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Bibliometric review of social value in construction literature

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2024-07

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/41376

Laryea, Kwasafo and Mensah. (2024). Bibliometric review of social value in construction literature In: Laryea, S. et al. (Eds) Proceedings of the WABER SuDBE Conference, 30 to 31 July 2024, Johannesburg, South Africa 1009-1020.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE WABER SuDBE CONFERENCE 2024

30 – 31 July 2024
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa

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ISBN: 978-0-7961-6032-4



In collaboration with:

Proceedings of the WABER SuDBE 2024 Conference

30th – 31st July 2024

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

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ISBN: 978-0-7961-6032-4 (e-book)

The ISBN for this publication was provided by the National Library of South Africa. Legal deposits of the publication have been supplied to the National Library of South Africa, Library of Parliament, and other places of Legal Deposit.

First published in July 2024

Published by:
WABER SuDBE Conference 2024
C/o Professor Samuel Laryea, Conference chair
School of Construction Economics and Management
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Declaration

All papers in this publication have been through a review process involving a review of abstracts, peer review of full papers by at least two referees, reporting of comments to authors, revision of papers by authors and re-evaluation of the revised papers to ensure quality of content.

WABER SuDBE Conference 2024
30 – 31 July 2024
Johannesburg, South Africa
ISBN: 978-0-7961-6032-4

BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW OF SOCIAL VALUE IN CONSTRUCTION LITERATURE

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The construction industry plays a leading role in the provision of infrastructure projects that promote not only the primary objectives for which a project is intended but also the secondary objectives which relate to wider socio-economic development and social value aspects, as shown in the International Organization for Standardization (ISO 10845…2022) 10845 family of standards for construction procurement. While most papers in the construction literature have focused on the primary objectives of infrastructure projects such as costs, time, and quality, relatively little attention has been focused on the secondary objective aspects like economic, environmental, and social sustainability objectives. There has been an increasing focus on the social value aspects of infrastructure projects in recent years. This trend seems likely to increase and directions for future research can be generated from examining the current literature. This paper examines 78 articles relating to social value in construction to explore current understanding and key emerging themes in this area. The 78 articles were identified through a systematic search in Scopus and Google Scholar, then analysed using temporal co-word analysis to generate four key bibliometric themes: social sustainability, social procurement, social value, and employment. Two preliminary conclusions are presented from the bibliometric review. First, while using the 'social value' terminology may show this as a relatively new concept flowing from the social sustainability discourse, earlier studies and practices in this area precede the 'social value' terminology and appropriate linkages to earlier knowledge should be properly established. Secondly, different terminologies are used to refer to the same concept, creating duplication and significant overlaps across the different terminologies. It would be necessary to consolidate and align the various terminologies for consistency.

Keywords: bibliometric review, construction procurement, socio-economic development, social procurement, social value

INTRODUCTION

Social value (SV) is a complex term without a universally accepted definition (Choi et al., 2014). It is a subjective and intricate concept, involving addressing social, economic, and environmental issues (Loosemore, 2015, 2016). According to the UK's Social Value Acts of 2012, social value refers to the extra benefits that communities receive from commissioning or procurement processes. Social value, as defined by Social Enterprise UK (2012), refers to a framework that considers allocating and exploiting scarce resources. Within the construction business, social value (SV) refers to the beneficial impact of construction activities on the community's well-being (Loosemore and Higgon, 2015). However, no universally accepted

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method or established set of standards for measuring SV exists. To generate social value (SV), enterprises should carefully assess how their operations might enhance the welfare of the communities in which they are situated. Most research articles emphasize the importance of SV measurement, but this is not explicitly stated in government publications. This may be due to empirical research and growing recognition of quantifying the societal consequences of an organization's activities.

