Causal Pathways of Innovation Orientation, Sustainability, Leadership and Social Performance

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Abstract:

Purpose: This article aims to find causal pathways that explain the success of sustainable international companies when their social performance is used as a measure.
Design/Methodology/Approach: Using data collected from Polish international companies, a fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fs/QCA) was applied, finding common conditions that can explain the chosen outcome.
Findings: The results of the analysis show that international companies can achieve social performance through multiple paths. The only variable included in all configurations is innovation orientation, indicating that this may be a key factor or prerequisite for achieving social performance in international companies.
Practical Implications: The main achievement of this research is the discovery of two configurations that lead to high social performance. This result is essential for practice as it gives insight into success while focusing on sustainability.
Originality/Value: This paper introduces the factors influencing the social performance of international companies and attempts to find out how the interplay of these different conditions creates pathways to success.

Keywords: Innovation orientation, environmental sustainability, leadership, social performance, international companies, fs/QCA.

JEL Classification: M14, F23, L10

Paper Type: Research article.

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1. Introduction

Growing global challenges make it necessary to take action for sustainable economic development. The emergence of the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship and sustainable enterprise has been driven by the growing importance of environmental issues and sustainable development. Moreover, the growing importance of acting responsibly for the environment, society, and economy is essential in politics and academia (Melay and Kraus, 2012). Sustainable entrepreneurs holistically attempt to combine the environmental, economic, and social components of sustainability and thus are perceived as having a different, broader organizational logic than more conventional entrepreneurs (Parrish, 2006). As a result, sustainable entrepreneurship is increasingly focused on social, environmental, and economic sustainability (Dyllick and Hockerts, 2002). A sustainable enterprise seeks to conserve nature and support life and community to pursue future products and processes that provide economic and non-economic benefits to individuals, the economy, and society (Shepher and Patzelt, 2011).

The key to a sustainable economy that combines economic, social, and environmental value creation with an emphasis on the well-being of future generations (Hockert and Wüstenhagen, 2010) is the effective implementation of sustainable practices through entrepreneurial activity. A growing number of businesses, particularly those operating in the international marketplace, seek to address social and environmental challenges by engaging in entrepreneurial practices. A common feature and differentiator of these companies that incorporate environmental and social aspects focus on achieving a positive impact on society and the environment, rather than simply achieving profitability by satisfying specific needs. This approach is related to the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which has inspired empirical research in management for almost half a century (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012), and companies that incorporate environmental and social aspects are considered innovative.

In the article, we attempt to answer a few questions in this area. First, what configurations of various factors influence the social performance of companies, especially those operating on international markets? Second, what are the implications for social issues, the interplay of factors such as visionary leadership, innovation orientation, environmental sustainability, and resources management capability in international companies? Third, what specific psychological/personal characteristics of the board members and management team, combined with selected organizational and environmental issues, affect the social performance of companies, especially those operating on the international market? Therefore, our research attempts to trace these issues by analysing different pathways of interrelated variables that result in the social performance of international companies. Based on the literature analysis, the factors directly related to social performance have been selected, i.e., visionary leadership, innovation orientation, environmental sustainability, and resource management capability.

Furthermore, in contrast to existing studies, this paper introduces the factors influencing social performance and tries to find out how the interplay of these different variables creates a path to the social success of international companies. So far, no significant research has been carried out to show how various organizational, environmental, and leadership factors simultaneously and collectively affect the social performance of companies, especially those operating in the international market. While there have been attempts to understand how companies successfully implement or base their organizations on sustainable practices, it is unclear how some executives, board, and management teams can create a successful enterprise in this field as well (Fellnhofer *et al.,* 2014).

We answer the questions mentioned above using a fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fs/QCA) on the empirical data collected on a sample of international companies located in Poland. This paper aims to find the causal paths that explain the success of sustainable international companies when their social performance is used as a measure. The study used a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis, a set theory approach with the ability to deal with a high degree of complexity in combining different causal conditions to obtain an outcome (Ragin, 2008). In this study, this approach enables the interdependent study of visionary leadership, innovation orientation, environmental sustainability, resources management capability, and social performance. The results of our study fill the cognitive gap in the area of factors and their configurations influencing the social performance of international companies.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Following this introduction, the second part of the article provides a brief overview of the literature on selected factors and social performance, concluding with corresponding propositions and research models. The third part describes the research method (qualitative comparative analysis of fuzzy sets), the key factors and variables, the data collection process, and the sample. The fourth part presents the analysis results; the fifth discusses these results; the sixth sets forth the conclusions and contributions of the research. Finally, the last part highlights the limitations and opportunities for future research.

