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Uncovering Interdependence of Shared Value Dimensions – Insights from the Agri-Food Industry

Abstract: The study is founded on the concept of shared value creation defined by Porter and Kramer as policies and operational practices that enhance business competitiveness while simultaneously improving socio-economic conditions. The research adopts the perspective that shared value operates as a strategic process and is composed of three interconnected and inseparable dimensions: social value creation, environmental value

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creation, and economic value creation. Understanding the interdependencies among these dimensions is considered crucial for developing this strategic process.

The article examines the interdependencies between the dimensions of shared value and their influence on the strategic process within the organisation.

The study utilised a theoretical framework positioning shared value as a strategic process where interdependencies exist between all dimensions. The primary analytical tool employed was fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), which is suitable for integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies and reflecting existing interdependencies. Empirical data were collected via a cross-sectional electronic survey from the agri-food sector in Poland, specifically involving 22 grain and cereals producers.

The analysis does not reveal a single path to creating shared value. Social value is influenced by environmental factors such as reduced environmental impact, resource consumption and extended product life. Similarly, environmental value is influenced by social factors such as community safety, improved employment conditions and employee skills development. Both dimensions are integral to the creation of economic value. The results provide empirical evidence for the interdependence of shared value dimensions, affirming that shared value creation can be conceptualised as a strategic process directly influenced by the interplay between its social, environmental, and economic components. Managers are advised to utilise combinations of different conditions to create value and gain competitive advantage.

Keywords: shared value, fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis, agri-food industry

JEL: Q01, Q2–3, Q56–57

1. Introduction

Enterprises are increasingly seeking strategies that address social and environmental issues while contributing to market growth and innovation. The concept of shared value (SV) is intrinsic to this discourse, as it postulates that businesses can attain a competitive advantage by incorporating social objectives into their business strategy (Prahalad, Ramaswamy, 2004). Porter and Kramer's (2006) seminal study revealed a pervasive disconnection between commercial entities and society at large, thereby engendering a profound misinterpretation of interconnectedness and interdependence. In response, the concept of 'shared value' was introduced

and subsequently defined as the policies and operational practices that enhance a corporation's competitiveness while concomitantly improving socioeconomic conditions within local communities (Porter, Kramer, 2011).

The SV views the relationship between business and society as an opportunity to make better use of resources to create social and environmental value while growing the company economically (Sinthupundaja, Kohda, Chiadamrong, 2020). In contrast to related concepts such as stakeholder theory, blended value, 'bottom of the pyramid' or CSR, SV integrates response to social and environmental problems directly into organisational strategy, influencing the choice of business models and combining multiple values and goals (Porter, Kramer, 2014; Nam, Hwang, 2019; Menghwar, Daood, 2021). Adopting SV as a strategic process enables companies to gain competitive advantage by solving social problems and addressing unmet needs (Khurshid, Snell, 2021; Li, Zhu, Wang, 2023).

The concept is gaining importance in various economic sectors, including the agri-food industry. In this context, companies are focusing on building innovative supply chains that meet the growing expectations of consumers, who prefer products that reflect ethical values and sustainable production practices. The value generated in these chains comes from the synergies achieved through collaboration between partners, obtaining higher prices for differentiated and sustainable products, and realising shared values tailored to meet changing consumer needs (Diamond et al., 2014).

The concept combines social goals with profitability, creating value through product differentiation and supporting social or environmental values. Partners in these chains work together to maximise financial and social benefits. The concept of shared value assumes that markets can generate positive externalities and that integrating social goals into business strategies can improve efficiency and innovation without necessarily increasing operating costs.

Understanding the interdependencies between shared value dimensions such as social, economic and environmental value creation seems to be crucial in developing strategic process of an organisation. This allows for the assessment of how social and environmental initiatives affect an organisation's financial performance and how increased economic value can improve social and environmental conditions. Studying these interactions helps optimise strategies that support organisational and community development, leading to sustainability and long-term success.

