Support for Sustainable Development Goal 5 and Social Performance: The Role of Diversity Targets, Work-life Balance Practices, and Female Representation

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Abstract. Human resource management (HRM) scholarship has neither fully engaged with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5 – Gender Equality) nor deepened knowledge of the human resource practices that most likely contribute to the implementation of this goal. We address this gap by investigating the link between SDG 5 and multinational enterprises' (MNEs) social performance. We posit that attention to SDG 5 will facilitate MNEs' capacity to formulate and implement practices to increase gender equality in work settings. Drawing from the sustainable HRM framework and social role theory, we develop three hypotheses related to the role of diversity targets and work-life balance practices as mediators of the relationship between support for SDG 5 and MNEs' social performance. We also posit that women's representation across the organizational structure strengthens the relationship between support for SDG 5 and diversity targets as well as work-life balance practices. We tested these relationships with 418 MNEs in the S&P 500. We found that diversity targets and work-life balance practices (i.e., flexible arrangements and daycare services) mediate the relationship between support for SDG 5 and social performance. In addition, the interaction between women's representation and support for SDG 5 enhances diversity targets and flexible arrangements. We theoretically contribute to the sustainable HRM literature by a) revealing the reasons for a spillover effect of support for gender equality to other demographic groups; b) explaining broader societal impacts of support for SDG 5 on the workforce, community, human rights, and product responsibility. To successfully integrate SDG 5, MNEs must weave diversity targets and work-life balance practices into strategic planning.

Keywords: Support for Sustainable Development Goal 5, diversity targets, social performance, women's representation, work-life balance practices

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Research in business sustainability has increased rapidly over the last decade, especially as it relates to sustainable HRM (Cooke & Wood, 2024; Ren et al., 2023). We define sustainable HRM as "the adoption of HRM strategies and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social and ecological goals, with an impact inside and outside of the organization" (Ehnert et al., 2016, p. 90). A review of articles published on sustainable HRM during the last two years shows increased attention by HRM scholars to this topic (Jia et al., 2023; Latan et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2023; Poon & Law, 2022; Ren et al. 2023; Su et al., 2023), with some of this attention dedicated to issues associated with gender equality (cf., Cooke & Wood, 2024). Scholars have also examined accountability to reduce bias and work-life balance practices, which is instrumental to increasing gender equality in work settings (Kossek et al., 2017; Kossek et al., 2023; Nishii et al., 2018; Leslie, 2019). In parallel, the Global Reporting Initiative and the United Nations Global Compact (2017) have issued recommendations for implementing these and other sustainable HR practices in MNEs.

Despite these contributions, HRM scholarship has remained silent on informing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and deepening knowledge of the HR practices that most likely contribute to the implementation of these goals (Cooke & Wood, 2024; Sanders & De Cieri, 2021). Enacted in 2015 by the United Nations in collaboration with governments, companies, and civil society, the SDGs are the most important goal-based global governance agenda for sustainable development for UN member countries (van Zanten & van Tulder, 2018). Addressing the global challenges of our time, including poverty, inequality, war, and environmental degradation, the SDGs are the blueprint for building a better world for all (Cooke & Wood, 2024). We argue that HRM has the tools to positively influence this global agenda

including practices such as targeted recruitment, mentoring programs for women, diversity targets, and work-life balance.

Our research objective is to theoretically develop and empirically test hypotheses examining the relationship between MNEs' support for SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and their social performance. We focused on gender equality over other global challenges because extant research suggests a spillover effect to employees' families and communities at large via human resource practices (Lyness & Kropf, 2005; Montiel et al., 2021). In addition, evidence associated with gender equality points to positive outcomes including increases in innovation and organizational performance (Joo et al., 2023; Østergaard et al., 2011). We posit that attention to SDG 5 will facilitate MNEs' capacity to formulate and implement practices to increase gender equality in work settings, and more generally, social performance. We define social performance as the firm's focus on its workforce, product responsibility, community, and human rights (Luo et al., 2015). Focusing on social performance is important because it relates to financial performance, competitive advantage, and several employee attitudes including employee engagement (Glavas, 2016; Nyuur et al., 2019; Shahzad & Sharfman, 2017), deepening our understanding of MNEs' capacity for "doing good" (Stahl et al., 2020). Using a sample of S&P 500 companies, we answer calls to better understand how and why MNEs are involved in the SDG 5 process (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021). MNEs are particularly suitable for this study because they often have the scale and resources necessary to influence social performance (Napier et al., 2022).

To build our theoretical foundation, we draw from the sustainable HRM framework (Kramar, 2014) because it comprehensively explains the role of sustainable HRM from strategy formulation to organizational outcomes. Drawing from this theoretical foundation, we explain *why* and *how* this relationship takes place via substantive actions including diversity targets and

work-life balance practices as two different—albeit related—mechanisms. We selected diversity targets and work-life balance practices for examination for two reasons. First, MNEs that support SDG 5 must ensure implementation (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021). One of the main tools for organizations to implement SDG 5 is with transparent human resource management practices (Grosser & Moon, 2005) such as diversity targets, which drives the sustainability strategy (Lashitew, 2021; Wettstein et al., 2019). Second, we examine work-life balance practices because they represent one of the most prominent tools to implement SDG 5 (Grosser & Moon, 2005; Kossek & Thompson, 2016; Kossek et al., 2023). Organizations often implement work-life balance practices as a response to women's concerns regarding family responsibilities, who are those most frequently using this type of practice (Kalysh et al., 2016). In addition, work-life balance practices affect a wide range of organizational outcomes (e.g., financial performance, talent management) and stakeholder groups (e.g., relationship quality with customers and vendors) (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018; Masterson et al., 2021), increasing their ability to explain MNEs' social performance. In summary, both diversity targets and work-life balance practices represent two different types of practices, namely accountability and resource practices respectively (Leslie, 2019), which, we posit, provide a scaffold for implementing the firm's sustainable HRM strategy.

We integrate this theorizing with social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 1999) by examining the impact of women across the organizational structure—including women in executive, management, and employee positions—as a contextual moderator shedding light on the implementation of HRM practices designed to enhance the likelihood of setting diversity targets and implementing work-life balance practices, ultimately increasing MNEs' social performance (see Figure 1). We focus on female representation across the organizational structure because

women's communal roles should shape HRM practices benefiting not only women but also various groups of employees.

Our research makes several unique contributions. First, we draw from and extend the cumulative knowledge built over the last decade on sustainable HRM (Kramar, 2014; Enhert et al., 2016; Ren et al. 2024). Despite the importance of this phenomenon-driven research stream (Buckley et al., 2017), SDG 5 has remained overlooked in HRM scholarship (Cooke & Wood, 2024). To advance the field, we apply and extend the sustainable HRM framework (Kramar, 2014) to SDG 5 by: a) revealing a spillover effect of SDG 5 to diversity targets involving other underrepresented groups beyond gender; and b) discovering broader societal impacts involving the workforce, the community, human rights, and product responsibility.

Second, we theoretically advance the sustainability literature in an understudied area (Cooke & Wood, 2023; Kossek et al., 2023) by explaining why MNEs implement diversity targets and work-life balance practices and minimize decoupling, informing the "'black box' of implementation" (p. 2082) of these practices (Kossek et al., 2023). Diversity targets and work life-balance practices are beneficial in response not only to legal mandates (Ali et al., 2021; Kalev et al., 2006; Konrad et al., 2016) but also to global mandates such as SDG 5, which ultimately increase MNEs' social performance.

Finally, we contribute to research by identifying women's representation across the organizational structure as an organizational factor affecting SDG 5 implementation. This representation, an enduring aspect of the organizational social structure, strengthens the relationship between support for SDG 5 (i.e., symbolic support) and social performance via both diversity targets and work-life balance practices (i.e., substantive actions) (Eagly & Wood, 1999). While women's representation has been widely studied in HRM (e.g., Joo et al., 2023), our study advances this literature by considering women's representation throughout the organizational

structure, not just on boards or in upper-level management, and by highlighting the synergistic effect between women's representation and support for SDG 5. Our approach voices the importance of not only championing voluntary goals but also ensuring that more women are engaged at all organizational levels.

Theoretical Background

Sustainable HRM Framework

The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 43). Since this definition was proposed, the world has witnessed an increase in awareness of sustainability, with the SDGs enacted by the United Nations in 2015 serving as the hallmark of the sustainability agenda for governments, MNEs, small and medium enterprises, and civil society.

This debate has been joined by HRM scholars, who have proposed models and conceptualizations to explain the role of HRM in economic, social, and environmental sustainability (e.g., Barrena-Martínez et al., 2019; Ehnert et al., 2016; Kramar, 2014; Ren et al., 2024; Stahl et al., 2020; Westerman et al., 2020). We draw from Kramar's framework (2014) because of the breadth and depth of its propositions (Gerring, 2001). Briefly, Kramar (2014) conceptualizes an open-system framework in which the source of human resources, namely human capital, drives the HRM strategy, policies, and practices, which in turn relate to normative, efficiency, and substance sustainability interpretations, each yielding outcomes in the organizational, societal, individual, and ecological domains. The normative and substance sustainability interpretations inform our study by allowing us to build the rationale for the mediating hypotheses in terms of norms and quality of life. Healthy employment relations, trust, quality of life, and energy use are examples of normative interpretations for organizational,

social, individual, and ecological outcomes, respectively. The normative or responsibility approach centers around the definition of sustainable development and considers that responsibility should be adopted for its own sake. On the other hand, healthy workforces, viability of sources of human resources (e.g., schools and universities), and green products and services are examples of substance sustainability interpretations of organizational, social, individual, and ecological outcomes. The substance approach focuses on the importance of the quality and value of people inside and outside the organizational structure. It focuses on how the consumption and reproduction of resources allow the organization to survive. All of these outcomes emerge in a socioeconomic, ecological, institutional, and technological context. We draw from this model to build our rationale.