2. Literature Review

The social and environmental problems that have intensified in recent years have encouraged companies to engage in corporate social responsibility activities for sustainable development. This attitude is reflected and translates into initiatives and strategic directions outlined by the executive board. Conceptualizing and measuring sustainability performance, seeking to link corporate social responsibility policies, practices, and programs to outcomes, are problematic issues. Management research often fails to distinguish between the effects of the policies and practices of companies that lead (or not) to scores from actual performance in terms of results, such as the amount of energy or water used, CO_2 emissions, work-related injuries, and non-compliance with human rights (Herbohn *et al.,* 2014). Considerations of social

performance are inextricably linked to corporate social responsibility. Both academics and companies themselves emphasize the need and necessity to disclose corporate social responsibility in balanced reporting. These data are a valuable source of information in measuring and evaluating corporate social performance, not only for stakeholders but also for decision-making managers. As highlighted in the literature, corporate social performance refers to social responsibility as an input and stakeholder evaluation as an outcome.

More sophisticated studies are conducted in international companies in terms of empirically testing the causal relationship between social and financial performance of these entities, analyzing whatever the relationship between these outcomes is positive, negative, or perhaps neutral (Pereira, 2019). To better understand this complex and multidimensional phenomenon of corporate social responsibility, it is necessary to investigate different contexts and related variables that can support international companies in these areas by analyzing determinants simultaneously influencing social performance in these firms. Corporate social responsibility and sustainability are now firmly established trends in international companies, driven by a shift in social consciousness. In an environment with expressed competitive dynamics and articulated community demands, corporate social responsibility is becoming a mandatory strategy for responsible and ethical management of international companies (Denčić-Mihajlov et al., 2020), where these actors cannot achieve benefits at any cost without considering the environmental and social impacts of their strategies and actions.

Stakeholders of international companies are intensely interested in whether a company is sustainable concerning its operations, whether socially conscious and invest in those entities that meet specific corporate social responsibility standards (Cheah et al., 2011). Through their business activities, companies take actions that contribute to the betterment of society by reducing or even avoiding degradation of the natural environment. These practices are employed by large corporations (Perrini et al., 2007), which are inherently socially responsible. Managers of these companies pursue a strategy of engaging in corporate social responsibility that begins with an internal focus, specializes in related aspects of corporate social responsibility, and is consistent and reliable over time (Lin et al., 2018). By enabling economic opportunities from identified problems, corporate social responsibility brings the company indisputable benefits.

Corporate social performance approaches sustainable development more integrated (Martinez-Conesa et al., 2017). According to Baumgartner and Rauter (2017), it becomes necessary to mitigate or limit the adverse social and environmental effects generated by economic activity while increasing its results. Due to the growing requirements of stakeholders in the area of transparency of the company's operations, reporting on sustainable development indicators has become more critical in recent years (Bergmann and Posch, 2018). Social performance focuses on what enterprises can achieve by taking into account, responding to, and measuring their commitments

(Carroll and Buchholtz, 2006). Social performance and social impact are popular issues raised in public discussions and academic literature on public policy, non-profit organizations, corporations, and entrepreneurial ventures (Gugerty and Karlan, 2018; Stephan *et al.,* 2016). Performance measurement allows companies to identify areas for improvement. Measuring and reporting social performance and its impact is essential to both the organization in question and various stakeholders (Ormiston, 2019).

Social performance is a dynamic, multidimensional concept involving concern for shareholders, stakeholders, and community/state well-being that still lacks a common understanding of the underlying motives (Battaglini, 2019). Social performance is a complex organizational issue that concerns the management and policies of a company, in conjunction with the goals and values of society, and influences decision making and strategy, and is an essential means of meeting the needs of many stakeholders. However, meeting stakeholders' requirements with different social outcomes and social impact requirements can be challenging (Ebrahim, 2014). Creating value for society is an initiative undertaken by the social entrepreneur. The continuous development of ventures and learning aims to exploit opportunities for social development. The two most common arguments explaining the conceptual ambivalence of social action are, on the one hand, that business exists to serve the good of the larger community and, on the other hand, that corporate social responsibility is about increasing its profits (Yılmaz, 2013).

According to Pathak *et al*. (2018), despite the perception of social enterprises in different ways, the central concept of social entrepreneurship is not to focus on profit generation but to make a positive and sustainable social impact. Social entrepreneurship includes the process of innovative and creative ideas to solve social problems, and it is referred to as the key to solving them (Olinsson,2017). Innovation is one factor that can generate economic sustainability for social entrepreneurship initiatives that focus on social issues and have not been considered an attractive commercial business opportunity (Seelos and Mair, 2005). Innovation offers solutions to social problems and can ensure the efficiency of the entire economy (Johnson, 2003). Therefore, it is worth considering innovation orientation as one of the main strategic directions in social entrepreneurship and social performance.