Despite the initial successes of shared value concept, its practical application has faced difficulties, especially at the micro level. The problem is verifying its impact on improving corporate performance and increasing social impact (Kroeger, Weber, 2014; Dembek, Singh, Bhakoo, 2016; Alberti, Varon Garrido, 2017; Singh et al., 2021; Lu, Chesbrough, 2022). There is also a lack of research in the literature on operational practices that support the realisation of shared value (Dembek, Singh, Bhakoo, 2016; Chaurasia et al., 2020; Menghwar, Daood, 2021).

The extant research on shared value is primarily concerned with establishing the concept's originality and its role in the strategic process. However, there is a paucity of research that elucidates the interconnectedness between the dimensions of shared value and their impact on the value creation. In light of the research gap, and the challenges of shared value creation,

we contribute to the discussion by presenting existing interdependencies among the social, environmental and economic value dimensions. The objective of this article is to examine the interrelationships between the dimensions of shared value and their influence on the value creation process. To this aim, specifically we ask: To what extent do the items of each dimension of shared value influence the creation of this value in the other dimensions?

The research focuses on developing a tool to measure the value generated by SV strategies and how effectively they are implemented (Porter, Kramer, 2011; 2019). The study was conducted on the sample of 22 grain producers from the agri-food sector in Poland (Menghwar, Daood, 2021; Camilleri et al., 2023). Preliminary empirical research identified three key dimensions of SV: economic, social and environmental, which are analysed in this article. fsQCA analysis was utilised in the research to reflect the existing interdependencies between the three dimensions of shared value (Ragin, 2008; Pappas, Woodside, 2021).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Firstly, a literature review of the concept of shared value is presented, together with a theoretical basis for the existence of its three dimensions: social, environmental, and economic. These theoretical stances were then used to develop the conceptual framework of the study, in which three analytical paths were formulated to show the relationships of influence of each dimension on the other. In the following section, the fsQA method is examined to demonstrate the interdependences of shared value dimensions and the presentation of results. A comparison of the results with existing literature reveals that the paper contributes to the extant literature on strategic management by positing that the creation of shared value, encompassing social, environmental, and economic values, can be conceptualised as a strategic process. The paper concludes with a discussion of its limitations, a consideration of further research that might be pursued, and an examination of managerial implications.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Understanding shared value concept and its dimensions

The initial premise of shared value creation concept is based on the corporate strategy of the company that enables the integration of economic and social objectives (Porter, Kramer, 2002). In the domain of strategic management research, the concept of shared value is associated with two perspectives.

The first of these is the stakeholder theory, in which the concept of shared value is consistent with the main goal of creating economic and social value for all stakeholders of the organisation (Strand, Freeman, 2015). This perspective emphasises the direct link between corporate social responsibility and the creation of shared value, basing this assumption on the premise that a socially responsible organisation should take economic and social values into account in its business processes (Ezzi, Jarboui, 2016).

The second perspective defines shared value as a strategic process that allows businesses not only to solve social problems but also to treat them as an opportunity to adapt the value chain in order to generate profit (Menghwar, Daood, 2021). The concept of shared value is regarded as a viable method for companies to generate new value and achieve competitive advantage (Prahalad, Ramaswamy, 2004; Menghwar, Daood, 2021). This suggests a necessity for the adoption of a specific business model, which in turn facilitates the simultaneous pursuit of disparate objectives, thereby engendering both social and economic value (Khurshid, Snell, 2021).

Adopting a second perspective, namely that of creating shared value as a strategic process, businesses can implement a shared value strategy in three ways. Firstly, a redefinition of goals for operating in new markets and the introduction of new products and offerings is imperative. The second approach involves the creation of shared value through the enhancement of efficiency across the organisation's value chain. The latter emphasises the importance of supporting the development of local and global clusters (Porter, Kramer, 2011; 2019). These approaches enable companies to transcend prevailing socio-economic values, thereby enhancing social and environmental well-being while preserving competitiveness and profit margins (Dembek, Singh, Bhakoo, 2016; Gionfriddo, Piccaluga, 2023).