Support for SDG 5, Diversity Targets, and Social Performance

The United Nations' goals generated expectations for MNEs to deliver sustainable solutions (Zhan & Santos-Paulino, 2021). These expectations represent pressures by the institutional context in which MNEs operate. This pressure has urged scholars and international organizations to draft policy recommendations including the commitment to a global corporate social responsibility strategy related to SDG 5 and the call for an in-depth examination of MNEs' strategies, policies, and practices (Cook & Wood, 2024; Eden & Wagstaff, 2021; GRI & Global Compact, 2017). In response to these calls, MNEs have been focusing on enacting and implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives (e.g., Dell, 2021). However, progress is uneven, with only one in four companies adopting all the core practices recommended by experts to ensure fairness in hiring and performance reviews. Notably, companies that implement all these core practices see the most significant progress in advancing women (McKinsey & Company, 2024). Other statistics show that while 46% of organizations leverage diversity, equality, and

inclusion programs to attract and retain employees, only 20% are leveraging these programs to achieve business results such as innovation (PWC, 2022).

Building on this foundation and the normative approach of sustainability with the view that responsibility and accountability to different stakeholders should be adopted for its own sake (Kramar, 2014), we propose that support for SDG 5 (i.e., symbolic support) will enable organizations to set diversity targets (i.e., substantive action), including gender diversity targets, to conform to the institutional context. Examples of diversity targets include providing women with equal opportunities for leadership and ending discrimination against women (United Nations, n.d.). We posit that this is tantamount to the implementation of HRM sustainability, in which MNEs must respond to changes in the socioeconomic and institutional context increasingly demanding the realization of the SDG agenda (Kramar, 2014; Lashitew, 2021). Once organizations commit to supporting SDG 5, it will become challenging for them to conceal noncompliance (Crilly et al. 2012) as support will lead to further pressure by organizational stakeholders. Thus, we expect that support for SDG 5 will lead firms to initiate substantive action by setting diversity targets in response to an institutional context that demands compliance with this global mandate.

Although at first glance this relationship might appear to be tautological (i.e., MNEs that support SDG 5 will necessarily set diversity targets), theoretical and empirical rationales drive us to examine it more closely. Theoretically, we propose that support for SDG 5 will exert pressure on MNEs to set targets related not only to women but also to other employee groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, and disability). Thus, we posit that the scope of diversity targets is much broader than that of women's employment. We know from prior literature that signaling value for diversity (as is the case with support for SDG 5), as proxied by diversity climate, resonates with more than just one group of employees, and includes different racial and ethnic groups across the

organizational structure (Dwertmann et al., 2016; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; McKay et al., 2008; Ward-Bartlett et al., 2023).

Drivers for expanding the scope of groups beyond women may vary, including providing equitable treatment across different groups in organizational settings, reducing potential liabilities for ignoring some groups in the management of diversity, integrating differences (Ely & Thomas, 2001), or alternatively highlighting the business case for diversity (Konrad et al., 2016). At the conceptual level, it would be logically inconsistent to support one marginalized group and leave out other underrepresented organizational groups because support for SDG 5 advocates for equal opportunity. More generally, this argument aligns with Ghauri et al. (2021), who argue that there is a synergistic relationship between gender diversity and diversity related to race, age, sexual orientation, disability, and ethnicity, and that gender diversity objectives cannot be achieved without attaining other diversity objectives. At the operational level, SDG 5 target indicators include other demographic categories, including age (see Indicators 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.4.1, 5.6.1, and 5.6.2) (cf., https://sdgs.un.org/goals).

Empirically, scholars have shown that while firms benefit from incorporating sustainability principles into their business-level strategies, research also points to decoupling strategies (e.g., "greenwashing") signaling symbolic support while leaving business processes unchanged (Crilly et al., 2012; Stahl et al., 2020). Others have pointed to the backfire effect of diversity initiatives (Burnett & Aguinis, 2024), or noted a backlash effect (Kossek & Thompson, 2016; Perrigino et al., 2018). Other researchers have noted that although there is general support from senior managers regarding diversity targets, some of these managers express dissatisfaction because these diversity targets are difficult to achieve or undermine managerial discretion, whereas other managers simply disregard them, try to achieve the target rather than get the right people into the right jobs, or alternately invoke a business case rationale as an excuse for not following diversity

policies, leaving senior managers skeptical about the viability of the targets (Noon & Ogbonna, 2021).

Despite these legitimate concerns, we propose that once the organization acknowledges support for SDG 5, it will be difficult to conceal noncompliance (Crilly et al., 2012). A key mechanism used by organizations to signal support is the establishment of an accountability structure (Burnett & Aguinis, 2024). In addition, and although we do not directly test for decoupling, we argue that accountability practices should minimize decoupling (Kalev et al., 2006). Lastly, evidence-based recommendations and implementation guidelines to prevent the backfire effect (cf., Burnett & Aguinis, 2024) such as the creation of a diversity, equity, and inclusion accountability structure suggests that backfiring is less of a possibility because setting diversity targets is a type of accountability practice implemented by MNEs.

Empirical evidence provides some support for this reasoning. Kalev et al. (2006) found that the best way to remedy inequality is to set goals and assign responsibility for achieving them. Regarding the spillover effect from gender to other diversity initiatives, Ghauri et al. (2021) found that companies with higher gender board diversity disclosed more information related to other types of diversity compared with companies with lower gender board diversity. In addition, consider the cases of the National Science Foundation (2022) and the National Institutes of Health (2023), which have been consistently calling for increases in female representation in STEM work settings as a priority in their strategic plans. Yet, these organizations also mention the need to focus on other underrepresented groups as a priority in their strategic objectives, which in turn guides program objectives (cf., NSF 22-638). Another example is Dell Technologies (2021), a company that strongly supports women in the workforce with diversity goals and programs spilling over to other underrepresented groups. Thus, we posit that:

H1a: Symbolic support for SDG 5 is positively related to diversity targets (i.e., substantive support).

We argue that diversity targets increase social performance (i.e., workforce, community, human rights, and product responsibility). To enhance clarity, we develop a rationale for each individual sub-dimension of social performance. However, instead of testing the four sub-dimensions separately, we test the hypotheses with the composite index of social performance formed by the four sub-dimensions. First, the normative approach of sustainability proposes that sustainable HRM involves responsibility to a variety of stakeholders in terms of workplace relations, including the workforce (e.g., employee well-being and quality of life), and relations with the social environment (Kramar, 2014). We define workforce as the entire pool of employees working for a particular organization. It follows that diversity targets will lead organizational stakeholders to focus on formal structures tied to the expected diversity composition of the workforce (Kalev et al., 2006), which should increase job applicants' attraction to the firm and improve workforce retention (Masterson et al., 2021). Empirical evidence provides some support for this rationale (cf., Konrad & Linnehan, 2000; Motel, 2016).

Second, given that a normative sustainability HRM approach also involves good relations within the social context and particularly social legitimacy (i.e., the legitimacy of organizational practices; Kramar, 2014), we posit that diversity targets will also relate to the organization's actions regarding the community, including its customers, suppliers, and investors (i.e., community). We refer to community as the pool of external stakeholders interacting—or having the potential to interact—with the organization. Indeed, investors reward investments in companies that meet societal expectations of commitment to workforce support, such as those with family-friendly programs (Arthur, 2003). In addition, customers positively evaluate companies committed to their workforce (Cogin et al., 2018; Masterson et al., 2021), and gender

and racial diversity on corporate boards has been linked to community and cultural activities (Hillman et al., 2002; Williams, 2003).

Third, human rights are at the core of sustainable HRM (Ehnert et al., 2016). We define human rights as "inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being; they cover political, civil and socio-economic and cultural rights as defined by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and more broadly the International Bill of Human Rights and subsequent treaties" (Wettstein et al., 2019, p. 54). Consistent with the normative sustainability approach (Kramar, 2014), we argue that diversity targets should also increase an organization's actions regarding human rights. Although we know very little about the relationship between support for the SDGs and human rights (Wettstein et al., 2019), we posit that the two should be related because pursuing equal treatment for all, an essential characteristic of diversity plans, is at the core of universal human rights (Melé & Sánchez-Runde, 2013). Thus, diversity targets activate expectations of the organization regarding protecting and respecting basic human rights and remedying breaches of such rights (Murphy & Vives, 2013). Remedies can be manifested by businesses in various ways including apologies, restitution, financial compensation, rehabilitation, prevention of future harm, and punitive sanctions (Thompson, 2017). Diversity targets could trigger specific organizational actions that may help remedy breaches of basic human rights such as prevention of future harm in the form of unequal treatment across employee groups. Another example may be the implementation of an overall assessment of the organization to promote meaningful organizational change, not just remedying breaches of basic human rights but also addressing the underlying issues causing systemic injustices such as the power imbalance between the business and the victims (Thompson, 2017).

Finally, diversity targets should also increase MNEs' actions regarding product responsibility, or "the quality and safety of the product when bought and used by the consumer" (Beckmann et al., 2020, p. 128). Consistent with the substance approach, sustainable HRM focuses on the consumption and reproduction of resources, which contributes to organizational survival (Kramar, 2014). This rationale reflects a company's capacity to produce quality goods and services that consider the customer's health and safety, company integrity, and data privacy. By setting diversity targets and increasing the diversity and inclusion of women and other underrepresented groups, MNEs also increase the effectiveness of diversity outcomes (Motel, 2016), particularly in addressing customer-related health and safety issues associated with products in the market for all employee groups. Consider the following two examples. First, health scholars have noted that an increase in female representation in science improves knowledge associated with the dosing of medication for patients in a variety of treatments (Clayton & Collins, 2014). Second, toy makers such as Lego and Mattel have signaled their desire to be identified with a diversity agenda (Almeida, 2017; Bowersox, 2022). In alignment with such an agenda, these companies have updated their toy lines to reflect diversity in gender, race, ethnicity, and disability. Thus, setting diversity targets should increase product responsibility to different employee groups.

