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**SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: CHALLENGES AND
OPPORTUNITIES IN THE POST-COVID ERA**

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF LEAN ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE FRAMEWORK

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OBJECTIVE

This paper aims to investigate the possibilities for adopting Triple bottom line (TBL) framework in Lean organization. The TBL framework, proposed by Elkington (1998), is used to track and report sustainability indicators related to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). As a framework, TBL includes an economic bottom line (profit), an environmental bottom line (planet) and a social bottom line (people). As Elkington (1998) explains, the traditional measure (net profit) is not valid enough for measuring companies' success.

As Lean has proven itself as one of the most successful approaches for organising company operations (Kirin et al., 2022; Knol et al., 2018), it is interesting to explore how all three aspects of sustainability are tied to lean practices. According to Simeunović et al. (2012), lean represents a systematic approach to identifying and eliminating elements not adding value to the process.

However, a lack of reporting is found when researching the implementation of sustainability throughout lean organizations. This study aims to fill the gap of research scarcity surrounding sustainability indicators in lean organizations, and examine if and how can TBL be used as a framework for lean organizations to track their sustainability aspirations.

METHODOLOGY

According to Fischl et al (2014) a systematic literature review contributes to the relevance and rigour of research. As a result, a systematic literature evaluation was carried out in order to answer the following research question: If and how could lean practices be tied to Triple bottom line framework?

Several keyword combinations were used to find as many relevant publications as available. All of the keywords have to do with sustainability and lean, but because of the nature of the topic, three sets of keyword combinations were used: (1) lean (environment, pollution, waste, energy efficiency) related to first P of TBL – Planet; (2) lean (financial, profit, KPI's) related to second P – Profit; (3) lean (people, HR, culture, leadership) related to the third P– People.

The study criteria attempted to eliminate papers that were not directly relevant to the research issue. The search was limited to abstracts, keywords and titles. Scopus database was used in search for related published papers. The final sample contained 87 articles that were examined in detail. To mitigate subjectivity, papers were reviewed by multiple researchers, and results were regularly cross-checked (Tomašević et al., 2020).

RESULTS

Among the analyzed articles, 7 consider all three bottom lines of TBL, and 87% of articles focus on one or two sides of the TBL in lean context. Profit bottom line was considered in 69% of articles. When exploring profit, costs, quality, waste reduction, productivity and ROI were taken into considerations. Nearly 47% of papers at least mention metrics related to planet (environmental bottom line) and were focused on waste

elimination, energy efficiency and pollution. However, less than 20% of papers included social aspect (people) of TBL. These papers refer to the health and safety of workers, their teamwork and development.

CONCLUSION

Main goal of this paper was to examine if lean organizations could use TBL framework to trace their sustainability aspirations. This research shows that two of three pillars, planet and profit, are completely aligned with lean organization's principles, which could give lean organizations advantage in changing, CSR oriented, markets. On the other hand, although insufficiently researched, the people pillar doesn't yield the same positive results as the previous two. This leads to a contradiction because the core of lean are continuous improvement, respect for people and teamwork. Thus, social aspects of lean organizations and their reporting through TBL framework should be the subject of additional research.

Keywords: *lean, TBL, profit, planet, people*

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