Porter and Kramer's seminal concept of shared value (Porter, 2011) distinguished between the creation of economic and social value. Subsequent research has expanded this distinction to also include environmental value (Paulraj, 2011; Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018; Sinthupundaja, Kohda, Chiadamrong, 2020). Contemporary studies distinguish between social value and environmental value in response to climate change and the need for sustainable development (Khurshid, Snell, 2021).

In the context of ongoing changes in economic, social, and environmental processes, three dimensions of shared value can be distinguished. These three types of processes are associated with the three dimensions of shared value, as evidenced by the work of Sibińska and Krawiec (2023). Emerson (2003) posits that within the context of SV, these values reinforce each other, without the necessity of establishing priorities between them. The objective is to generate social, economic, and environmental value as interconnected and inseparable components (Bonini, Emerson, 2005). It is posited that, from a strategic process perspective, the comprehension of the dimensions of shared value and the interplay of social, economic and environmental value creation become open questions. It is essential to understand the dimensions of shared value, namely social value creation, economic value creation and environmental value creation, and to examine the interconnected nature of these dimensions and their role in the value creation process.

Social value creation (SVC)

Social value creation (SVC) pertains to the initiatives undertaken by an organisation that yield benefits to society, local communities and residents. Such actions may include improving the health and safety of communities, as well as increasing the well-being of the local population. This includes the implementation of positive change for disadvantaged individuals through social interventions, such as the provision of microcredit to the poorest women

or the improvement of sanitation in slums, the revitalisation of health services, and the promotion of sports (Kroeger, Weber, 2014). SVC is employed to denote enterprises that integrate a social mission with economic objectives. Although social entrepreneurship is known to encourage innovation, it does not necessarily guarantee a high social value (Sinthupundaja, Kohda, Chiadamrong, 2020). However, innovative companies have the capacity to enhance their reputation, which has a positive impact on both social and business value creation (Rubio-Andrés, del Mar Ramos-González, Sastre-Castillo, 2022).

Good social entrepreneurship practices must be compatible with other company capabilities (Bacq, Eddleston, 2016) and can be analysed both internally and externally (Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018). Internal activities encompass core responsibilities such as production, job creation and economic growth. Indirectly, these responsibilities include conducting these activities with an awareness of changing values and social priorities, such as environmental, employment and employee relations along with meeting more stringent customer expectations for information, fair treatment and protection from harm (Paulraj, 2011; Bacq, Eddleston, 2016; Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018). External activities of the company include new, less specified responsibilities, such as fighting poverty (Carroll, 1999; Paulraj, 2011). The social resource-based view (SRBV) suggests that cross-sector collaboration can increase SVC, making better use of social resources and solving challenges that traditional methods are not able to overcome (Bacq, Eddleston, 2016; Bitencourt da Silva, Bitencourt, 2018; Khurshid, Snell, 2021).

Environmental value creation (EnVC)

The environmental value creation (EnVC) involves the integration of sustainable practices into business operations, with the objective of generating both economic and environmental benefits (Nickl, 2019). This may encompass a reduction in CO_2 emissions, the management of resources in a sustainable manner, the recycling of materials, the minimisation of waste, the incorporation of pro-environmental criteria in the selection of suppliers, the monitoring of their environmental responsibility, and the encouragement and support of suppliers in the implementation of environmental initiatives. It is evident that companies engaging in such practices are driven by the objective of decreasing their negative environmental impact and fostering sustainability (Paulraj, 2011; Porter, 2011; Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018; Rubio-Andrés, del Mar Ramos-González, Sastre-Castillo, 2022). It is therefore essential to acknowledge the inherent interconnectedness between organisations, the environment, and society. This necessitates a shift in corporate mindset, encouraging enterprises to adopt a long-term perspective rather than prioritising short-term profit at the expense of the environment (Paulraj, 2011; Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018).