According to Johnson (2003), social entrepreneurship is considered as an innovative approach to dealing with complex social needs, so social entrepreneurship and innovation orientation seem to be appropriate responses to some of the challenges and problems emerging in all societies today. Innovative activities driven by innovation orientation result in better social outcomes. Moreover, they are characterized by their ability to meet certain types of external stakeholder requirements, such as consumers, employees, investors, and regulators. Manu and Sriram (1996) define innovation orientation as a multi-component concept of new products, R&D expenditure, and market entry. According to Hult *et al.* (2004), innovation can introduce new products, technologies, and ideas. The literature on innovation has overwhelmingly relied on a

few specific innovation outcomes, while few studies and analyses have addressed the relationship between more comprehensive innovation orientation and its social impact (Totterdell *et al.,* 2002). Research by Lordkipanidze *et al.* (2005) indicates that strategies focusing on environmental sustainability can lead to competitive advantages in cost reduction, environmental performance, and reputation. Eco-innovation and orientation towards it, due to increasing environmental expectations and pressures, has become one of the more critical strategic tools to enable sustainability in manufacturing industries. Environmental activities and related investments were considered unnecessary, but strict environmental regulations have changed companies' competition rules and benchmarks. Gaining a competitive advantage in the market is related to eco-innovation and is achievable through environmental focus or sustainability. Rennings (2000) states that eco-innovation is facilitated by focusing on environmental sustainability. The corresponding proposition is as follows:

Proposition 1: Innovation orientation of companies has a positive association with social performance.

The environmental revolution, which has been going on for almost three decades, has permanently influenced and changed the way companies do business. The concept of sustainability is derived from technological criticality, environmental sustainability, and resource reserve. Currently, many companies feel a responsibility to care for the environment and operate under the belief that their business should not harm the environment. Sustainable entrepreneurship translates into social and environmental benefits (Kuckertz and Wagner, 2010). The environmental issue involves constant monitoring, taking appropriate action, and responding and aligning its elements and the whole company's strategy (Leonidou *et al.,* 2015).

Consequently, it has become a significant business issue and concern (Wells, 2016). Morelli (2011) defines environmental sustainability as a state of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to meet its needs while not exceeding the capacity of ecosystems. The environmental benefits affecting environmental sustainability are reduced consumption of priceless resources and the environment, reduced generation and action of harmful substances, and reduced pollution and waste production. Social and environmental entrepreneurs share common elements characteristic of sustainable entrepreneurs contributing to environmental sustainability. Sustainable entrepreneurs strive to achieve a certain level of performance in the three areas of sustainability by directing their actions and engaging the entire organization. The goal is to achieve a balanced relationship between the environmental, economic, and social pillars to secure sustainable management at the corporate level. The corresponding proposition is as follows:

Proposition 2: Environmental sustainability has a positive association with social performance.

Sustainability has three critical dimensions for a company. Although there are trade-offs between these dimensions, social responsibility to employees and other stakeholders and environmentally friendly behaviors generally contribute to credibility, so this approach makes good business sense. The role of leaders in meeting stakeholder needs is vital. Leaders who focus on visions or missions inspire and empower their followers, experience organizational change and growth. International companies need leaders who can channel their vision to others to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage. A leader must be able to guide the organization and direct it toward clearly defined goals.

Visionary leadership is defined as the ability of leaders to create, formulate, communicate, and implement the thoughts of all elements of the organization that must be implemented together (Molina, 2018). A visionary leader for attracting and retaining and gaining his followers' support need effective communication. Organizations should invest and develop visionary leaders who are focused on satisfying employees and customers and improving society's overall well-being by providing environmentally friendly products and services (Nwachukwu *et al.*, 2017).

Additionally, Nwachukwu *et al.* (2017) emphasize that visionary leadership positively relates to corporate social performance. According to Çınar and Kaban (2012), visionary leaders are focused on the future mission to create a business at the highest level. Dhammika (2016) states that visionary leadership focuses on creating and communicating an inspiring vision to subordinates for achieving and sustaining excellent performance. Carton *et al.* (2014) argue that the role of visionary leadership is to motivate and mobilize followers to achieve a future state. On the other hand, Stam *et al.* (2014) state that visionary leadership motivates and contributes to the joint creation of the role of followers in pursuit of the vision. Breevaart *et al.* (2014) confirm that various studies suggest that visionary leaders play a role in improving the performance of their organizations, including social performance. Based on the above discussion, the corresponding proposition is as follows:

Proposition 3: Visionary leadership has a positive association with social performance.