In sum, we posit that diversity targets will increase MNEs' social performance and mediate the relationship between support for SDG 5 and MNEs' social performance (Ehnert et al., 2016; Kramar, 2014). Our rationale is consistent with that of Halme et al. (2020), who argue that increasing organizational social performance requires the identification of institutional pressure while establishing business processes by setting up formal structures or practices. We argue that diversity targets are an intermediate stage (Lashitew, 2021) of increasing gender equality

consistent with SDG 5, which in turn should increase MNEs' social performance. Thus, we propose that:

H1b: Diversity targets (i.e., substantive support) increase MNEs' social performance.

H1c: Diversity targets (i.e., substantive support) mediate the relationship between symbolic support for SDG 5 and MNEs' social performance.

Moderator of Support for SDG 5 and Diversity Targets

Eagly and Wood (1999) argue that compared to men, women have less power and status as a result of the different roles held by both. More dominant behaviors are characterized as controlling and assertive, and more subordinate behaviors are characterized as compliant and cooperative. These behaviors have been referred to as agentic and communal, respectively (Eagly, 1987). Women's communal roles include friendly and nurturing behaviors that facilitate both the care for children and other individuals, while men's agentic roles include assertive and independent behaviors (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Importantly, Eagly and Wood argue that in social interactions, people communicate role expectations that induce targets to conform to those expectations, triggering social processes that allow men and women to maximize personal benefits within the constraints of the social setting.

We posit that given higher female representation across the organizational structure, there will be more female managers and generally more employees advocating for organizational practices favoring the needs of female and other marginalized employees. Women's communal gender roles align with research that indicates that women tend to manage subordinates in a more participatory and democratic manner, which should facilitate employee voice (Joo et al., 2023). In addition, women in positions of power tend to both raise issues related to multiple stakeholders who have an impact on the company's performance—or alternatively are impacted by it—and adapt practices to accommodate the needs of employees in relation to human resource policies

and practices (Joo et al., 2023; Konrad et al., 2008). This concern for others has substantial support in the literature as scholars have consistently shown that women in management and board positions are associated with an increase in social performance (Hafsi & Turgut, 2013), an increase in corporate social responsibility ratings (Bear et al., 2010; Boulouta, 2013), and support for Sustainable Development Goals (Kiefner et al., 2022).

If a firm decides to support SDG 5, it follows that higher female representation across the organizational structure will increase the likelihood of substantive actions such as setting diversity targets to embrace multiple stakeholders, not just females, because the communal role involves caring for others, which should embrace diverse employee groups. Conversely, with low female representation across the organizational structure, there will be fewer opportunities for women to shape HR practices such as setting diversity targets.

Empirical evidence supports a connection between women's representation in the upper echelons and their representation in mid-and lower-levels of the organizational structure, including women from different races (e.g., Bloch et al. 2021; Dreher, 2003; Kalev et al., 2006; Kurtulus & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012). In addition, Bear et al. (2010) found a positive relationship between the number of women board members and corporate social responsibility strength ratings, especially institutional strength related to community and diversity issues. Furthermore, Ghauri et al. (2021) provided empirical evidence that increased women's board representation is associated with higher diversity beyond gender in organizational structures. Thus, we propose that:

H1d: Women's representation across the organizational structure positively moderates the relationship between symbolic support for SDG 5 and diversity targets (i.e., substantive support).

Diversity Targets and Work-life Balance

Drawing from the substance approach to sustainability and focusing on *how* MNEs drive the implementation of support for SDG 5, we argue that successful implementation of diversity targets will involve diversity management initiatives such as the provision of work-life balance practices that support employees' well-being (Kossek et al., 2023; Kramar, 2014; Yang & Konrad, 2011). We refer to work-life balance practices as organizational initiatives that reduce employees' work-family conflict and support family roles outside of the workplace (Masterson et al., 2021). Work-life balance practices may include features such as flexible arrangements, compressed workweeks, working from home, job sharing, family leave, and daycare services. By allowing variation in the amount, timing, and location of work (Kossek et al., 2021; Masterson et al., 2021), work-life balance practices permit the complex management of work demands while allowing employees to attend to family demands. This argument is consistent with a routine implementation of the strategic goal associated with diversity, where the driver of implementation comes from within the organization with clear managerial consensus (Crilly et al., 2012). We argue that once diversity targets are in place, managers will translate targets into work-life balance practices, mostly in support of women employees, who are the most likely candidates in need of these practices in order to achieve optimal performance (Kalysh et al., 2016). From this perspective, work-life balance practices are complementary to diversity targets, thereby closing the gap between intended and actual HRM (Nishii et al. 2018). Although we lack empirical evidence supporting the relationship between diversity targets and the likelihood of implementing work-life balance practices, scholars have provided examples of the relevance of diversity targets in the form of affirmative action plans or targeted recruiting in increasing diversity representation (Dobbin et al., 2015; Kalev et al., 2006; Nishii et al., 2018). Thus, we posit that:

H2: Diversity targets (i.e., substantive support) increase the likelihood of implementing work-life balance practices (i.e., substantive support).

Support for SDG 5, Diversity Targets, Work-life Balance, and Social Performance

We propose that pressure by the socioeconomic and institutional context in response to MNEs' support for SDG 5 (i.e., symbolic support) will propel the advancement of work-life balance practices by MNEs (i.e., substantive action) (Kelly et al., 2008; Kramar, 2014). The substance approach to sustainability focuses on maintaining an organization's human resources so that the organization is able to survive (Kramar, 2014). It also acknowledges the importance of the value and quality of employees (Kramar, 2014). Thus, support for SDG 5 should leverage the positive view of the organization and facilitate the opportunities employees need to succeed (i.e., resource practices; Leslie, 2019). One key practice that organizations have to acknowledge and further increase the value of employees is work life-balance practices (Kossek & Thompson, 2016; Masterson et al., 2021). Empirical evidence is generally missing as the examination of how organizations implement work-life balance practices is understudied (Kossek et al. 2023). However, it is important to note the work of Piszczek (2020), who found that high female collective turnover increases the likelihood of adopting childcare initiatives in subsequent years. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H3a: Symbolic support for SDG 5 increases the provision of work-life balance practices (i.e., substantive support).

Next, we draw from the normative approach to sustainable HRM that centers on the responsibility of HRM for promoting social and environmental health, particularly family and community well-being (Kramar, 2014) to propose that the presence of work-life balance practices should increase the four sub-dimensions of MNEs' social performance (i.e., workforce, community, human rights, and product responsibility). Work-life balance practices relate to the

workforce sub-dimension of social performance because it provides more control over the schedule and continuity of how work is performed or alternatively acts as an effective inducement to control the workforce and increase employees' contributions, leading to positive organizational outcomes (Kossek & Thompson, 2016; Kossek & Lautsch, 2018). Evidence consistently supports the relationship between work-life balance practices and organizational outcomes (cf., Masterson et al., 2021). Regarding the community sub-dimension of social performance, work-life balance practices support those in need of family care, signaling to job applicants and the community effective management of family needs (Kalysh et al., 2016; Masterson et al., 2021). Implementing work-life balance practices also fosters human rights by facilitating the protection, respect, and remedying due to those in need of organizational structures to accomplish performance goals (Murphy & Vives, 2013). Examples include employees who must care for a sick child or an elderly parent. We also posit a relationship between work-life balance practices and product responsibility. Work-life balance practices reduce work-life conflict, increase the ability to balance multiple roles, and facilitate women's ability to work (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Kalysh et al., 2016). This increased availability of women in the workforce should relate to the promotion of product responsibility because women are more likely to improve knowledge and innovate in products and services regarding underrepresented groups (Clayton & Collings, 2014).

Empirically, providing work-life balance practices leads to positive organizational outcomes (Nishii et al., 2018), especially those related to increases in social performance. For example, work-life balance practices are associated with future increases in the percentage of women in management (Dreher, 2003; Kalysh et al., 2016) and reductions of turnover in the years following implementation (Piszczek, 2020). Based on current theory and empirical evidence, we posit that:

H3b: The provision of work-life balance practices (i.e., substantive support) increases MNEs' social performance.

We also propose that work-life balance practices mediate the relationship between support for SDG 5 and MNEs' social performance. The normative and the substance approaches to sustainability explain this mediated relationship. Indeed, the acknowledgement of the value and importance of employees will facilitate substantive action, namely the implementation of work-life balance practices, that will ultimately render higher social performance (e.g., employee and community well-being, human rights, and higher likelihood of product responsibility) (Kramar, 2014; Lashitew, 2021; Yang & Konrad, 2011). Using a sample of 19 large Europe-based companies, Halme et al. (2020) found a path from corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitment to organizational social performance via core business activities. Examples of core business activities included taking diversity measures throughout the organization and avoiding overcompensation of top managers. Thus, we propose that:

H3c: The provision of work-life balance practices (i.e., substantive support) mediates the relationship between symbolic support for SDG 5 and MNEs' social performance.

Finally, our previous rationale also leads us to consider the provision of work-life balance practices as a mediator of the relationship between diversity targets and MNEs' social performance. We argue that accountability practices such as diversity targets will facilitate the provision of resource practices such as work-life balance mostly in support of women who are most likely in need of such practices (Kalysh et al., 2016). In turn, work-life balance practices will increase social performance, enhancing employee and community well-being, fostering human rights, and facilitating product responsibility (Kramar, 2014; Nishii, 2019; Yang & Konrad, 2011). Thus, we propose that:

H3d: Work-life balance practices (i.e., substantive support) mediate the relationship between diversity targets and MNEs' social performance.