The data indicates that enterprises which implement social and environmental practices experience accelerated long-term growth (Green, Morton, New, 1998; Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018). The existing literature has begun to distinguish between social value creation and environmental value creation, driven by the need to address climate issues (Paulraj, 2011; Sinthupundaja, Kohda, Chiadamrong, 2020; Pańczyszyn, 2024). Whilst social aspects are frequently combined with ecological concerns, they constitute a discrete layer, particularly with regard to the measurement of outcomes. The adoption of sustainable practices

has been demonstrated to stimulate innovation, resulting in the development of new products and services that address both environmental and socioeconomic needs (Paulraj, 2011; Koller, Nuttall, Henisz, 2019). In order to survive in the market and generate shared value, companies must adopt bold, proactive environmental initiatives (Paulraj, 2011; Rubio-Andrés, del Mar Ramos-González, Sastre-Castillo, 2022). This phenomenon can be attributed, in part, to the notion of environmental uncertainty, which emphasises the interplay between an organisation's performance and its external environment (Lavie, Stettner, Tushman, 2010). However, little is known about how environmental uncertainty affects the relationship between sustainability and organisational performance (Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018).

Economic value creation (EVC)

In the realm of business, the concept of economic value creation (EVC) in the context of shared value (SV) signifies a synthesis of conventional business objectives with additional benefits of a social and environmental nature. This integration is first delineated in the works of Porter and Kramer (2011). It is an established fact that companies have historically concentrated their efforts on the primary objective of generating profits for their shareholders (Carroll, 1999; Paulraj, 2011; Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018). However, contemporary approaches posit that economic development must be combined with environmental protection and social concerns (Carter, Rogers, 2008; Paulraj, 2011). Despite the prevalence of economic-focused studies within the business literature, which address subjects such as competitive advantage and financial performance (Wernerfelt, 1984), there is a growing body of research that suggests a need for a more holistic approach to business management. This suggests that economic, environmental and social resources and opportunities should be managed and utilised simultaneously (Murphy, Coombes, 2008). However, this integrated approach remains under-researched and inadequately addressed in the extant literature (Hart, Milstein, 2003; Florin, Schmidt, 2011; Sinthupundaja, Kohda, Chiadamrong, 2020).

A significant challenge confronting businesses is the effective integration of economic value with environmental and social benefits within their business models (Witjes, Lozano, 2016; Rosca, Arnold, Bendul, 2017; Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018; Rubio-Andrés, del Mar Ramos-González, Sastre-Castillo, 2022). This is partly due to the different approaches to measuring corporate performance, which should create shared value and promote development in three areas: organisational, social and environmental. The measurement of economic effects is achieved through the utilisation of various indicators, including operating costs incurred, return on investment, earnings per share, and results from sales (Zhu, Sarkis, 2004; Menguc, Ozanne, 2005; Paulraj, 2011; Porter, 2011; Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018; Rubio-Andrés, del Mar Ramos-González, Sastre-Castillo, 2022). The assessment of environmental performance is based on a range of indicators, including reductions in air emissions, waste, hazardous materials consumption, environmental accidents, environmental incidents, and energy savings (Zhu, Sarkis, 2004; Menguc, Ozanne, 2005).

Conversely, the concept of social performance is evaluated through the utilisation of novel indicators, encompassing enhancements in domains such as community health and safety, risks to the public and employee health and safety (Bansal, 2005). In consideration of the impact of company size, the assessment of sustainability is also undertaken on the basis of the number of employees and annual sales volume (Paulraj, 2011).

3. Research Methodology

Building on the view that creating shared value (CSV) functions as a strategic process (Menghwar, Daood, 2021), we conceptualise CSV as comprising three interdependent and inseparable dimensions – social value creation (SVC), environmental value creation (EnVC), and economic value creation (EVC) – that are embedded in the firm's core value chain and expected to mutually influence one another. This framework posits an examination of cross-dimensional interdependencies in value creation.