The analysis of the literature on the subject showed that resource management in a synthetic approach is a comprehensive process related to building a company's resource portfolio, integrating the ability to create resources and using the ability to create and maintain value for stakeholders, and the resource management abilities positively influence corporate social responsibility (Cheung, 2011; Beske *et al.,* 2014). The dynamic environment of sustainable development requires popularization and integration of green consumption and environmental concepts, increased frequency of updating environmental technologies, and dynamic adaptation of environmental policy.

These capabilities are related to facilitating the achievement of the company's goals, but the challenges of meeting the needs of many stakeholders, including consumers, employees, and society, should not be underestimated. As mentioned, resource management initiatives are often linked to corporate social responsibility and company performance. Companies with more developed resource management capabilities tend to have more robust corporate social responsibility policies (van Beurden and Gössling, 2008). Some studies suggest a slight dependence or even a disturbance in the relationship between resource management and effective management in the spirit of corporate social responsibility. This is due to insufficient knowledge of the principles and good practices of corporate social responsibility and the lack of guidelines based on empirical research that would directly define the determinants related to resource management influencing social performance in companies operating on the international market (Miron and Petrache, 2012).

According to Stahl *et al.* (2020), a significant challenge for enterprises is the combination of strategies, resource management, business models and operational processes, and building cultures that support a change in thinking and behavior with actions in the field of corporate social responsibility. International enterprises, by implementing appropriate activities, such as, reducing the consumption of resources and energy in all departments, implementing a recycling strategy to reduce business pressure on the environment, increasing investment in research and development of green technologies, and providing consumers with green products and services, should focus on the integration of internal resource management with external sustainability opportunities. Therefore, the value of sustainable development and achieving social success is related to the ability to change the base of resources by capturing, integrating, and releasing them. The corresponding proposition is as follows:

Proposition 4: Resources management capabilities have a positive association with social performance.

This presentation of the theoretical background attempts to summarize the current literature on potential factors that can create a successful social performance for international companies. This study identified which configurations (causal pathways) of innovation orientation, visionary leadership, resources management capability, and environmental sustainability are conducive to the success of sustainable companies when their social performance is used as a measure (Figure 1):

Figure 1. *Research model*
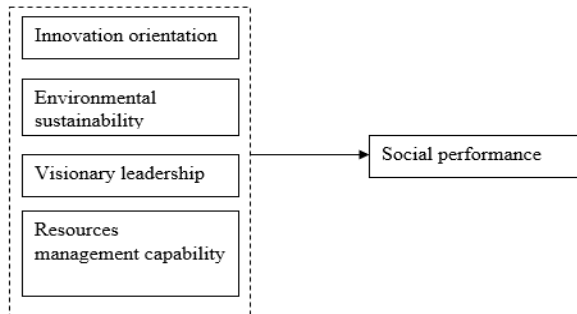
Source: Own research.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Analysis Technique

In this study, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), essentially fuzzy-set QCA (fs/QCA), was used to find common conditions that could explain the selected outcome (Ragin, 2008). This method determines whether visionary leadership, innovation orientation, resources management capability, and environmental sustainability can jointly or individually explain social performance for companies. The results of QCA are solutions, understood as alternative paths leading to the outcome under study. These paths illustrate three different ways a variable can affect an outcome: presence being an essential requirement; absence, showing a defective or missing requirement; and a variable of the type 'do not care' or unnecessary variable for the desired outcome. Studies using qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) methods have been successfully carried out in many types of research in the field of social sciences (Berné-Martínez *et al.,* 2021; Cervelló-Royoa *et al.,* 2020; Kwiotkowska, 2020, Gębczyńska, 2020).

At the initial stage of the fs/QCA analysis, the values of the variables are operationalized as membership scores within the defined sets, which are obtained by calibration (Ragin, 2008a; Meuer, 2014). In this case, the technique is based on the fuzzy set membership scores, which express the degree to which the cases belong to the set. Obtaining the membership results, the subset relationships can be analyzed, essentially given two coefficients, consistency, and coverage (Ragin, 2006). The consistency indicates how closely subsets of conditions and outcomes are related and refers to the degree to which cases share common conditions or combinations of conditions. The coverage provides information about the significance of conditions for the outcome and refers to an indication of the extent to which the resulting minimum formula results from an analysis that includes the observed cases. If the degree of coverage is low, it indicates several paths (combinations of conditions) leading to the same result (Ragin, 2008; 2009; Schneider and Wagemann, 2012). Using the calibration function of the fs/QCA software program, following the

procedure described in detail in Ragin (2008), the interval scale variables, and thus all research constructs can be transformed into fuzzy set membership scores (Ragin, 2008b).