SV has also been created through indigenous procurement policies (IPPs) that leverage the purchasing power of construction to address indigenous exclusion (Denny-Smith et al., 2024; Raiden and King, 2023). However, the understanding of the social value of IPPs has relied solely on economic indicators, excluding the involvement of indigenous people. Value has historically been defined as the customer's sense of contentment or quality with a good or service they have gotten (Daniel and Pasquire, 2019). Sweeney and Geoffrey (2001) categorized value into three main categories: social, emotional, and functional. Evidence supports the construction industry's focus on generating functional value through its operations, but less data suggests consideration of emotional and social value (SV) (Arroyo and Gonzalez, 2016). However, recent demands have driven various industries, like the construction sector, towards delivering social value (SV) (Denny-Smith et al., 2024; Arroyo and Gonzalez, 2016). This push is likely due to the construction industry's significant impact on individuals' and communities' social, economic, and environmental well-being.

This study aims to explore the current understanding of SV and identify key emerging themes of SV in construction literature. These specific objectives guided the study;

i) To explore the current understanding of SV in construction.
ii) To identify key emerging themes on SV in construction literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The construction industry is facing growing pressure to effectively implement social value (SV) in its operations, as mandated by the Social Value Act of 2012. Given the evident influence of building activities on the local economy, community, and environment, it is not surprising to see this outcome. However, the sector does not appear to prioritize addressing these issues when carrying out construction activities. According to Loosemore et al. (2021), the primary emphasis of a building project should be on fulfilling the client's demands and generating profits for the corporation, without considering the provision of social benefits to a broader society. Furthermore, they observed that the building industry emphasises the outcome rather than the techniques employed. Embracing this antiquated viewpoint will not aid in integrating social value into construction projects. Generating highly influential social value originates from the methods involved, rather than the outcome. Farag et al. (2016) and Loosemore et al. (2021) have highlighted the importance of considering the effects of construction activities on society as a whole and integrating the provision of social value into the construction project process. Porter and Kramer (2011) discovered that social value (SV) is mostly linked to philanthropic endeavours rather than a fundamental necessity for effectively executing a building project. As a result, building project organizations may still be hesitant to view SV delivery as an integral component of their primary duty in the project execution process.

However, social value (SV) is being integrated into construction projects in several countries, including the United Kingdom (Bridgeman et al., 2016; Burke and King, 2015; Loosemore and Barraket, 2017), Sweden (Petersen and Kadefors, 2016), and Australia (Denny-Smith and

Loosemore, 2017; Reid and Loosemore, 2017). Consult Table 1 to find the areas of implementation that various research projects have documented.

Table 1: Social value delivery in the context of construction projects

Construction projects social value initiative	Authors
Providing skills and training opportunities, such as apprenticeships	Burke and King (2015)
Engaging social enterprises	Loosemore and Barraket (2017)
Generating employment opportunities for the long-term unemployed	Petersen and Kadefors (2016)
Creating career advice and recruitment opportunities	Bridgeman et al. (2015, 2016)
Undertaking activities to address the needs of the local community (Reid and Loosemore, 2017)	Reid and Loosemore (2017)
Establishing job opportunities and career pathways for disadvantaged and minority groups	Bridgeman et al. (2016)
An approach focused on delivering services sustainably	Petersen and Kadefors (2016)
Considering the environment in procurement by prioritizing locals and local content usage	Petersen and Kadefors (2016)
Utilizing a socially-conscious procurement method and engaging in responsible supplier selection and management practices	Denny-Smith and Loosemore (2017)
Incorporating social value into construction project operations	Farag et al. (2016)