Guided by this framework, we formulate three research questions (RQs), each mapped to a configurational pathway in which one value dimension is modelled as the outcome and the remaining dimensions serve as conditioning sets of causal conditions. Indicators are operationalised using the 17 items listed in Table 1 (SV1–SV6; EnV1–EnV7; EV1–EV4).

RQ1. *To what extent do economic and environmental value creation jointly condition social value creation (SVC)?* Analytical pathway: SVC = *f*(EnV1–EnV7, EV1–EV4).

RQ2. *To what extent do economic and social value creation jointly condition environmental value creation (EnVC)?*

Analytical pathway: EnVC = *f*(SV1–SV6, EV1–EV4).

RQ3. *To what extent do social and environmental value creation jointly condition economic value creation (EVC)?* Analytical pathway: EVC = *f*(SV1–SV6, EnV1–EnV7).

For each pathway, the SVC, EnVC, or EVC outcome is assessed against comprehensive sets of conditions that correspond to the itemized indicators (SV1–SV6; EnV1–EnV7; EV1–EV4) reported in Table 1.

To investigate the impact of the conditions on the targeted outcomes and to identify the interdependencies between the various dimensions of shared value, the fsQCA approach was used as outlined in the fs/QCA 2.5 framework developed by Ragin and Davey (2014). The fsQCA represents an analytical tool, capable of integration with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

In terms of the measures of shared value, there is no universal measurement scale for measuring shared value. This study has deployed Bloom and Smith's (2010) approach of rating an organisation's economic, social and environmental achievements.

An empirically validated seven-point Likert scale was applied (Bloom, Smith, 2010). There were a total of three constructs and 17 questions. The list of questions and Cronbach's alpha values for internal consistency are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Scale items with mean, standard deviation and Cronbach's alpha values

Items source	Construct and scale items	Mean	S.D.
Social value creation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.892)			
Paulraj, 2011 Bacq, Eddleston, 2016 Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018	Our company improves the health of people in the community served (SV1)	4.05	1.939
	Our company improves the safety of people in the community served (SV2)	4.36	1.814
	Our company improves the awareness and protection of the claims and rights of people in the community served (SV3)	4.00	1.902
	Our company develops the integrity of people in the community served (SV4)	3.91	1.900
	Our company develops decent employment conditions (SV5)	4.68	1.912
	Our company supports employees in achieving greater skills and competence (SV6)	4.27	1.751
Environmental value creation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.915)			
Paulraj, 2011 Porter, Kramer, 2011 Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018 Rubio-Andrés, del Mar Ramos-González, Sastre-Castillo, 2022	Our company reduces the negative impact on the environment (EnV1)	4.55	1.595
	Our company reduces resource consumption (EnV2)	4.27	1.667
	Our company reduces waste (EnV3)	4.32	1.585
	Our company reduces the amount of pollutant emissions (EnV4)	4.14	1.807
	Our company improves the environmental conditions in the region (EnV5)	3.86	1.833
	Our company extends the life of products and raw materials by reusing or repairing them (EnV6)	4.45	1.711
	Our company improves the quality of habitats (EnV7)	4.18	1.790
Economic value creation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.906)			
Paulraj, 2011 Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018 Rubio-Andrés, del Mar Ramos-González, Sastre-Castillo, 2022	Our company enhances profitability (EV1)	4.91	1.306
	Our company has high profit growth rate (EV2)	5.23	1.232
	Our company has high sales results (EV3)	4.82	1.708
	Our company has lower financial costs (EV4)	5.05	1.704

Source: authors' own elaboration based on the literature.

3.1. Data collection

The study employed the fs/QCA 2.5 framework developed by Ragin, Drass, and Davey (2014) to examine the interrelationships between the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of shared value and their influence on the value creation process. The empirical context selected for this research was the agri-food sector, chosen for two principal reasons.