Moderator of Support for SDG 5 and Work-life Balance Practices

Finally, we posit that as women's representation increases, the relationship between MNEs' support for SDG 5 and the likelihood of implementing work-life balance practices also increases. High women's representation across the organizational structure will enable the shaping of practices embracing the care of women and other diverse groups (Eagly & Wood, 1999), which will ultimately benefit employees' well-being, particularly those facing strong work-life balance conflict (Bloom et al., 2011; Rashmi & Kataria, 2022). Conversely, when women's representation is low, there is more opportunity for deviation, and employees may ignore the need to advocate for practices that will support employees most in need of them (Eagly & Wood, 1999). In support of these arguments, scholars found support for the relationship between greater representation of women in the workforce and enhanced organizational responsiveness in the form of involvement in work-life issues (Dreher, 2003; Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Spoon et al., 2023). However, Bloom et al. (2011) found mixed evidence for such an outcome, with a positive and significant relationship between the proportion of female managers and work-life balance practices and a non-significant relationship between the proportion of female employees and work-life balance practices. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H3e: Women's representation across the organizational structure positively moderates the relationship between symbolic support for SDG 5 and work-life balance practices (i.e., substantive support).

Method

Data and Sample

We tested our hypotheses using a sample of MNEs listed in the S&P 500 index from 2015 to 2020. We retrieved the data from multiple reliable sources. The construction of our final sample started with extracting data on firm-level controls and sales from Compustat. Following Hitt et al. (1997), we constructed an international diversification index by identifying MNEs as firms with positive international diversification, yielding 418 unique MNEs. We then retrieved data on social performance, support for the 17 SDGs, diversity targets, work-life balance practices, women's representation, and organizational practices for 418 MNEs from the Refinitiv ESG database. We further collected and constructed data for two sustainability related variables – *CSR sustainability committee* and *CSR presence* – from the BoardEx database. We relied on Compustat in collecting and constructing all other firm- and industry-level controls. Merging all these data, we built a final sample of 1,922 firm-year observations over the 2015-2020 sample period, with our 418 unique MNEs operating in 167 four-digit SIC industries.

Measures

MNEs' Social Performance. Following prior research, we focused on four dimensions: workforce, human rights, community, and product responsibility as these social issues are of great interest to stakeholders and are considered the primary elements of a firm's social activities (Choi & Wang, 2009). To measure MNEs' social performance, we started by using the social pillar scores with a value between 0 and 100 provided by the Refinitiv ESG. Specifically, Refinitiv ESG aggregates the social performance score by drawing from 184 indicators associated with four categories: workforce (71 indicators), human rights (14 indicators), community (37 indicators), and product responsibility (62 indicators). Refinitiv ESG first collects data on these 184 indicators from companies' CSR reports, CSR sections in annual reports,

company websites, and stock exchange filings. With firms operating in the same industry as a benchmark, the professional analysts from Refinitiv ESG use their industry experience to consistently interpret and assign a score ranging from 0-100 to a focal firm in a specific year for each of these indicators. Finally, the analysts construct a set of data-driven industry-specific weights and use them to aggregate the 71 indicators into a workforce score, the 14 indicators into the human rights score, the 37 indicators into the community score, and the 62 indicators into the product responsibility score, and then aggregate the four scores into the final social performance score. Our three mediators – diversity targets, flexible arrangements, and daycare services – are three out of 184 indicators for the social performance score. Hence, to mitigate potential overlap with the other key variables in our model, we subtracted the diversity targets, flexible arrangements, and daycare services scores from the social pillar scores to form MNEs' social performance scores. To alleviate the concern over reverse causality, we measured MNEs' social performance at year *t+1*.

Symbolic Support for SDG 5. Support for SDG 5 is a dummy variable indicating whether a firm provides support for SDG 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (1 = support for SDG 5, 0 otherwise). The data for this variable were extracted from the Refinitiv ESG database. Analysts at Refinitiv examine a large set of publicly available data on companies and assign a score (raw form of data) regarding ESG performance to the following question: "Does the company support the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) Gender Equality?" If yes, the Refinitiv ESG coded the variable of SDG 5 Gender Equality as "TRUE" and otherwise "FALSE." Drawing from this raw data, we constructed a dummy variable of support for SDG 5 and transformed the raw data to 1 if the raw data were "TRUE" and 0 otherwise.

Substantive Support: Diversity Targets and Work-life Balance Practices. We extracted the data of these variables from Refinitiv ESG. *Diversity Targets* is a continuous variable

representing the extent to which a firm sets targets or objectives to achieve diversity and equal opportunity considering women, minorities, disabled employees, or employees of any age, ethnicity, race, nationality, or religion. This variable takes a value between 0 and 100.

We used two variables – *Flexible Arrangements* and *Daycare Services* – to capture the level of work-life balance within firms. *Flexible Arrangements* represent the extent to which a firm includes programs or processes that help employees achieve a balance between their work and personal life. *Daycare Services* reflects the extent to which a firm provides daycare services for its employees. Both variables take a value ranging from 0 to 100.

Women's Representation. We obtained data on the percentage of female executives, female managers, female employees, and new female employees from the Refinitiv ESG and took the average of these four variables to construct women's representation across the organizational structure, scaled by 100. The resulting variable of *Women's Representation* takes a value ranging from 0 to 100. To both simplify the interpretation of regression coefficients when interaction terms are present and potentially reduce issues with multicollinearity, we mean-centered the moderator – Women's Representation – to conduct the analysis and plot the figures of the interaction effect as suggested by Aiken and West (1991).

Control Variables. Support for the other 16 SDGs may play a role in explaining social performance. To take this into account, we included firms' support for each of the other 16 SDGs as controls. We used SDGs 1-4 and SDGs 6-17 to represent them in the tables to save space. A score of 1 represents support for a particular SDG and 0 represents no support.

We controlled for *Global Compact Signatory*, a dummy variable indicating whether or not a firm has signed a United Nations commitment to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies and to report on their implementation (coded 1 = Yes, 0 = No) because this will influence social performance (Choi & Wang, 2009). We controlled for *Diversity Policy* because this drives

diversity goals and practices (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021; Nishii et al., 2018), coded as 1 if a firm includes such policies and 0 otherwise. Following prior research, we also controlled for *ESG Controversies,* or a firm's exposure to environmental, social, and governance controversies and negative events reflected in global media (Aouadi & Marsat, 2018). The score for *ESG Controversies* takes a value ranging between 0 and 100: the higher the score the fewer the ESG controversies a firm faces. We controlled for *Board Gender Diversity,* or the percentage of female directors on the boards, because women are associated with social responsibility (Rao & Tilt, 2016). We controlled for *Board Size,* or the total number of board members (Fu et al., 2020), and *Board Tenure*, or the average number of years each board member has been on the board because this can influence a company's diversity policies and social responsibility (Krueger, 2010). We also controlled for *Sustainability Committee* and *Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) Presence* because research suggests that these stakeholders improve firms' engagement in social activities (Choi & Wang, 2009; Fu et al., 2020). Following Fu et al., we coded *Sustainability Committee* as 1 if the names of all board committees of a firm in the BoardEx database included any of the following words: "sustainability," "sustainable," "responsibility," "ethics," or "environment," otherwise we coded this variable as 0. Similarly, we coded *CSO Presence* as 1 if the role names of the executives and directors included any of the following words: "sustainability," "sustainable," "responsibility," "ethics," or "environment" and 0 otherwise.

Finally, setting diversity targets and the provision of work-life balance programs may depend on their financial performance and available financial and physical resources. To control for these alternative explanations, following Fu et al. (2020), we included *Firm Size,* measured by the natural logarithm of 1 plus a firm's total assets in a given year, profitability, measured by *Return on Assets* (*ROA*), *Leverage*, reflecting a firm's financial resource flexibility, measured by ratio of total debt-total assets, *Tobin's Q*, a long-term profitability indicator reflecting a firm's growth

prospects using the premium that the capital market is willing to pay for the firm, measured as book value of assets minus book value of common equity plus market value of common equity scaled by total assets, and C*apital Expenditures*, representing firms' available physical resources, measured by investment in fixed assets scaled by total assets (Krueger, 2010). To ease the interpretation of regression coefficients, we conducted the empirical analysis with raw data for all the variables.

Results

We performed Hausman's specification test to determine if a random or fixed-effects model was appropriate. The *p*-value of 0.04 suggests that we should reject the null hypothesis and use the fixed-effects model. We then applied a panel linear regression model with year fixed effects to control for changes in the macroeconomic environment and systematic changes in firms' social activities over time and industry fixed effects to control for any unobservable industry-level heterogeneity that is time-invariant and affects firms' engagement in social activities. We used one-tailed tests because our hypotheses are all directional and we focused on differences between groups in a specific direction (Hinkle et al., 2003). We adjusted standard errors for within-firm clustering to account for situations where observations within each group were not independently and identically distributed. We winsorized all variables at the 1st and 99th levels to minimize the effect of outliers.

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables. Correlations align with our theory. Multicollinearity tests revealed a maximum inflation factor (VIF) of 6.2 across the regression models, which is below the suggested threshold of 10 for the risk of multicollinearity (Cohen et al., 2003).

Table 2 (Model 1) shows a positive effect of support for SDG 5 on diversity targets (B = 12.037, p = 0.038), supporting H1a. Firms supporting SDG 5 score 12.037 higher on average on

diversity targets than firms not supporting SDG 5. In support of H1b, Table 2 (Model 2) also reveals a positive effect of diversity targets on social performance ($B = 0.040$, $p = 0.009$), showing how a one-unit increase in a firm's diversity targets score leads to an increase in the firm's social performance score by 0.04.