The construction industry is a primary target of these policies on a global scale because of its substantial labour force, ease of access, and capacity for societal transformation (Loosemore et al., 2020). Nevertheless, Barraket and Loosemore (2018) argue that the collaboration between different sectors and social enterprises faces challenges due to the conflicting goals of profit-making and social impact, as well as the rigid governance, management, leadership, and organizational structures within the industry, which hinder its capacity to address broader community needs. Although Petersen (2018) and Troje and Gluch (2019) have shed light on the overall institutional changes that may be necessary due to emerging social procurement policies, there is limited knowledge regarding the specific obstacles to employment that disadvantaged groups, who are the focus of these policies, encounter. The composition of these cohorts varies across different social procurement policy contexts, depending on the community's specific requirements and the government's priorities. For instance, in the United States, there has been a sustained emphasis on offering job opportunities and training programs for individuals with disabilities and other marginalized groups like migrants (McCrudden 2004). Conversely, countries such as Australia, Canada, and South Africa have prioritized long-term efforts towards supporting indigenous populations (as seen in the South African New Universities Case Study Close Out Report, 2017 and the Australian Indigenous Procurement Policy, 2015).

The landscape of social procurement policies is becoming increasingly complex. Australia has an intricate framework of federal, state, and municipal government programs designed to assist diverse marginalized populations. Nevertheless, this can result in perplexity and shortages in the building supply chain when it comes to fulfilling the progressively rigorous employment criteria. The Victorian social procurement framework, released by the Victoria State Government in 2018, mandates that all government departments and agencies in Victoria must take into account employment and job readiness goals for various marginalized groups. These groups include indigenous people, disabled people, women, long-term unemployed individuals, disengaged youth, single parents, migrants and refugees, and workers in transition. The construction industry, which lacks experience in this field, is facing a complicated and overlapping set of new employment requirements. This situation creates a potentially overwhelming situation, as the industry has a strong preconceived notion of what an ideal construction worker should be like. Additionally, the industry has traditionally viewed the community as a liability rather than a valuable resource. Ormerod and Newton (2013) highlight

that in the UK construction industry, there exists a stereotyped perception of the perfect construction worker as a physically strong, muscular, and able-bodied individual, typically assumed to be male. However, the consequences of not following mandatory policies in countries like Australia, Canada, and South Africa are substantial. Construction companies are required to show proof of meeting specific targets, and if they fail to do so, they may be removed from government agency tender lists. An example of such a policy is the Australian Indigenous Procurement Policy from 2015.

Globally, laws currently encourage SV creation in the built environment. Some examples of legislation are the Social Value (Public Services) Act 2012, the Inequality and Diversity Act 2010 in the UK, and the Sustainable Procurement Directive 2014 of the EU. Although there has been progress, the current comprehension and definition of Social Value (SV) is still unclear, particularly when carrying out building projects. SV, also known as shared value (SV) and corporate social responsibility (CSR), is sometimes referred to as such. Although Drevland and Lohne (2015) have criticized this narrow comprehension of SV, it is clear that the construction sector still lacks a comprehensive knowledge of the concept.

While the construction industry has always provided social value through its activities, Loosemore (2015) contends that the industry is in a favourable position to achieve social value targets through its activities. For instance, this sector is the most significant provider of employment globally, and as a result, it has the potential to generate employment opportunities in the local communities where it operates (Loosemore, 2016). However, the notion of SV (social value) has not yet received sufficient attention from scholars in construction management (Loosemore, 2015). Drevland and Lohne (2015) contend that a deficient understanding of the significance and associated notions, such as SV, may impede thorough deliberations and limit the effective application of these concepts. Recently, the social procurement technique has proven to be an effective method of generating value in building projects (Loosemore et al., 2021; Loosemore et al., 2020). Prior research has also examined and demonstrated connections between social procurement and sustainability practices (Ambe, 2019; Barraket and Loosemore, 2018; Hawkins and Wells, 2006). Nevertheless, there have been very few studies that have thoroughly investigated the social procurement strategy as a method of generating "social value" in the construction industry. Furthermore, the construction management literature has limited debate on social value (SV), as noted by Loosemore (2015). Recent reports by Denny-Smith et al. (2024), Raiden and King (2023), and the Social Value Act Review (2015) indicate that understanding of SV remains low. The main research question is: What is the present comprehension of SV and the key emerging themes of SV in construction literature?