First, the agri-food sector plays a critical role in the global economy and has a substantial impact on the natural environment and ecosystems. (Willett et al., 2019; Hamam et al., 2023). This importance is well documented in studies highlighting the environmental pressures associated with food production and the necessity of transitioning toward sustainable production practices, which can generate social, environmental, and economic value simultaneously. Secondly, the agri-food sector offers the opportunity to empirically examine the creation of shared value within this industry. In the context of the agri-food sector, knowledge exchange plays a pivotal role (Spithoven, Vanhaverbeke, Roijakkers, 2013; De Silva, Wright, 2019; McGahan et al., 2021), as does cooperation and resource sharing between companies and other stakeholders (Jones, 2022). Reconciliation of the economic, environmental, social and organisational aspects, alongside meeting marketing, food safety and societal obligations, is essential (Fritz, Schiefer, 2008; Priyono et al., 2024). Integrating resources and sharing knowledge are fundamental to creating shared value and achieving advantageous outcomes for all parties involved in the collaboration (Barile, Saviano, 2013; Nilsen, Gausdal, 2017; Camilleri et al., 2023). In the agri-food sector, the SV concept has found practical application in creating 'food value chains' that combine a social mission with improved financial performance (Humbert et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2013; Diamond et al., 2014).

The data was collected using a cross-sectional electronic survey. The research was carried out in June and July 2025 with the representatives of producers and traders of grain and cereal products affiliated with the Grain and Feed Chamber in Poland. The selection of organisations and key informants for the study was undertaken using purposive sampling, employing the snowball method. The snowball sampling technique was employed to facilitate access to qualified respondents and expand the sample through professional networks, a method well-documented as effective for reaching specialised or hard-to-access populations in business and management research (Ahmad, Wilkins, 2025).

Initially, the Grain and Feed Chamber was contacted to request the indication of relevant organisations for the survey. The Chamber comprised seventy member companies, operating across feed production, oil processing, grain milling and storage, domestic and international grain trading, and biofuels service providers in investment, transportation, and agricultural quality control. These companies collectively represent around 70% of the Polish grain market and over 50% of the feed market. To be included in the analysis, companies needed to meet the following criteria: (1) being involved in the grain and cereal production and trade, and (2) operating in the Polish market for a minimum of three years.

Survey invitations were sent to thirty-eight enterprises selected through this combined purposive sampling process, resulting in twenty-two fully completed questionnaires included in the final analysis. The sample consisted of owners, managers, and specialists with substantial knowledge of their companies' production, procurement, and trading operations, thus ensuring informed and reliable evaluations. The distribution of company sizes included small (10–49 employees), medium (50–249 employees), and large enterprises (250+ employees), as presented in Table 2, providing a heterogeneous sample reflective of the agri-food

sector's organisational diversity. Despite the relatively small sample size, the number of cases is suitable for fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), which is methodologically compatible with small- and medium-N designs focused on configurational causality (Ragin, 2008; Pappas, Woodside, 2021).

Table 2. Distribution of companies' size

Size of the company	Number of companies
Small (between 10–49 employees)	3
Medium- sized (between 50–249 employees)	9
Large (250 plus employees)	10

Source: authors' own elaboration.

4. Results

4.1. Calibration of raw data

The initial stage of the analysis entailed the transformation of the raw data into fuzzy membership scores, which ranged from 0 to 1 (Ragin, Davey, 2006). To calibrate the data, values of 0.95, 0.50 and 0.05 were selected as the three threshold parameters, transforming the data into the log-odds metric, with all values lying between 0 and 1. In line with previous studies utilising the seven-point Likert scales (Ordaniani, Maglio, 2009; Pappas, Woodside, 2021), the values of 6, 4, and 2 were employed as thresholds. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the raw data, including the means and standard deviations. In this study, the indicators associated with each shared value dimension (SV1–SV6, EnV1–EnV7, EV1–EV4) were aggregated into three latent variables – SVC, EnVC, and EVC – by treating each item as an equally important component of the construct, consistent with the empirically validated measurement scale employed (Bloom, Smith, 2010). All indicators were therefore assigned equal weight, and the aggregated latent variables served as the outcomes in the fsQCA models presented in Tables 3–5. Calibration of the seven-point Likert responses into fuzzy-set scores followed the standard logistic transformation procedure described by Ragin (2008), using the thresholds 2, 4, and 6 to represent full non-membership, the crossover point, and full membership, respectively, reflecting the empirical distribution of the data and established practice in prior fsQCA studies.