The truth Table is generated in the next stage, i.e., a data matrix with 2k rows. The results of the fuzzy sets are used to construct a truth table to operate Boolean algebra (Ragin, 2008b). As a result, the impact of each cause is examined in all logical contexts, with 2k representing configurations of conditions and k representing the number of causal conditions (Ragin, 2008; Woodside and Baxter, 2013).

In an analysis performed with fs/QCA, whole combinations of conditions are tested simultaneously instead of comparing individual variables. In the next step, these configurations are minimized by algorithms, and the truth table is reduced by specifying the frequency and consistency thresholds (Ragin, 2008). The frequency threshold determines which combinations of conditions are relevant and should be between 1 or 2. The consistency threshold indicates which combinations get a correspondingly high score. Combinations with a consistency score below the 0.75 thresholds, indicating significant inconsistency, are coded as 0, and combinations above this threshold indicate high consistency and are coded as 1 (Ragin, 2009). After successful minimization, each row of the reduced truth table consists of paths that can be interpreted causally, that is, each variable changes the outcome positively (presence) or negatively (absence) or is irrelevant (do not care). These pathways form at least one solution.

Using statistical analysis (Wagemann and Schneider, 2010), we rely on three main criteria to assess the quality of our solutions. Consistency measures how often a given solution (set of all found paths) explains the predicted outcome compared to all found outcomes for that solution. Coverage provides information about how the solution or path explains much variance (deviation) in the outcome. This resembles the explained variance (e.g., r-square) in quantitative regression. Unique coverage is provided for all paths illustrating a variance in the outcome that other paths cannot explain, resembling an incremental explained variance. We only assess solutions and paths with a consistency of equal to or larger than 0.80, a considerable coverage of 0.1, and a unique coverage larger than 0.01. To model the fsQCA, the fs/QCA 2.5 software package (Ragin and Davey, 2017) is applied.

3.2 Data Collection

The data used in our study were collected through a survey using a questionnaire designed based on previous high-validity studies (Nanus, 1992; Kraus *et al.,* 2017; Duvnas *et al.,* 2012; Desarbo *et al.,* 2010; Eggers *et al.,* 2013; Baker and Sinkula, 2009). To make the questionnaire respondent-friendly, we surveyed randomly selected managers from eight companies who confirmed the relevance and wording of the survey items. These processes ensured that our questionnaire was factually correct. The reliability of our instrument was then pre-tested on a sample of 23

companies from a total of 49 entities constituting our research sample. The individual reliability of each construct was more significant than the minimum acceptable Cronbach's α value of 0.7, thus indicating high reliability (Nunally and Bernstein, 1994).

The total data collection period (including the pre-test) ran from September 2019 to March 2020. We collected data from companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange (WSE), with legal addresses in Poland, focusing on the executive board and management team. All respondents were invited to take part in the survey anonymously. After confirming that the respondent was an appropriate representative of the company and indicating the company-level variables (age of the company, origin of the company), the respondent answered the items for the relevant variables presented in random order. Finally, after ensuring the anonymity of the answers given, some personal information (gender, age, position) was asked. We received 121 responses and removed 18 incomplete questionnaires (due to missing data), resulting in 103 usable questionnaires. Table 1 summarises the main characteristics of the sample (85,1% response rate).

Table 1. *Characteristics of the research sample*

Category		Statistic
Firm level	Firm age	24 (36,8%)
		49-25 (55,1%)
		> 50 (8,1%)
	Firm background/sector	Raw material and petroleum industry (8,1%)
		Metal industry (18,4%)
		Electromechanical industry (28,6%)
		Construction materials industry (16,3%)
		Pharmaceutical industry (10,2%)
		Food industry (18,4%)
Respondent level	Gender	Female (23.3%)
		Male (76.7%)
	Position	Executive board (17,5%)
		Management team (82,5%)
	Age	Mean: 52,7

Source: *Own study.*

Second-hand data from company websites, annual reports, and press releases were also collected during the research to understand better the companies' international assignments and the implications for their managers. Data collection and data analysis were carried out in parallel; this procedure allowed the development of theoretical insights and proposals, testing and modifying them as the research developed. It is worth noting that data overlap in collection and analysis is beneficial as it speeds up the analysis and "reveals helpful adjustments to data collection" (Eisenhardt, 1989).