RESEARCH METHOD

Article selection (data sources)

A two-stage article search was conducted using Scopus and Google Scholar. According to researchers like Hallinger and Kovacevic (2019); and Mongeon and Paul-Hus (2016), Empirical research indicates that Scopus provides a broader range of sources compared to the Web of Science, particularly in fields beyond medicine and the physical sciences. The analysis encompassed various document formats, including journal articles, books, book chapters, and conference papers. The lack of a specified start date for the search allows the engine to retrieve the oldest literature publications. Relevant terms and combinations of terms were used in the search.

The set of search strings applied to verify the title, abstract, and keywords of the papers collected from the Scopus database is: (Search string: (TITLE-ABS-KEY "Social Value in Construction" OR "Social Procurement in Construction")) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Construction" OR "Social Value" OR "Social Value Theory") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Social Procurement" OR "Value in Construction Procurement") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Construction Procurement" AND "Social Value") AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")). The initial search on Scopus yielded seventy-two (72) documents published from 2014 to 2024. No Scopus subject filters were applied, as all documents from the database were useful after scanning the list according to their subject importance. Further examination of the documents confirmed their relevance to assessing social value in the building industry.

The search results indicated a lack of substantial documentation on SV in the database. This demonstrates that the concept of SV is still developing and gaining recognition in the field of construction management literature (Loosemore et al., 2021; Loosemore, 2015). Consequently, the search was expanded to encompass government records and technical reports on SV. This was conducted to get a comprehensive comprehension of the ongoing discourse around SV and to guarantee that no pertinent resources were overlooked. To draw insights and understand what had been done concerning SV in earlier studies before 2014, a further search was purposively conducted on Google Scholar using keywords like “social value in construction” or “social procurement in construction” or “social value” and six (6) articles were selected for review. A total of seventy-eight (78) studies from Scopus and Google Scholar were reviewed.

Data analysis

This review analyzed bibliographic data describing the characteristics of seventy-eight documents. The metadata included details such as author names, document titles, publication dates, author keywords, author affiliations, and comprehensive citation information. A trend analysis of the literature on social value in construction was conducted using descriptive statistics.

To examine and summarize knowledge generation patterns in this literature, bibliometric analyses were performed using the VOSviewer tool. The second research objective utilized keyword co-occurrence analysis, also known as co-word analysis, within VOSviewer. According to Van Eck and Waltman (2014), keyword co-occurrence refers to how frequently two terms appear together in the title, abstract, or keyword list of publications within the review database. Co-word analysis is a method used to visually represent the connections between terms that often appear together in literature. This method allows for the identification of common topics. (Zupic and Cater, 2015). This review employed temporal co-word analysis to determine the dominant subjects in the current literature. It is important to mention that co-occurrences or co-word analysis in VOSviewer only examines the bibliographic information of documents, such as the title, abstract, and keyword list. It does not capture the main content of the documents.

Nonetheless, a comparative analysis was done to ascertain how social value was treated across the articles, noting any similarities, differences, or contradictions in how it is defined, measured, or integrated into construction practices to help generate further insights into the key emerging themes and current understanding of social value in construction.

DATA PRESENTATION

Descriptive trends and data on SV in the construction knowledge base

The publications released in recent years constitute an expanding repository of knowledge on social value in the building industry. Among the selected publications (see Appendix I for reference details), the earliest document was published in 1996 and the newest document was published in 2024. Interest in 'social value' in the construction industry emerged slowly in 2014 but picked up pace with publications in 2020. The literature in question experienced a significant surge, with 68% of it published within the timeframe of 2019 to 2023, indicating its rapid emergence (see Fig. 1).

