategy.

2. The organization has to tailor all its processes to support the creation of all components of social value.

3. See explanation for characteristic 2.

4. See explanation for characteristic 2.

5. The organization has to make sure to develop key performance indicators for all the components of social value, and that these are included in the reporting to both managers and employees.

6. See explanation for characteristic 5.

8. The organization innovates its products, services, and processes to be(come) increasingly environmental-friendly.

4.2. *HPO Factor Openness and Action Orientation*

9. Management regularly discusses the components of social value, to keep on top of what is happening in the organization with respect to social value creation and maintenance, while employees are also continuously informed about developments in this area.

10. In these discussions the components of social value are emphatically the subject of learning.

11. Employees are emphatically involved in discussing, making decisions, and taking action in regard to the various components of social value.

4.3. *HPO Factor Management Quality*

15. Management is trusted by employees (and stakeholders) in an environment where managers are ethical, create and maintain individual relationships with people at all levels, have belief and trust in others, show people respect, and exhibit fairness in the way all people (and stakeholders) are treated.

16. It is important that management is honest and sincere, i.e. has high integrity, so as to lead by example. The demonstration of commitment, enthusiasm, and respect in accordance with ethical standards is strongly encouraged in order to support the ethical level of the organization. This is related to creating clear, strong, and meaningful core values which are put into practice, showing decisiveness, and acting boldly when needed, in particular, with fundamental social responsibilities linked to employees (and stakeholders). In addition, the equal treatment of employees is a clear sign of integrity.

17. See explanation for characteristic 16.

20. Managers should be able to coach employees on a regular basis in achieving social value (in all its components).

21. Related to characteristic 21, the organization and its management emphatically want to achieve positive results in regard to the components of social value.

22. The organization and its management are actually very good at achieving positive results in regard to the components of social value.

4.4. *HPO Factor Employee Quality*

27. Managers should be able to enthuse employees for supporting the achievement of social value (in all its components).

28. When employees get regular training aimed at dealing with ESG, CSR, and EDI issues, it will make them more flexible and agile which helps the achievement of social value.

29. A diverse workforce is a clear sign of diversity and inclusivity.

4.5. *HPO Factor Long-Term Orientation*

30. The stakeholder theory is the key theory in the debate on business' role and responsibility in society and addresses the capacity of an organization to respond to social pressures and create social value. The main claim is that organizations are not simply managed in the interests of their shareholders but that there is a range of groups, or stakeholders, that have a legitimate interest in the organization as well. Organizations that treat stakeholders in a trustworthy manner will develop a competitive advantage since they are able to reduce costs and environmental impacts, that is, good stakeholder management translates into good business. Therefore, management should be able to handle the relational process with stakeholders very well by empathically looking out for their interests.

31. CSR shows first and foremost in fair pricing of the product and service delivered but also in taking interest in the customer beyond the product/service exchange. At the same time, consumers are becoming more interested in buying products from socially and environmentally responsible companies. After all, organizations that are perceived by customers and governments to be behaving badly with regard to the environment or human rights standards are increasingly at risk of falling sales.

32. Through the globalization of the economy, organizations are increasingly involved in a network of international chains of suppliers and customers. It has therefore become important for them to establish alliances and partnerships within their value chain and to be part of a value-creating network so that together all parties in the network can make sure environmental and social issues are addressed adequately.

34. In terms of labor issues, when subscribing to CSR and EDI principles the organization is committed to providing high-quality working conditions that reduce potential liabilities and health hazards. This goes hand in hand with the importance of an integrated and continuous environmental strategy for processes, products, and services in order to increase the overall business efficiency and reduce potential health and working risks to employees.

35. When new management is promoted from within the organization it means that all internal people get (and should have) a fair chance of promotion.

5. Conclusion, Limitations, And Future Research

Our research set out to identify the organizational capabilities MNEs need for creating and sustaining social value by theoretically linking the HPO Framework to the various components of social value. As Table 1 shows, there are actually many links to be made between the two. In fact, the Table indicates that 25 of the 35 HPO characteristics influence one or more of the social value components positively. The consequence of this research result is that – at least theoretically – when an organization becomes an HPO it will be in a much better position to create and sustain social value as it has at its disposal the organizational capabilities needed to do just that. This means that the HPO Framework seems to be a promising framework to achieve our ultimate research objective to identify the organizational capabilities MNEs need for creating and sustaining social value. The next research stage, therefore, is to take the results depicted in Table 1 and evaluate these in a follow-on study at two MNEs. There we will conduct several round table discussions with employees of these MCEs, to discuss how they in practice give shape to the capabilities as included in the HPO framework in order to create and sustain social value. During these discussions, the impact matrix, as given in Table 1, will also be reviewed in order to address the main limitation of our research, namely the fact that only three people have constructed the matrix potentially excluding other viewpoints and input of importance to the matrix.

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