3.3 Measurements

All four conditions and outcomes used in our QCA analysis (visionary leadership; innovation orientation; resources management capability; environmental sustainability; and social performance) were measured with five-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To obtain the variables for the QCA, multi-item scales were created, their reliability and validity were assessed, and index scores were used. These scores were then transformed into fuzzy sets through quantiles (0.05, 0.33, 0.50, 0.66, 0.95) to determine membership. Innovation orientation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85) is based on three items developed by Duvanas *et al.* (2013). Visionary leadership (Cronbach's alpha = 0.94) is based on thirteen items for the four dimensions, direction setter, agent of change, spokesperson, and coach based on Nanus (1992) and Nindyati (2013). Resources management acquisition capability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83) was constructed based on ten items in the three dimensions: resource capacity, resource integration capacity, and resource release capacity on Desarbo *et al.* (2010). Environmental sustainability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.84), one item was derived from the corresponding subscale from Kraus *et al.* (2017), and the second item from Rettab *et al.* (2008). Finally, social performance (Cronbach's alpha = 0.93) is measured by four items, as recently applied by Eggers *et al.* (2013) and Baker and Sinkula (2009). Table 2 provides all variables (measures) used for the fs/QCA.

Table 2. *Key variables, sources and items*

Variable (source)	Coding	Item
Innovation orientation (Duvanas *et al.* 2012).	*inno*	• our company has bound itself strongly to developing new things, to product development and to innovations; • our company has introduced many new products or services on the market; • the changes in products or services we offer are typically significant.
Environmental sustainability (Kraus *et al.,* 2017; Rettab *et al.,* 2009)	*enviro*	• we measure CO_2 emissions and/or our generated waste and actively try to reduce it; • we set ourselves ambitious goals in regard to sustainability and incorporate them in all strategic decisions.
Visionary leadership (Nanus 1992; Nindyati 2013)	*visiol*	Direction setter • we take action to motivate employees; • we take action to direct the achievement of progress Agent of change • we understand the need of changes in environment • we are able to react appropriately to changes • we are able to anticipate the risk that come up from decision making process • we are able to use current data to plan the future success Spokesperson • we clearly express our ideas; • we are able to encourage others; • we are able to relate with significance person from different organization; • we take a role to solve the problems; Coach • we are able to give guidance; • we are able to lead organizational development process • we are able to see the opportunity to success.

Variable (source)	Coding	Item
Resources management capability (Desarbo, *et al*, 2010)	*reso*	Resource acquisition capability • we obtain resources based on changes in the external environment; • we acquire resources at a lower cost than competitors; • we acquire resources faster than our competitors; • we acquire higher quality resources than our competitors; Resources integration capability • we integrate resources according to development needs; • we configure resources rationally based on environmental changes; • we not waste resources; Resources release capability • we sell similar products (services) more easily than our competitors; • we properly use idle resources; • we successfully, as scheduled recover accounts receivable.
Social performance (Eggers *et al.* 2013; Baker, Sinkula 2009)	*socialp*	• our beneficiaries are satisfied with our services; • we help mobilize interest for additional social welfare initiatives; • the output provided by our organization has a significant impact on general well-being; • our organization is on a good path to accomplish its social mission.

Source: Own study.

4. Results

This section presents the results from the analysis, explaining which conditions lead firms to the outcome (i.e., high social performance). The model for analysis is:

$$Socialp = f(inno, enviro, visiol, reso) \tag{1}$$

Note: inno - innovation orientation; enviro - environmental sustainability, visiol visionary leadership, reso - resources management capability.

Fs/QCA method allows combinations of conditions (causal configurations) to be analyzed. Table 3 shows the results for the intermediate solution. This solution minimizes the combination by assuming that the conditions of visionary leadership, innovation orientation, resources management capability, and environmental sustainability lead to high social performance. As Table 3 shows, analysis consistency is 0.81, which indicates a good relationship between high social performance and a specific subset of conditions.

Table 3. *Configuration explaining visionary leadership, innovation orientation, resources management capability and environmental sustainability for high social performance of international companies*

Solution	Causal conditions				Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	Solution coverage	Solution consistency
	inno	*vsiol*	*reso*	*enviro*					
S1	●	●		●	0.38	0.08	0.85	0.69	0.81
S2	●		●		0.35	0.05	0.81		
Note: • *inno* - innovation orientation; *enviro* - environmental sustainability, *visiol* - visionary leadership, *reso* - resources management capability; • Filled circles indicate above-threshold levels of the respective condition. Blank cells indicate 'don't care' conditions.									

