

Call for Papers for the 2021 Emerging Discourse Incubator

Managing Working Conditions in Supply Chains: Towards Decent Work

Guest Editors: Vivek Soundararajan, Miriam Wilhelm and Andrew Crane
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The topic for *JSCM's* fourth emerging discourse incubator (EDI) is **Managing Working Conditions in Supply Chains: Toward Decent Work**. Decent work refers to “opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men” (ILO, 2019). The goal of decent work for all is enshrined in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals as SDG 8, ‘Decent work and Economic Growth’. Yet in many supply chains this goal remains elusive. For example, there is evidence that the supply chains of several prominent companies, such as Amazon, have not adequately addressed worker safety concerns in regard to the COVID-19 virus.

For decades, studies on decent work across disciplines like development studies, geography, political science, sociology and management have focused on various topics including barriers to decent work, causes of indecent work, and measures to improve and maintain decent work (e.g. Anker et al., 2003; Barrientos, 2013; Blustein et al., 2016; Grandey et al., 2015; Sehnbruch et al., 2015). Insights from these studies have informed policies and practices across the globe, many of them focused on the governance of global supply chains.

Research on working conditions in SCM is often conducted under the broader theme of sustainable supply chain management. Under this theme, research has focused on topics such as the supplier capabilities for social management (Huq et al., 2016), occupational health & safety (e.g. Cantor et al., 2017; Pagell et al., 2018), including that of emerging economy suppliers (Hamja et al., 2019), and the role of intermediaries in managing suppliers’ social practices (Wilhelm et al., 2016; Soundararajan & Brammer, 2018).

Nevertheless, a closer look at these studies suggests that decent work and SCM scholarship have had very little interaction. Therefore, this emerging discourse incubator encourages further attention to the interface of decent work and supply chain management. A key feature of such research would be that it accounted for the supply chain context; both within and between organizations. Within an organization, decisions about the composition and treatment of the workforce are often separate from supply chain decisions and these supply chain decisions often occur across multiple functions. Equally, supply chain decision makers often influence and are accountable not only for their own organization but also for what other organizations (often in other countries or in a remote supply chain tier) do. Guaranteeing decent work in a supply chain that is accountable to all of its stakeholders, including shareholders and managers, is highly complex, and research for this EDI should account for these complexities.

Research Opportunities

We seek high-quality empirical submissions that explore decent work in supply chains from diverse perspectives and that advance theory and practice in line with *JSCM's* mission. While we are open to submissions using both qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as purely

conceptual papers, submissions must make significant theoretical contributions. Authors are explicitly encouraged to incorporate insights from the two recent Emerging Discourse Incubators in the Journal of Supply Chain Management on “*Research at the Intersection of Supply Chain Management and Public Policy and Government Regulation*”¹ (Fugate et al., 2019) and “*Research Where the Focal Actor in the Network is Not a For-Profit Firm*”² (Pagell et al., 2018) and connect them to the topic of decent work in global supply chains.

Potential topics and research questions are listed below, but submissions do not need to be limited to these suggestions. In addition, we encourage authors to consider empirical settings beyond manufacturing, including health care, non-profit organizations, logistics, government agencies, information technology, and others.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Governance of decent work in supply chains
- The role of supply chain intermediaries in decent work
- The relationship between occupational health and safety and decent work in supply chains
- The role of public policy on the quality of working conditions in supply chains
- The relationship between socio-economic or gender inequalities and decent work in supply chains
- The influence of institutions and industry on decent work in supply chains
- Supply chain responses to forced labor, human trafficking and modern slavery regulation
- Research methods to explore decent work in supply chains

Across these topics, submission might answer questions such as:

- When, how and why can private governance mechanisms be particularly effective in ensuring decent work in supply chains?
- When, how and why can multi-stakeholder collaborations effectively ensure decent work in supply chains?
- What roles do supply chain intermediaries such as sourcing agents play in enabling decent work in supply chains?
- What are the challenges of extending OHS in global supply chains?
- How are socio-economic inequality and decent work in supply chains interlinked?
- How are gender inequality and decent work in supply chains interlinked?
- How should organizations address safety and privacy concerns when using technology to monitor and resolve decent work challenges in the supply chain?
- How are firms responding to different types of new regulatory demands related to modern slavery/forced labor? And is this legislation effective for ensuring decent work in supply chains?
- What are the methodological, ethical, and safety challenges for researchers who seek to study decent work in supply chains? What are suggested solutions to these challenges?

¹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/1745493x/2019/55/2>

² <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/1745493x/2018/54/2>

Timeline

May 2020: Initial call for submissions

January 2021: Invited papers and guest editors' introduction expected to appear online to initiate the discourse

January 2021-January 2022: Submission window for normal submissions

Please direct any queries to guest editors Vivek Soundararajan (v.soundararajan@bath.ac.uk), Miriam Wilhelm (m.m.wilhelm@rug.nl) and Andrew Crane (a.w.crane@bath.ac.uk) or JSCM co-editor Mark Pagell (mark.pagell@ucd.ie)

Guest Editors' Profile

Vivek Soundararajan is an Associate Professor at School of Management, University of Bath. His research primarily on worker exploitation in supply chains, and governance of Decent Work in supply chains. His research has been published in journals such as Business Ethics Quarterly, Journal of Operations Management, Journal of World Business, Human Relations, among others. He has received grants for his work from research councils and industry. Currently, he is an editorial board member of Journal of Business Ethics and Business & Society.

Miriam Wilhelm is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Groningen, The Netherlands. Her main research interests lie in managing tensions and paradoxes between sustainability and business, and the governance of sustainability in global (and multi-tier) supply chains. Her research has been published in Journal of Supply Chain Management, Journal of Operations Management, International Journal of Operations and Production Management, Organization Science, among others.

Andrew Crane is a Professor of Business and Society and Director of the Centre for Business, Organisations and Society in the School of Management at the University of Bath, UK. He is also an International Affiliate Faculty at Audencia Business School in France. His research focuses on the changing role of the corporation in the global economy and on understanding the business of modern slavery. He has published a number of books and has published in the Academy of Management Review, Business Ethics Quarterly, Journal of Management Studies, among many others. From 2015-2019 he was the co-editor of Business & Society and is currently on the editorial board of Journal of Management Studies and Organization Theory.

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