To test for the mediation of diversity targets on the relationship between support for SDG 5 and MNEs' social performance (H1c), we followed the Structural Equation Modeling based on the seemingly unrelated regressions (SURs) approach (Preacher et al., 2007). In particular, we applied the generalized Structural Equation Modeling (GSEM) approach, in which we controlled for year fixed effects, industry fixed effects, with robust standard errors clustered at the firm level due to our panel data structure. The GSEM approach allows the error terms across equations to be correlated and takes this correlation into account in the estimation of effects (see Models 3 and 4 in Table 2). First, Model 3 shows a positive effect of support for SDG 5 on diversity targets ($B = 12.037$, $p = 0.031$). Second, Model 4 presents the results of the regression of social performance on support for SDG 5, diversity targets, and control variables. The coefficient estimate of the mediator – *Diversity Targets* – remains positive and significant ($B = 0.039$, $p = 0.006$), suggesting an indirect effect carried by the mediator to the dependent variable – *Social Performance*. The Sobel test statistic is 2.97 (Sobel, 1982), greater than the threshold value of 1.96, which provides support for the indirect effect of support for SDG 5 via diversity targets on firms' social performance. We further performed bootstrapping to validate the indirect effect of setting diversity targets on the relationship between support for SDG 5 and social performance. We obtained bootstrap confidence intervals for these conditional indirect effects. We ran 5,000 bootstrap samples. None of the 95% confidence levels generated by bootstrapping contained 0, corroborating the results presented in Models 3 and 4 of Table 2. This supports H1c.

To test H1d, we added the interaction of diversity targets and women's representation to Model 5 in Table 2. As expected, women's representation strengthens the effect of support for SDG 5 on diversity targets (B = 1.004, p = 0.009). We plotted this interaction following Aiken and West's (1991) procedure (Figure 2). The figure reveals that the most positive effect of support for SDG 5 on diversity targets occurs when both support for SDG 5 and women's representation within organizations are high. This supports H1d.

Table 3 shows the results of H2. As predicted, diversity targets have a positive impact on work-life balance practices, including the provision of flexible arrangements to their employees (B = 0.173, p = 0.001; Model 1), and the provision of daycare services within MNEs (B = 0.157, p = 0.001; Model 2). For every unit increase in diversity targets, MNEs' performance score in providing flexible arrangements and daycare services to their employees increases by 0.173 and 0.157 respectively. These results provide support for H2.

Table 4 presents the effects of support for SDG 5 on MNEs' provision of flexible arrangements and social performance (H3a-H3c). In support of H3a, Model 1 reveals that MNEs' support for SDG 5 is associated with the provision of flexible arrangements (B = 14.653, p = 0.017). Model 2 shows that the provision of flexible arrangements positively affects MNEs' social performance (B = 0.104, p = 0.000), supporting H3b. Firms supporting SDG 5 score 14.653 higher on average on the provision of flexible arrangements than firms not supporting SDG 5, with a one-unit increase in firms' performance in the provision of flexible arrangements resulting in an increase in their social performance by 0.104.

Table 4 (Models 3 and 4) shows the results of GSEM approach related to the mediating effect of the provision of flexible arrangements on the relationship between support for SDG 5 and MNEs' social performance. First, support for SDG 5 has a positive and statistically significant impact on the provision of flexible arrangements (B = 14.653, p = 0.025). Second, in

Model 4, we regressed social performance on support for SDG 5, flexible arrangements, and a set of control variables. The coefficient estimate of the mediator – *Flexible Arrangements* – remains positive and significant ($B = 0.104$, $p = 0.000$). The Sobel test statistic is 4.2, indicating an indirect effect of SDG 5 on social performance mediated by the provision of flexible arrangements. We further performed bootstrapping to validate the indirect effect of flexible arrangements by obtaining bootstrap confidence intervals for these conditional indirect effects. We ran 5,000 bootstrap samples. None of the 95% confidence levels generated by bootstrapping contained 0, confirming the results presented in Models 3 and 4 of Table 4. This supports H3c.

Table 5 reveals how support for SDG 5 affects the provision of daycare services and MNEs' social performance (H3a-H3c). Support for SDG 5 positively relates to the provision of daycare services ($B = 13.323$, $p = 0.019$ in Model 1), supporting H3a. The provision of daycare services is positively related to MNEs' social performance ($B = 0.066$, $p = 0.000$ in Model 2), consistent with H3b. Firms supporting SDG 5 score 13.323 higher on average on the provision of daycare services than firms not supporting SDG 5; in turn, a one-unit increase in firms' performance in the provision of daycare services results in an increase in their social performance by 0.066.

We also found support for H3c, or the mediation of the provision of daycare services on the relationship between support for SDG 5 and MNEs' social performance. Based on the GSEM approach, results suggest that support for SDG 5 positively relates to daycare services ($B = 13.323$, $p = 0.014$; Table 5, Model 3). The provision of daycare services positively relates to MNEs' social performance ($B = 0.066$, $p = 0.000$; Table 5, Model 4). The Sobel test statistic is 3.77, suggesting the indirect effect of support for SDG 5 via the provision of daycare services on firms' social performance. We further performed bootstrapping to validate the indirect effect with 5,000 bootstrap samples. None of the 95% confidence levels generated by bootstrapping contained 0, corroborating the results presented in Models 3 and 4 of Table 5.

Models 3-6 of Table 3 present the results of the regression of social performance on diversity targets, work-life balance practices (i.e., flexible arrangements and daycare services), and control variables. The coefficient estimates of the mediators – *Flexible Arrangement*s and *Daycare Services* – remain positive and significant ($B = 0.102$, $p = 0.000$, see Model 4; $B = 0.063$, $p = 0.000$, see Model 6), suggesting an indirect effect carried by the mediators to the dependent variable – *Social Performance*. The Sobel test statistics are 6.4 (for flexible arrangements) and 4.84 (for daycare services) (Sobel, 1982), providing support for the indirect effect of diversity targets via work-life balance practices, such as flexible arrangements and daycare services, on firms' social performance. We further performed bootstrapping to validate this set of results. We obtained bootstrap confidence intervals for these conditional indirect effects. We ran 5,000 bootstrap samples. None of the 95% confidence levels generated by bootstrapping contained 0, corroborating the results presented in Models 3 - 6 of Table 3. This supports H3d.

Hypothesis H3e received mixed support. The interaction of support for SDG 5 and women's representation within MNEs was significant ($B = 0.712$, $p = 0.012$; see Table 4, Model 5). While the provision of flexible arrangements was highest when MNEs support SDG 5 and MNEs have high women's representation across the organizational structure (Figure 3), the same interaction did not predict daycare services ($B = 0.469$, $p = 0.265$; Table 5, Model 5).

In the Supplemental Materials, we present the definition of all the variables in the model, provide a detailed explanation of the social performance metric, address endogeneity concerns, report a battery of robustness checks considering alternative measures and samples, report the analysis and results using standardized data, and examine the four sub-dimensions of social performance as dependent variables in testing the hypotheses of the model. Results show that the findings reported are robust.

Discussion

Our research objective was to theoretically develop and empirically test hypotheses examining the relationship between MNEs' support for SDG 5 and MNEs' social performance. One of our main findings is that support for SDG 5 leads to societal benefits beyond gender equality, encompassing other demographic groups. In addition, by supporting SDG 5, MNEs support not only women at work but also families, the workforce, and communities at large. Thus, we provide evidence that MNEs can "do good" by investing in employees and fostering a positive organizational and social environment (Kramar, 2014; Ren et al., 2023; Stahl et al., 2020), which ultimately enhances social performance. We also found that women's representation across the organizational structure positively affects SDG 5 implementation.

Theoretical and Research Contributions

We refine the sustainable HRM framework (Kramar, 2014) by explaining the role of specific HR practices—diversity targets and work-life balance practices—as mediators between support for SDG 5 and social performance. We also extend this framework by theorizing how these practices explain the subdimensions of social performance—workforce, community, human rights, and product responsibility.

In addition, we connect elements of the sustainable HRM framework by theorizing about the link between diversity targets and work-life balance practices and explaining how this link reduces the potential likelihood of decoupling (i.e., SDG "washing") (van Tulder & van Mil, 2023). We found that MNEs minimize decoupling by setting diversity targets and implementing work-life balance practices designed to address those targets, a step consistent with advancing the SDG 5 agenda (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021). We expand social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 1999) into a new context and explain the moderating role of female representation across the organizational structure in strengthening the alignment between support for SDG 5 and diversity targets and flexible work arrangements (though not for daycare services).

Support for SDG 5 demonstrates MNEs' commitment to a sustainable HRM agenda that has spillover effects. This commitment enables MNEs to support employees' families, better their communities, offer responsible products, and address human rights issues. Thus, our findings partially respond to whether MNEs are part of the problem or part of the solution to societal grand challenges (Buckley et al., 2017) and illustrate how sustainable HRM can provide theory-driven solutions in relation to this global agenda (Cooke & Wood, 2024). Eccles et al. (2014) found that firms highly engaged in sustainability outperform those with low engagement in terms of organizational processes (e.g., stakeholder engagement) and financial performance. Our research demonstrates that MNEs that support SDG 5 outperform those that do not in terms of organizational diversity processes and social performance.

Practical and Policy Implications

Our findings have several practical implications. First, to ensure that support for SDG 5 is not merely symbolic, it is essential to set concrete diversity targets and implement work-life balance practices. We argue that a successful implementation of SDG 5 (Kossek et al., 2023) leading to tangible improvements in social performance involves accountability and provision of resources. In addition, our findings complement previous research, which found that establishing responsibility for diversity is crucial to creating a diverse organization (Kalev et al., 2006). In other words, having diversity targets and work-life balance practices enable organizations to make substantial progress toward social performance.