Table 2: Information on the data and document types

Document Type	No. of document	Average citations per doc.
Article	47	14.36
Book	5	6
Book chapter	5	2.33
Conference paper	18	6.27
Review	3	0

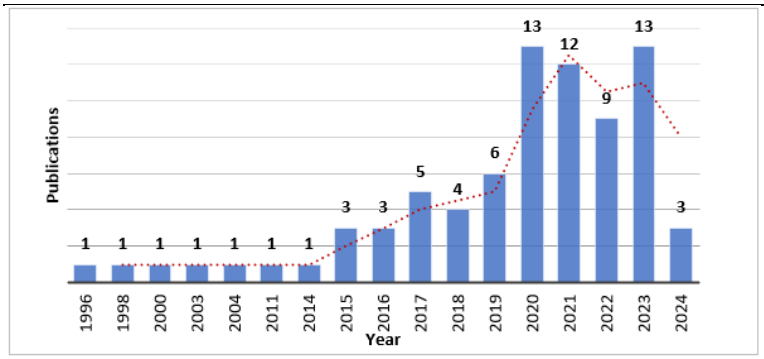

Figure. 1: Distribution of selected publications of SV in Construction

Table 2 presents the information on the data and document types selected spread across SV in construction. The data indicates the number of documents, document types and average citations per type. The statistics show that seventy-eight journal articles, books and other publications were used as data sources. Each document category has an average citation as follows, Article 14.36, Book 6, Book Chapter 2.33 and Conference Paper 6.27 per document.

BIBLIOMETRIC (CO-OCCURRENCE) ANALYSIS

Topical trends on SV in the Construction knowledge base

The conclusions obtained from the descriptive analysis were further strengthened by the application of topical analysis. "A co-word map was created using VOSviewer by setting a threshold of 1 for keyword co-occurrence" (refer to Figure 2). We compiled the terms from each cluster to determine the main themes found in the literature. The map depicted in Figure 2 illustrates two primary concepts: Social Procurement and Social Value. Other observed themes are social impact, social sustainability, and corporate social responsibility. Earlier themes of SV in construction were mostly on the concepts of targeted procurement and preferential procurement which is evident in the works of researchers like Ron Watermeyer (2003; 2000), Watermeyer et al. (1998), Eadie et al. (2011), McCrudden (2004), and Bates and Williams (1996). These at the time were concepts that dealt with the social aspects of procurement and social value delivery in infrastructure projects.

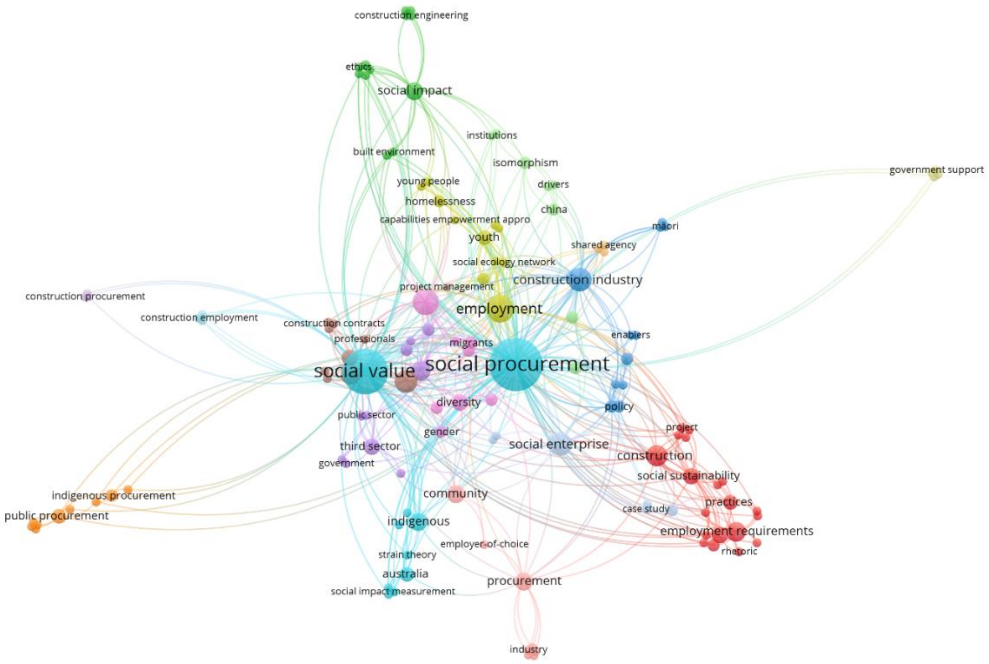

Figure 2: Mapping of keyword co-occurrence (co-word) analysis (Keyword threshold = 1; display 135 keywords)[4]