The final solution can be expressed as follows:

$$\text{inno*visiol*enviro + inno*reso} \rightarrow \text{social} \qquad (2)$$

*Note: * logical AND; + logical OR*

The discussion of the results examines two solutions resulting from the analysis. These solutions appear in Table 3. Ragin (2009) recommends a consistency threshold of 0.75 (all configurations comply with this threshold). Due to the considerably unique coverage of their respective paths, the solutions explain 69 percent of the variation in social performance. Filled circles indicate above-threshold levels of the respective condition. Blank cells indicate 'do not care' conditions. The first configuration, S1, shows that a combination of innovation orientation, visionary leadership, and environmental sustainability is sufficient for high social performance. Resource leveraging is irrelevant in this path (consistency = 0.85, coverage = 0.38, unique coverage = 0.08). The only alternative to S1 is the second configuration, S2, which assumes that the combination of innovation orientation and resources management capability is also a sufficient condition for high social performance. Considering the drop in coverage compared to S1, configuration S2 seem to be less certain (consistency = 0.81, coverage = 0.35, unique coverage = 0.05).

Subsequently, in this paper, a necessity analysis was conducted, in which causal conditions were searched for with membership scores that were consistently higher than the membership outcome. If it is so in all cases for any causal condition, then that condition passes the necessity test. Therefore, the outcome is a subset of the causal condition, which is the set-theoretic way of expressing necessity (Ragin, 1989). For our analysis, the consistency score suggested by Ragin (2006) was adopted. A condition, or a combination of conditions, is called necessary or almost always necessary if the consistency score exceeds the threshold of 0.9. Table 4 shows that none of our causal conditions or negation exceeds that 0.9 thresholds for our outcome – high social performance of international companies.

Table 4. *Analysis of necessary conditions for high social performance of international companies*

Condition	social performance	
	Consistency	Coverage
inno	0.51	0.42
~inno	0.48	0.43
enviro	0.55	0.43
~enviro	0.71	0.47
visiol	0.53	0.45
~visiol	0.60	0.57
reso	0.45	0.40
~reso	0.68	0.59

Note: *inno* - innovation orientation; *enviro* - environmental sustainability, *visiol* - visionary leadership, *reso* - resources management capability; ~ logical negation - the absence of conditions.

Source: *Own study.*

Our final step involved a series of robustness checks. The discussion on appropriate robustness tests of QCA analyses is not yet well developed in published empirical studies of QCA in management (Wagemann *et al.,* 2016). Measures proposed in the methodological literature to assess the robustness of QCA results include (1) analyses for the absence of the outcome, (2) different calibration thresholds, and (3) different consistency thresholds (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012).

Our solutions for the absence of the outcome indicate that no configurations have an acceptable level of consistency (threshold 0.75). We generated solutions for lower and higher calibration anchors and lower and higher consistency thresholds, and we compared these solutions with the baseline scenario used in our primary analysis. Lowering calibration anchors, in most cases, leads to decreases in solution coverage as in reduced explanatory power, whereas raising thresholds did not yield any consistent solutions. The variation in consistency thresholds did not produce any new or logically incompatible solution terms. Lower consistency thresholds ($-$ 0.05) yielded logical supersets of the baseline solutions. Increasing the consistency thresholds ($+$ 0.05) led to the absence of consistent truth table rows (and, thus, the unavailability of solutions). To summarize, the variation in consistency thresholds did not suggest any improvement of our results, thus corroborating the choices underlying our primary data analysis.

5. Discussion

In our paper, we try to analyze the relations between selected factors such as visionary leadership, innovation orientation, environmental sustainability, and resource management capability, and social performance in international companies. As we have argued in the literature review section previously, most previous studies in the literature have examined visionary leadership, innovation orientation, resources management capability, and environmental sustainability separately. We still know little about how they interact and how their combination affects company social performance.

We concentrate on finding the configurations of factors necessary for social performance in Polish international companies, including configurations of various factors that influence the social performance of companies, especially those operating on international markets, implications for social issues, the interplay of selected factors, and investigating what psychological/personal characteristics of the board members and management team, combined with selected organizational and environmental issues, affect the social performance. The paper uncovers configurations on how visionary leadership, innovation orientation, resources management capability, and environmental sustainability affect the social

performance of Polish companies. The analysis uses fs/QCA to identify combinations of causes that lead to high social performance for Polish international companies.

The empirical results of this study show that both paths include the innovation orientation variable. The results, therefore, suggest that a focus on innovation orientation builds the foundation for successful social performance. This finding confirms Proposition 1 and is consistent with the views of Seelos and Mair (2005) and Johnson (2003). They report innovation orientation's positive impact on social performance and indicate that innovation orientation also offers solutions to social problems and can ensure the efficiency of the entire economy. In this study's first alternative path (S1), innovation orientation is accompanied by a sustainable environment and visionary leadership.