Second, supporting SDG 5 benefits myriad groups, including minorities and persons with disabilities. These groups gain from diversity targets and work-life balance initiatives. In addition, flexibility is crucial for employees who are balancing work-life demands or other special needs, and these efforts have been found to attract talent to organizations (Kalev & Dobbin, 2022; van Mierlo et al., 2018). Furthermore, post-hoc analyses showed that diversity

targets and daycare services predict three sub-dimensions of social performance (i.e., workforce, community, and human rights), whereas flexible work arrangements predict the four sub-dimensions including product responsibility. These findings inform managers of the importance of work-life balance in increasing social performance across most, if not, all domains. In this regard, MNEs are leading the way for social change (Buckley et al., 2017) and communicating these societal benefits will further increase social performance.

Third, to effectively integrate SDGs, MNEs must weave diversity targets and work-life balance practices into strategic planning. In support of this reasoning, Wettstein et al. (2019, p. 61), argue that "there is more practical need to gain insight into how companies respond to and integrate SDGs in their business strategies." Recent studies identify the issue of "SDG washing," where companies specifically use the term "Sustainable Development Goals" without integrating organizational practices into their organizational structure that will enable them to achieve these goals (Lashitew, 2021; van Tulder & van Mil, 2023). When organizations embed SDG 5 into the strategic planning, their progress toward SDG 5 will be more robust.

Our findings also inform policy. Policymakers in MNEs should look beyond intended practices and evaluate MNEs policies regarding gender equality with high quality evidence. Diversity targets should serve as benchmarks for evaluating progress toward the implementation of practices and social performance. In addition, given the novelty and importance of our findings regarding flexible arrangements and daycare services, managers should implement an evidence-based policymaking approach of agenda-setting, policy formulation, policy implementation and evaluation regarding these practices, in addition to assessing employees' access experience and use, thereby providing high-quality evidence to policymakers to draft regulations and legislation (Eden & Wagstaff, 2021; Kossek et al., 2023).

Limitations and Future Research

Every study has limitations, and ours is no exception. First, because our study relies on a sample of MNEs from the S&P 500, we operate from the perspective of a Western country. Thus, although our U.S.-based MNEs will undoubtedly consider the impact of their operations on subsidiaries and societies around the globe, future research should examine how the HR processes hold up when considering cross-national variation in MNEs from different countries. Because differences between societies is one of the most powerful dividing forces globally (Huntington, 1993), we would expect that the relationship between MNEs' support for SDG 5 and social performance mediated by diversity targets and work-life balance practice would differ across countries. For example, we would expect differences in the strength of this mediated relationship across countries such as the US, China, and India as formal and informal institutions condition HR policies and practices given that HRM is one of the areas most likely reflecting local circumstances (Brewster et al., 2016). Replicating our study with additional country clusters (Ronen & Shenkar, 2013) is paramount. Second, calls for future research have been made regarding cross-cultural variance surrounding the interpretation of diversity, equity, and inclusion in different countries (Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007). This should be taken into consideration to compare organizational practices aligned with SDG 5 across MNEs' subsidiaries, something we did not do.

Third, although we are confident about our results, they are based on secondary data. Thus, another limitation of our study is that we are unable to capture the cognitive intentions, meaning, and motivations of managers responsible for implementing practices that can facilitate attaining gender equality. Hence, future research should collect primary data by interviewing managers about how their organizations are developing and implementing strategies and structures that may lead to gender equality outcomes that support SDG 5. This research will likely offer insights regarding the lack of significant effects for women's representation across the organizational

structure in strengthening the relationship between support for SDG 5 and the provision of daycare services.

Fourth, although we examined the percentage of females in MNEs' organizational structures, we did not capture females' roles in lower-level structures, where women may voice their concerns and opportunities surrounding resource allocation. In future research, scholars may examine how employees' voices may shape, reinforce, or dismantle HRM practices (van Mierlo et al., 2018). Scholars may also examine how these voices enable the use and outcomes of work-life balance practices (Kossek et al., 2023). Finally, our work focused on examining MNEs' social performance, which involves the study of positive externalities concerning how MNEs' internal actions positively impact third parties' benefits beyond those received by the workforce (Montiel et al., 2021). For a more comprehensive treatment, future research should focus on examining negative externalities associated with supporting SDG 5. In a world of ever-increasing political divisions, some stakeholders may see MNEs' investments in gender equality as unnecessary attention-seeking with the potential to increase societal divisiveness.

Conclusion

Our study highlights the importance of recognizing that MNEs' support for SDG 5 contributes to achieving the United Nations' agenda of well-being for all. As a response to global mandates such as SDG 5, MNEs that implement HRM processes ultimately improve social performance. Diversity targets and work-life balance programs minimize decoupling, or the gap between intended and actual HRM. Ultimately, support for SDG 5 has a spillover effect, rendering societal benefits beyond gender equality in work settings. By supporting SDG 5, MNEs' spread benefits both to the most basic institution of all—families—and to society at large.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1 Performance	64.47	18.72	1.00															
2 SDG 5	0.11	0.31	0.17	1.00														
3 SDG 1	0.05	0.21	0.10	0.51	1.00													
4 SDG 2	0.05	0.22	0.10	0.49	0.68	1.00												
5 SDG 3	0.10	0.30	0.16	0.74	0.48	0.52	1.00											
6 SDG 4	0.09	0.28	0.17	0.67	0.52	0.49	0.62	1.00										
7 SDG 6	0.08	0.27	0.15	0.55	0.42	0.53	0.63	0.55	1.00									
8 SDG 7	0.09	0.29	0.14	0.67	0.48	0.45	0.63	0.61	0.64	1.00								
9 SDG 8	0.12	0.33	0.19	0.78	0.54	0.52	0.74	0.72	0.64	0.73	1.00							
10 SDG 9	0.08	0.27	0.16	0.59	0.40	0.35	0.59	0.59	0.53	0.62	0.67	1.00						
11 SDG 10	0.07	0.26	0.15	0.68	0.58	0.48	0.57	0.64	0.47	0.58	0.69	0.58	1.00					
12 SDG 11	0.07	0.26	0.13	0.61	0.49	0.38	0.56	0.54	0.49	0.64	0.64	0.59	0.58	1.00				
13 SDG 12	0.11	0.31	0.17	0.73	0.47	0.51	0.72	0.67	0.69	0.70	0.79	0.62	0.64	0.60	1.00			
14 SDG 13	0.13	0.34	0.20	0.78	0.49	0.52	0.76	0.67	0.65	0.73	0.86	0.67	0.67	0.65	0.77	1.00		
15 SDG 14	0.04	0.19	0.13	0.39	0.47	0.45	0.46	0.44	0.54	0.50	0.46	0.41	0.40	0.42	0.48	0.49	1.00	
16 SDG 15	0.06	0.24	0.13	0.52	0.52	0.57	0.56	0.53	0.59	0.58	0.61	0.46	0.49	0.54	0.58	0.60	0.64	1.00
17 SDG 16	0.05	0.22	0.12	0.55	0.50	0.41	0.58	0.53	0.50	0.58	0.59	0.56	0.55	0.56	0.57	0.56	0.52	0.48
18 SDG 17	0.06	0.24	0.15	0.63	0.50	0.52	0.57	0.56	0.52	0.59	0.63	0.57	0.54	0.49	0.63	0.59	0.45	0.50
19 Firm Size	9.91	1.43	0.36	0.15	0.11	0.07	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.16	0.14	0.11	0.13	0.13	0.11	0.15	0.10	0.07
20 ROA	0.14	0.08	0.02	-0.10	-0.08	-0.07	-0.09	-0.07	-0.08	-0.11	-0.09	-0.09	-0.09	-0.12	-0.06	-0.10	-0.09	-0.05
21 Leverage	0.30	0.19	0.13	0.08	0.04	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.11	0.09	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.11	0.08	0.10	0.12
22 Tobin's Q	2.74	2.00	-0.10	-0.03	-0.02	-0.03	-0.03	-0.02	-0.05	-0.06	-0.02	-0.02	-0.03	-0.05	-0.02	-0.05	-0.06	-0.02
23 Expenditure	0.03	0.03	-0.06	-0.06	-0.05	-0.04	-0.03	-0.04	0.00	-0.02	-0.05	-0.01	-0.07	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03	0.01	0.01
24 Board Diversity	23.35	9.25	0.29	0.24	0.16	0.13	0.20	0.20	0.16	0.18	0.21	0.14	0.19	0.17	0.20	0.23	0.11	0.14
25 Board Size	10.89	2.18	0.27	0.07	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.07	0.05	0.05
26 Board Tenure	9.06	3.36	-0.16	-0.05	-0.07	-0.06	-0.04	-0.07	-0.07	-0.06	-0.09	-0.07	-0.06	-0.05	-0.06	-0.07	-0.04	-0.04
27 Committee	0.18	0.38	0.19	0.07	0.04	0.11	0.05	0.04	0.12	0.09	0.08	0.06	0.03	0.06	0.08	0.10	0.11	0.13
28 CSO Presence	0.25	0.43	0.26	-0.01	0.01	0.05	-0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.02	-0.03	-0.02	-0.03	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.01
29 Compact	0.17	0.37	0.30	0.16	0.06	0.12	0.15	0.12	0.19	0.12	0.16	0.10	0.11	0.07	0.15	0.16	0.11	0.14
30 Controversies	83.12	29.96	-0.24	-0.14	-0.11	-0.12	-0.12	-0.10	-0.12	-0.14	-0.13	-0.08	-0.13	-0.12	-0.12	-0.15	-0.12	-0.10
31 Diversity Policy	0.97	0.17	0.31	0.31	0.14	0.20	0.20	0.22	0.22	0.20	0.22	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.23	0.26	0.16	0.16
32 Targets	14.42	33.73	0.31	0.31	0.14	0.17	0.18	0.22	0.22	0.20	0.22	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.23	0.26	0.16	0.16
33 Arrangements	34.94	41.93	0.41	0.23	0.12	0.13	0.18	0.17	0.14	0.13	0.18	0.12	0.16	0.15	0.16	0.18	0.09	0.15
34 Daycare	26.82	41.68	0.41	0.22	0.09	0.10	0.12	0.16	0.08	0.11	0.14	0.10	0.17	0.09	0.13	0.12	0.05	0.07
35 Representation	28.10	13.45	0.31	0.12	0.08	0.06	0.10	0.07	0.03	0.08	0.06	-0.01	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.07	0.03	0.07

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlations (Cont.)