Figure 3 introduced a time aspect to the co-word map shown in Figure 2 during the final analysis. The temporal overlay establishes a connection between keywords and the precise publication date of the corresponding texts. Temporal co-word analysis accurately determines the specific period during which certain themes were most dominant, as demonstrated by Zupic and Cater in 2015. Therefore, by examining the problems concerning colour or hue, we may observe the progression of societal significance in the creation of literature in modern times. The nodes that are darker in colour represent concerns prominent in earlier literature, whereas the lighter colours indicate topics that have been more recently emphasized. The temporal co-word map indicates that the present body of literature is concentrated on two distinct themes. (See Figure 3). The forefront of social value (SV) in construction literature is emphasized through light-shaded yellow nodes, focusing on issues such as social sustainability, employment, added value, and shared agency. The temporal co-word map reveals additional prominent issues by the presence of numerous green/lighter-shade nodes. Among these, social procurement and social value emerge as noteworthy topics, indicating an increasing emphasis on these subjects in recent studies. As a result, the key emerging trends found are increasing focus of research topics on social sustainability, social procurement, and social value; the increasing potential of social procurement in achieving social value; and increasing concerns on social sustainability.

[4] Note: The node size reflects the frequency of occurrence, while the proximity of nodes is determined by the patterns of their co-occurrence in the review documents. Clustering by colour is based on the patterns of co-occurrence among multiple keywords in the review documents.

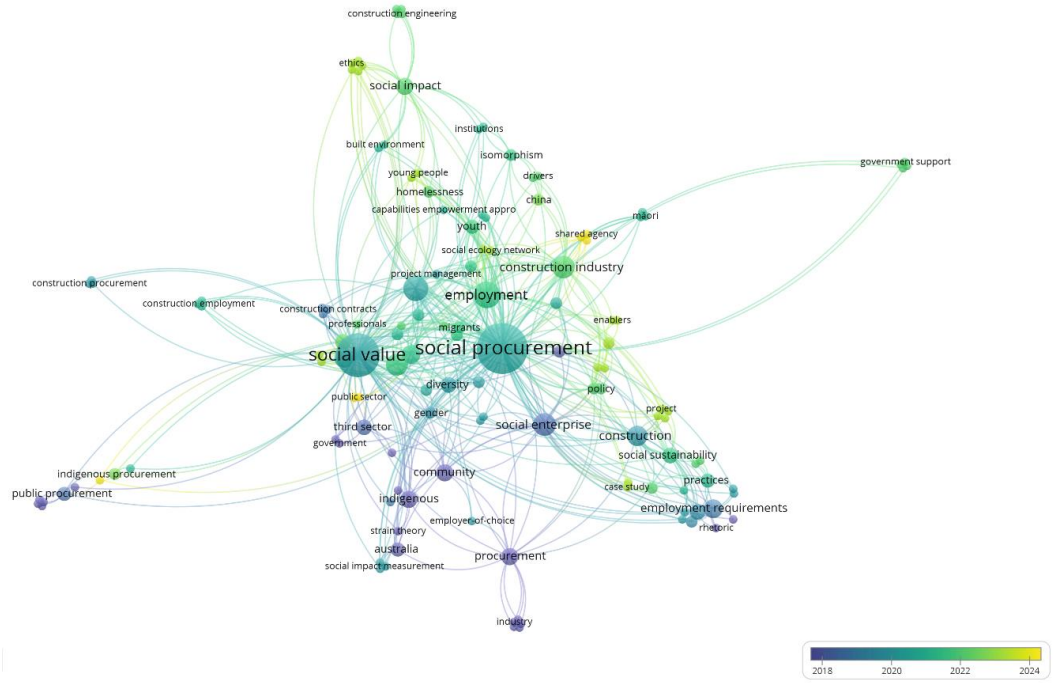

Figure 3: Temporal overlay on keyword co-occurrence map (keyword threshold = 1; display 135 keywords)[5]