This supports the evidence in the existing literature (Rennings, 2000) that eco-innovation is facilitated by focusing on environmental sustainability. Research shows that strategies focusing on environmental sustainability can lead to competitive advantages in terms of cost reduction, environmental performance, and reputation (Lordkipanidze *et al.,* 2005). This competitive advantage occurs through eco-innovation, which is made possible through environmental focus or sustainability. This finding thus confirms Proposition 2. This research also shows that visionary leadership has a positive relationship with social performance and that creating and communicating an inspiring vision among subordinates' influence achieving and sustaining superior performance. This finding thus confirms Proposition 3. It also points to specific psychological and personality characteristics that visionary leadership combines, related to direction setter, agent of change, spokesperson, and coach. A visionary leader, called a vision bearer, has a clear sense of direction for the institution's future and is expected to mobilize, inspire, and intellectually stimulate others to innovate and unite to achieve the company's vision (Pribudhiana *et al.,* 2020).

Visionary leadership holds skills to motivate employees, create long-term partnerships with other organizations or institutions, and manage appropriate resources. Visionary leadership sees issues in context, and the content of the vision varies. Visionary leadership elicits specific characteristics that converge on the vision as the focus of importance; anticipation that a leader steadfastly mobilizes and motivates others towards achieving it; more like a dream for the institution's future (Komariah, 2016). In other configuration (S2), innovation orientation builds a path to high social performance in combination with the resources management capability. This configuration is an important message for international organizations, emphasizing the importance of resources management capability in achieving social performance.

Xiao *et al.* (2008) concluded that it is rational to operationalize economic entities through resource management processes in sustainable development (Xiao *et al.,* 2008). Organization can significantly enhance their ability to acquire, utilize, and release resources through the control of sustainable development opportunities, thereby further enhancing their resources management capabilities. In this way,

companies that focus on innovation and develop resource management capabilities create a path to high social performance. These results can be supported by literature as Acquaah (2003) proves, the effectiveness of corporate management capability positively influences the company's sustainable development, and sustainable companies will maintain sustained growth to increase the likelihood of long-term survival (Carson *et al.,* 2004). Therefore, proposition four is confirmed, thus emphasizing the resource management capability of international companies' social performance.

6. Conclusion

The literature about the corporate social performance and different areas of activity in companies has advanced in the sense of empirically testing the causality relationship examining whether the relationship is positive, negative, or neutral. Although many studies have tested the direct relationship between, i.e., social performance and financial performance to understand this complex and multidimensional phenomenon, it is necessary to explore a variety of contextual factors that can provide support by investigating equifinal configurations of determinants simultaneously influencing social performance in international companies.

This paper not only introduces factors influencing the social performance of international companies (like visionary leadership, innovation orientation, resources management capability, environmental sustainability) but also attempts to find out how the interplay of these different conditions creates paths to the success of sustainable companies when their social performance is used as a measure. The main achievement of our research is the discovery of two configurations that lead to high social performance, configuration 1 includes innovation orientation, visionary leadership, and environmental sustainability and the second configuration combines innovation orientation and resource management capability. Both configurations include innovation orientation, thus indicating that it can be a crucial factor or prerequisite for achieving social performance in studied international firms. The main implication of this study for practitioners is that this study shows two different combinations of variables that lead to success. This result is essential for practice as it gives insight into success while focusing on sustainability.

This research has certain limitations, which may create opportunities for future investigations. First, many more factors can be influenced by high social performance than those taken into account in this study. The set of variables selected for this study and their impact on social performance are intended to show the different pathways to the success of multinational companies in the social field, but by no means are they comprehensive enough to cover all possible permutations.

Another limitation of this study is the spatial scope of the conducted analysis, i.e., data collected from international companies with legal addresses in Poland. A significant limitation that we did not influence when designing the study was also the condition

of the Polish economy, which could have impacted the results obtained. In the future, the sample size should be increased by performing a more extensive study to obtain a more significant data set and by being more persistent when emailing the questionnaire to companies. Also, the results could be compared by analyzing the above in the international market. Consequently, due to the limited spatial scope and limited range of variables considered in this study, a little picture of how firms can achieve sustainable social outcomes has been provided.

In the future, it may be an exciting area of research to analyze which of the two paths analyzed in the article is better suited to specific industry conditions. It may be that in one industry, a sustainable environment and resource management capability will be more critical, and in another industry, innovation orientation and visionary leadership, without a sustainable environment. This would be the next stage of our research in the future. It might be interesting to conduct similar research in another group of enterprises, i.e., small, and medium-sized enterprises, considering their specificity and functioning.

Authors' contribution:
Anna Kwiotkowska: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Data curation, Investigation, Validation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing.
Magdalena Gębczyńska: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Investigation, Writing- Original draft preparation, Visualization.

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