	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
13 SDG 12																			
14 SDG 13																			
15 SDG 14																			
16 SDG 15																			
17 SDG 16	1.00																		
18 SDG 17	0.56	1.00																	
19 Firm Size	0.10	0.13	1.00																
20 ROA	-0.09	-0.08	-0.42	1.00															
21 Leverage	0.02	0.05	-0.09	0.18	1.00														
22 Tobin's Q	-0.02	-0.04	-0.50	0.55	0.02	1.00													
23 Expenditure	-0.02	-0.05	-0.12	0.26	0.11	0.13	1.00												
24 Board Diversity	0.13	0.18	0.25	-0.08	0.03	-0.01	-0.09	1.00											
25 Board Size	0.03	0.07	0.53	-0.16	0.01	-0.25	-0.10	0.17	1.00										
26 Board Tenure	-0.03	-0.05	-0.13	0.18	-0.09	0.13	-0.01	-0.14	-0.05	1.00									
27 Committee	0.05	0.07	0.23	-0.14	0.07	-0.19	0.07	0.15	0.21	-0.07	1.00								
28 CSO Presence	-0.02	0.03	0.24	-0.06	0.04	-0.14	0.04	0.09	0.18	-0.11	0.15	1.00							
29 Compact	0.11	0.18	0.12	0.00	0.07	-0.04	-0.05	0.16	0.18	-0.09	0.14	0.14	1.00						
30 Controversies	-0.11	-0.14	-0.46	0.10	-0.05	0.07	-0.04	-0.18	-0.23	0.13	-0.13	-0.14	-0.12	1.00					
31 Diversity Policy	0.04	0.04	0.10	0.02	-0.03	-0.07	-0.01	0.07	0.09	-0.06	0.07	0.05	0.07	-0.04	1.00				
32 Targets	0.13	0.19	0.16	0.01	0.07	-0.01	0.03	0.24	0.15	-0.08	0.12	0.02	0.19	-0.15	0.08	1.00			
33 Arrangements	0.12	0.15	0.33	-0.10	0.00	-0.09	-0.07	0.24	0.23	-0.14	0.15	0.08	0.20	-0.21	0.13	0.24	1.00		
34 Daycare	0.06	0.11	0.32	0.04	0.04	0.02	-0.11	0.22	0.21	-0.06	0.11	0.13	0.14	-0.23	0.11	0.21	0.42	1.00	
35 Representation	0.04	0.09	0.14	0.05	0.01	0.10	-0.14	0.40	0.18	-0.16	0.05	0.18	0.19	-0.11	0.19	0.15	0.24	0.27	1.00

Note: SD = standard deviation; Performance = MNEs' social performance; SDG = Sustainable Development Goal; SDG 5 = symbolic support for Sustainable Development Goal 5; ROA = return on assets; Expenditure = capital expenditure; Board Diversity = board gender diversity; Committee = sustainability committee; CSO = Chief Sustainability Officer; Compact = Global Compact Signatory; Controversies = environmental, social, and governance controversies; Targets = diversity targets; Arrangements = flexible arrangements; Daycare = daycare services; Representation = women's representation

Table 2

SDG 5, Diversity Targets, and Social Performance

Variables	Model 1 Diversity Targets	Model 2 Social Performance (t+1)	Model 3 Diversity Targets	Model 4 Social Performance (t+1)	Model 5 Diversity Targets
SDG 5	12.037*		12.037*	1.529	7.763
	(6.799)		(6.439)	(2.089)	(11.027)
Diversity Targets		0.040**		0.039**	
		(0.017)		(0.016)	
Women's Representation					0.536**
					(0.175)
SDG 5 × Women's Representation					1.004**
					(0.419)
Firm Size	2.623+	4.399**	2.623*	4.399**	-0.567
	(1.660)	(0.837)	(1.572)	(0.787)	(1.780)
ROA	43.248**	23.859*	43.248**	23.894*	79.705**
	(17.323)	(12.629)	(16.406)	(11.862)	(24.213)
Leverage	-3.569	2.919	-3.569	2.866	-3.877
	(7.483)	(4.820)	(7.087)	(4.540)	(11.096)
Tobin's Q	0.067	0.149	0.067	0.151	0.508
	(1.095)	(0.511)	(1.037)	(0.480)	(0.926)
Capital Expenditure	115.298**	-39.035+	115.298**	-39.160+	59.345+
	(44.461)	(25.802)	(42.108)	(24.270)	(39.404)
Board Gender Diversity	0.492**	0.135*	0.492**	0.136*	0.511**
	(0.158)	(0.080)	(0.149)	(0.075)	(0.153)
Board Size	1.645**	1.287**	1.645**	1.286**	0.532
	(0.623)	(0.330)	(0.590)	(0.310)	(0.783)
Board Tenure	0.074	-0.543**	0.074	-0.544**	-0.058
	(0.378)	(0.213)	(0.358)	(0.200)	(0.406)
Global Compact Signatory	0.421	3.959*	0.421	3.962*	14.010**
	(3.637)	(2.023)	(3.444)	(1.897)	(5.740)
ESG Controversies	-3.200	2.922*	-3.200	2.922*	-4.368+
	(3.059)	(1.508)	(2.897)	(1.414)	(3.066)
Sustainability Committee	6.472+	9.701**	6.472*	9.685**	3.563
	(4.100)	(1.694)	(3.883)	(1.594)	(4.178)
CSO Presence	-0.052+	-0.009	-0.052+	-0.009	-0.083*
	(0.037)	(0.018)	(0.035)	(0.017)	(0.046)
Diversity Policy	2.983	14.730**	2.983	14.731**	-6.327
	(3.316)	(3.053)	(3.141)	(2.866)	(6.402)
SDGs 1-4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SDGS 6-17	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Estimation Method	OLS	OLS	GSEM	GSEM	OLS
Observations	1,922	1,650	1,922	1,650	825
R-squared	0.430	0.638	N/A	N/A	0.601
Industry FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Standard errors are in parentheses and adjusted for within-firm clustering. Coefficients in this table are unstandardized beta weights. SDG 5 = symbolic support for Sustainable Development Goal 5; SDGs 1-4 represent the inclusion of control variables of support for SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, and SDG 4; SDGs 6-17 denotes the inclusion of SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15, SDG 16, and SDG 17.

Table 3

Diversity Targets, Provision of Work-life Balance Practices, and Social Performance

Variables	Model 1 Flexible Arrangements	Model 2 Daycare Services	Model 3 Flexible Arrangements	Model 4 Social Performance (t+1)	Model 5 Daycare Services	Model 6 Social Performance (t+1)
Diversity Targets	0.173**	0.157**	0.178**	0.023+	0.161**	0.030*
	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.047)	(0.015)	(0.048)	(0.016)
Flexible Arrangements				0.102**		
				(0.017)		
Daycare Services						0.063**
						(0.018)
Firm Size	7.060**	7.069**	7.069**	3.582**	7.073**	3.941**
	(2.215)	(2.261)	(2.099)	(0.759)	(2.151)	(0.784)
ROA	12.475	80.254**	12.206	22.989*	80.101**	18.881+
	(26.732)	(26.058)	(25.465)	(11.665)	(24.662)	(12.385)
Leverage	12.828	-3.987	13.356+	1.530	-3.544	2.995
	(10.806)	(12.751)	(10.291)	(4.237)	(12.057)	(4.470)
Tobin's Q	0.160	1.540+	0.145	0.112	1.528+	0.050
	(1.169)	(1.180)	(1.106)	(0.508)	(1.117)	(0.504)
Capital Expenditure	1.214	-189.514**	1.444	-39.879*	-189.752**	-26.631
	(59.251)	(59.997)	(56.062)	(23.805)	(56.943)	(24.810)
Board Gender Diversity	0.145	0.268+	0.147	0.125*	0.271+	0.113+
	(0.176)	(0.179)	(0.167)	(0.069)	(0.170)	(0.073)
Board Size	1.697*	0.839	1.698*	1.130**	0.840	1.240**
	(0.917)	(0.839)	(0.873)	(0.292)	(0.797)	(0.299)
Board Tenure	-0.942*	0.231	-0.930*	-0.464**	0.240	-0.559**
	(0.542)	(0.539)	(0.512)	(0.190)	(0.511)	(0.201)
Global Compact Signatory	14.049**	13.745**	14.216**	2.326+	13.874**	3.024+
	(5.141)	(4.800)	(4.891)	(1.762)	(4.557)	(1.927)
ESG Controversies	0.296	4.809+	0.347	2.986*	4.854+	2.680*
	(3.842)	(3.613)	(3.655)	(1.335)	(3.425)	(1.404)
Sustainability Committee	8.484*	11.627*	8.566*	8.645**	11.689**	8.973**
	(4.676)	(4.985)	(4.448)	(1.477)	(4.723)	(1.538)
CSO Presence	0.040	-0.008	0.041	-0.013	-0.008	-0.009
	(0.051)	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.015)	(0.045)	(0.016)
Diversity Policy	20.541**	8.344*	20.457**	12.685**	8.255*	14.217**
	(6.432)	(5.048)	(6.080)	(2.871)	(4.783)	(2.912)
SDGs 1-4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SDGS 6-17	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Industry Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Estimation Method	OLS	OLS	GSEM	GSEM	GSEM	GSEM
Observations	1,922	1,898	1,922	1,922	1,898	1,898
R-squared	0.472	0.497	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Notes: + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Standard errors are in parentheses and adjusted for within-firm clustering. Coefficients in this table are unstandardized beta weights. SDGs 1-4 represent the inclusion of control variables of support for SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, and SDG 4; SDGs 6-17 denotes the inclusion of SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15, SDG 16, and SDG 17.