RESULTS

This paper aims to explore the current understanding of SV and identify key emerging themes of SV in construction literature.

Current understanding of SV in Construction

- SV emphasizes the importance of positively influencing community stakeholders and the physical environment, shifting from just cost-cutting to delivering satisfactory services, in construction projects, to ensuring community satisfaction (Denny-Smith et al., 2024).
- The notion of social value is difficult to define and lacks a universally acknowledged technique or standard criteria for measurement (Reid and Loosemore, 2017).
- There is significant overlap between the different terminologies used in the literature. It would be necessary to consolidate, establish and align the various terminologies around what is essentially the same concept.
- Following Freeman's (1984) integration theory, the creation of social value (SV) should not be approached as a separate endeavour from the generation of economic value. Instead, they should be amalgamated and treated as a cohesive system to exert influence on society at large.
- The limited dedication of construction businesses to the development of SV may have been motivated by Friedman's (1962) "separation theory."
- The argument for implementing social value does not solely rely on legislation and regulation. It also encompasses other factors, such as the economic viability, international interest, and market potential of social value. These elements have the

[5] Note: The frequency of occurrence is depicted by the size of a node, while the proximity of nodes is determined by their co-occurrence patterns in the review documents. Colour coding indicates the relative recency of a topic's occurrence in the review documents.

potential to benefit both private and public sectors, particularly construction organizations, by enhancing business efficiency (Barraket et al., 2016).

Key Themes of SV in Construction Literature

- The study reveals increasing research focus on social sustainability, social procurement, social value, and employment, indicating a growing emphasis on these themes in recent studies.
- The integration of SV into construction projects is increasingly recognized as a crucial aspect of societal impact.
- 'Social value' as a terminology seems like a relatively new concept flowing from the social sustainability discourse, but there are earlier studies and practices in this area that precede the 'social value' terminology.
- Earlier themes of SV in construction were mostly on targeted procurement and preferential procurement which is evident in the works of Ron Watermeyer (2003; 2000), Watermeyer et al. (1998), Eadie et al. (2011), McCrudden (2004), and Bates and Williams (1996). These at the time were concepts that dealt with the social aspects of procurement and social value delivery in infrastructure projects.
- The social procurement philosophy facilitates the fulfilment of SV objectives in executing construction activities. Construction enterprises may perceive the communities and physical surroundings in which they function as their clientele, and not just as individuals and locations (Loosemore et al., 2021).
- The focus of the construction industry is often on meeting client requirements and making a profit, rather than delivering social value (Loosemore et al., 2021).
- The traditional view in the industry prioritizes the outcome over the processes used, which hinders SV delivery (Loosemore et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH GAPS