Table 4

SDG 5, Flexible Arrangements, and Social Performance

Variables	Model 1 Flexible Arrangements	Model 2 Social Performance (t+1)	Model 3 Flexible Arrangements	Model 4 Social Performance (t+1)	Model 5 Flexible Arrangements
SDG 5	14.653*		14.653*	0.375	2.593
	(6.903)		(6.544)	(1.971)	(8.380)
Flexible Arrangements		0.104**		0.104**	
		(0.018)		(0.017)	
Women's Representation					0.706**
					(0.297)
SDG 5 × Women's Representation					0.712*
					(0.311)
Firm Size	6.944**	3.691**	6.944**	3.691**	3.091
	(2.130)	(0.810)	(2.019)	(0.761)	(2.782)
ROA	22.643	24.678*	22.643	24.684*	33.655
	(24.614)	(12.606)	(23.331)	(11.843)	(34.960)
Leverage	11.102	1.462	11.102	1.451	11.467
	(10.861)	(4.551)	(10.295)	(4.285)	(14.032)
Tobin's Q	-0.287	0.105	-0.287	0.105	-2.441+
	(1.117)	(0.551)	(1.058)	(0.518)	(1.526)
Capital Expenditure	27.495	-37.785+	27.495	-37.825+	101.967+
	(58.044)	(25.373)	(55.019)	(23.847)	(62.631)
Board Gender Diversity	0.244+	0.136*	0.244+	0.136*	0.379*
	(0.173)	(0.074)	(0.164)	(0.069)	(0.209)
Board Size	1.993*	1.152**	1.993*	1.152**	-0.985
	(0.922)	(0.313)	(0.874)	(0.294)	(0.979)
Board Tenure	-0.821+	-0.456*	-0.821+	-0.457**	0.145
	(0.542)	(0.203)	(0.514)	(0.191)	(0.870)
Global Compact Signatory	14.040**	2.271	14.040**	2.273	11.580+
	(5.143)	(1.897)	(4.875)	(1.781)	(8.260)
ESG Controversies	-0.260	2.817*	-0.260	2.817*	-1.840
	(3.938)	(1.413)	(3.733)	(1.327)	(4.887)
Sustainability Committee	10.719*	8.669**	10.719**	8.666**	14.344**
	(4.784)	(1.584)	(4.535)	(1.492)	(5.424)
CSO Presence	0.026	-0.013	0.026	-0.013	-0.012
	(0.051)	(0.016)	(0.048)	(0.015)	(0.058)
Diversity Policy	20.702**	12.651**	20.702**	12.653**	9.858
	(6.317)	(3.053)	(5.988)	(2.868)	(11.012)
SDGs 1-4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SDGS 6-17	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Estimation Method	OLS	OLS	GSEM	GSEM	OLS
Observations	1,981	1,651	1,981	1,651	863
R-squared	0.452	0.664	N/A	N/A	0.617
Industry FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Standard errors are in parentheses and adjusted for within-firm clustering. Coefficients in this table are unstandardized beta weights. SDG 5 = symbolic support for Sustainable Development Goal 5; SDGs 1-4 represent the inclusion of control variables of support for SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, and SDG 4; SDGs 6- 17 denotes the inclusion of SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15, SDG 16, and SDG 17.

Table 5

SDG 5, Daycare Services, and Social Performance

Variables	Model 1 Daycare Services	Model 2 Social Performance (t+1)	Model 3 Daycare Services	Model 4 Social Performance (t+1)	Model 5 Daycare Services
SDG 5	13.323*		13.323*	0.787	2.769
	(6.407)		(6.068)	(2.012)	(7.942)
Daycare Services		0.066**		0.066**	
		(0.019)		(0.018)	
Women's Representation					0.174
					(0.357)
SDG 5 × Women's Representation					0.469
					(0.419)
Firm Size	7.277**	4.051**	7.277**	4.051**	8.120**
	(2.206)	(0.836)	(2.090)	(0.786)	(3.107)
ROA	84.083**	19.690+	84.083**	19.717+	73.922*
	(25.820)	(13.430)	(24.455)	(12.619)	(36.316)
Leverage	-5.172	2.884	-5.172	2.857	28.587+
	(13.034)	(4.802)	(12.345)	(4.519)	(21.354)
Tobin's Q	1.569+	0.066	1.569+	0.067	0.417
	(1.121)	(0.556)	(1.062)	(0.523)	(1.479)
Capital Expenditure	-172.944**	-22.531	-172.944**	-22.657	-74.448+
	(60.642)	(26.552)	(57.436)	(24.967)	(55.470)
Board Gender Diversity	0.324*	0.127+	0.324*	0.128*	0.104
	(0.175)	(0.079)	(0.166)	(0.074)	(0.271)
Board Size	1.032	1.281**	1.032	1.280**	-1.811+
	(0.853)	(0.319)	(0.808)	(0.300)	(1.285)
Board Tenure	0.220	-0.557**	0.220	-0.557**	1.647*
	(0.540)	(0.215)	(0.511)	(0.202)	(0.915)
Global Compact Signatory	13.958**	3.017+	13.958**	3.021+	7.310
	(4.827)	(2.057)	(4.572)	(1.930)	(9.521)
ESG Controversies	4.296	2.495*	4.296	2.497*	3.160
	(3.670)	(1.482)	(3.476)	(1.392)	(6.510)
Sustainability Committee	12.441**	9.039**	12.441**	9.033**	16.141*
	(5.140)	(1.652)	(4.868)	(1.553)	(7.771)
CSO Presence	-0.018	-0.009	-0.018	-0.009	-0.092*
	(0.048)	(0.017)	(0.045)	(0.016)	(0.051)
Diversity Policy	9.121*	14.244**	9.121*	14.245**	4.230
	(4.996)	(3.095)	(4.732)	(2.906)	(11.332)
SDGs 1-4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SDGS 6-17	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Estimation Method	OLS	OLS	GSEM	GSEM	OLS
Observations	1,905	1,650	1,905	1,650	829
R-squared	0.487	0.646	N/A	N/A	0.632
Industry FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Standard errors are in parentheses and adjusted for within-firm clustering. Coefficients in this table Are unstandardized beta weights. SDG 5 = symbolic support for Sustainable Development Goal 5; SDGs 1-4 represent the inclusion of control variables of support for SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, and SDG 4; SDGs 6- 17 denotes the inclusion of SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15, SDG 16, and SDG 17.

Figure 1

Hypothesized Relationships

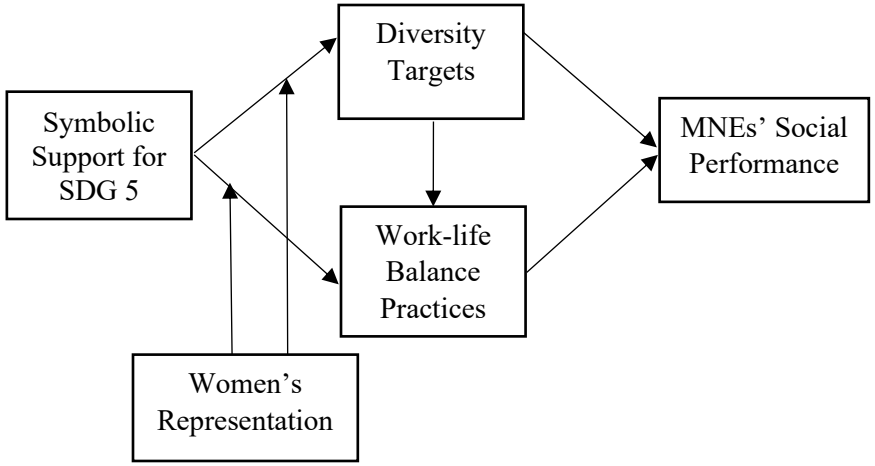

Figure 2

Moderating Effect of Women's Representation on Symbolic Support for SDG 5 and Diversity Targets

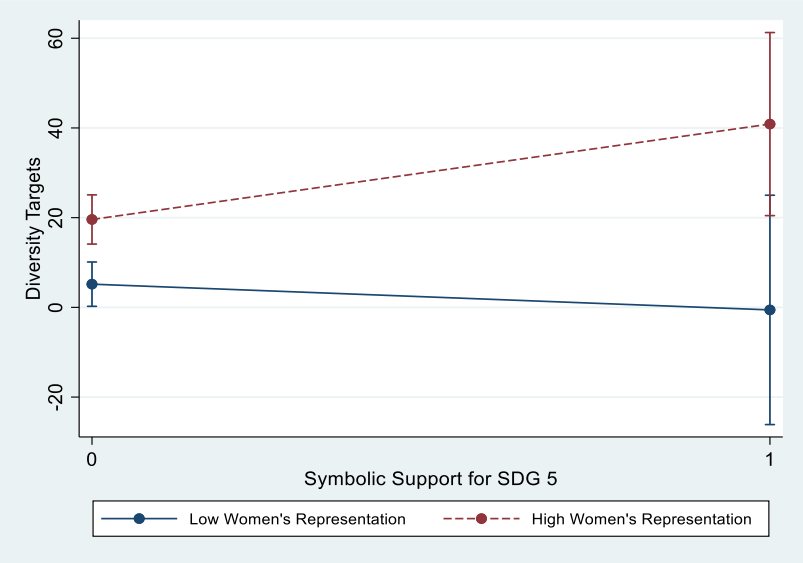

Figure 3

Moderating Effect of Women's Representation on Symbolic Support for SDG 5 and Flexible Arrangements