Current understanding of SV in construction

The analysis revealed a lack of substantial discourse or investigation on the social procurement capacity to produce social value in the built environment. Nonetheless, it does contribute to the attainment of social value goals during the execution of construction projects. This approach allows construction firms to perceive communities and the surrounding environment of operation as their clients, and not just as individuals and locations (Denny-Smith et al., 2024; Raiden and King, 2023). This underscores their commitment to providing SV to local communities and the nearby environment surrounding the development projects. The building sector needs to exhibit a higher level of commitment to improving the whole society in light of the repercussions of its actions. The study provides evidence that supports the separation theory, as proposed by Friedman (1962), which successfully severs the link between shareholder value (SV) and economic value. As a result, businesses are less inclined to prioritize the delivery of shareholder value. Nevertheless, Freeman (1984) disputed this perspective in his comprehensive theory. Construction organizations should integrate the development of social value (SV) with economic value, rather than seeing them as separate operations. By delivering both as a system, they can have a broader impact on society. The investigation findings suggest that the delivery of SV is motivated by more than just regulation. It is also driven by the economic imperative, worldwide interest in SV, the possibility of making social investments, and the financial reason for providing SV (Barraket et al., 2016). This suggests that the dedication to providing SV in building activities or inside organizations is not a mere checklist task motivated by compliance. There are additional advantages, such as

the logical and practical reasons for implementing it. Although there is a growing focus on measuring social worth, particularly in the UK, the bibliometric analysis suggests that this approach has not yet gained traction in the academic literature (Raiden and King, 2023). The absence of a universally recognized technique or set of standards for quantifying social value (SV) in the field of construction leads to variations in how SV is measured or identified depending on the specific circumstances and target audience.

Key themes of SV in construction literature

Though the study reveals increasing research focus on social procurement, social sustainability, social value, and employment, indicating a growing emphasis on these themes in recent studies, more comprehensive research is needed to define frameworks, develop case studies, and increase scholarly interest in SV. Though the use of 'social value' as a terminology may seem like a relatively new concept flowing from the social sustainability discourse, there are earlier studies and practices in this area that precede the 'social value' terminology. Hence this is not a new area per se. Insights from earlier studies indicate that themes of SV in construction were mostly 'targeted procurement' and 'preferential procurement' which is evident in the works of Ron Watermeyer (2003; 2000), Watermeyer et al. (1998), Eadie et al. (2011), McCrudden (2004), and Bates and Williams (1996). These at the time were concepts that dealt with the social aspects of procurement and social value delivery in infrastructure projects.

Understanding stakeholders' barriers and enablers is crucial for maximizing social benefits through procurement practices. The research literature also indicates a limited understanding of SV and its extent in the construction research literature. Existing studies provide little comprehensive or robust empirical data on SV impacts (Denny-Smith et al., 2024; Loosemore et al., 2021). Addressing this gap requires mixed methods approaches that combine quantitative metrics with qualitative assessment to develop rich insights currently missing. Without more extensive exploration, the complexity and depth of SV will continue to be underestimated within construction research.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this investigation was to explore the present understanding of SV and identify key themes of SV in the literature. In conclusion, while the use of 'social value' as a terminology may present this as a relatively new concept flowing from the social sustainability discourse, there are earlier studies and practices in this area that precede the 'social value' terminology. Hence this is not a new area per se and appropriate linkages to earlier knowledge should be properly established. Also, there is significant overlap between the different terminologies used in the literature and it would be necessary to consolidate and establish and align the various terminologies around what is essentially the same concept. This work is grounded in a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, and the discoveries it presents can be used as a basis for future research. Based on this review, the key emerging themes found were: (a) the increasing focus of research topics on social sustainability, social procurement, social value, and employment; (b) and (c) increasing concerns about social sustainability. Finally, it is observed that there is; (a) limited awareness and scholarly articles; (b) a lack of discussion and exploration of the role of the social procurement approach in creating social value in the built environment; (c) Limited understanding of SV and its extent in the construction research literature. In response, potential research directions have been proposed to guide future research in SV in construction research. The study recommends obtaining empirical evidence on SV practice by way of future research and development in understanding and measuring social value in construction project delivery. Future research should also consider examining the impact of SV on project outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction as well

as investigating the potential of different strategies and methods to enhance SV delivery in construction projects. Future studies should also consider more comprehensive content or thematic analysis of the documents and not only bibliographic information.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the CIDB Centre of Excellence at Wits University in the development of this work.

APPENDICES

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Or127jCcuoMmI7gO4a_54NNHzTJwImPy?usp=sharing

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