4.2. Analysis of necessary conditions

The consistency and level of data coverage in the study provide the foundation for the subsequent fsQCA analysis. In accordance with Ragin (2008), a condition that exhibits a consistency score above the 0.90 threshold is regarded as a necessary condition in the analysis. In this

study, both high and low levels of each condition were evaluated in relation to high and low social, environmental, and economic value creation to determine whether any single factor is indispensable for the occurrence of these outcomes. The results of the necessary-conditions analysis indicate that none of the examined conditions surpassed the 0.90 consistency threshold (Table 3), demonstrating that no individual factor can be regarded as necessary for explaining the presence of any of the three shared value dimensions. To provide a comprehensive perspective, the analysis also reports the negated outcomes (~SVC, ~EnVC, ~EVC), which represent the fuzzy-set complements of the respective value creation dimensions. These negated outcomes capture cases characterised by low or absent levels of social, environmental, or economic value creation. Their inclusion reflects fsQCA's principle of causal asymmetry, which recognises that the causal conditions leading to high levels of value creation are not simple inverses of those leading to low levels. Reporting both the positive and negated outcomes therefore enables an assessment of whether any condition functions as a necessary prerequisite for either high or low performance in a given dimension. In the context of this study, the results show that none of the conditions met the consistency requirement for necessity in either their positive or negated form, indicating that no single environmental, social, or economic condition is indispensable for explaining the presence – or the absence – of social, environmental, or economic value creation among the analysed agri-food enterprises.

Table 3. Results of analysis of necessary conditions

Conditions	Parameters	SVC	~SVC	EnVC	~EnVC	EVC	~EVC
Necessity conditions of social value creation (SVC)	Consistency	–	–	0.88	0.43	0.89	0.40
	Coverage	–	–	0.87	0.52	0.69	0.74
Necessity conditions of ~social value creation (~SVC)	Consistency	–	–	0.54	0.84	0.83	0.53
	Coverage	–	–	0.43	0.86	0.53	0.81
Necessity conditions of environmental value creation (EnVC)	Consistency	0.87	0.43	–	–	0.89	0.38
	Coverage	0.88	0.53	–	–	0.70	0.72
Necessity conditions of ~environmental value creation (~EnVC)	Consistency	0.52	0.86	–	–	0.81	0.53
	Coverage	0.42	0.84	–	–	0.51	0.80
Necessity conditions of economic value creation (EVC)	Consistency	0.69	0.53	0.70	0.51	–	–
	Coverage	0.90	0.83	0.89	0.81	–	–
Necessity conditions of ~economic value creation (~EVC)	Consistency	0.74	–	0.72	0.80	–	–
	Coverage	0.40	–	0.38	0.53	–	–

Source: authors' own elaboration.

4.3. Analysis of sufficiency

In conducting the sufficiency analysis, the frequency cut-off was set to one, which resulted in the exclusion of configurations represented by fewer than one empirical case. All remaining configurations met the predetermined consistency threshold of 0.80, indicating that they were sufficiently aligned with the outcome to warrant inclusion. The fsQCA procedure produced three solution types – complex, parsimonious, and intermediate – each offering a different degree of simplification based on how logical remainders are treated. The complex solution relies solely on empirically observed configurations and thus provides the most detailed representation of causal pathways. In contrast, the parsimonious solution incorporates all logical remainders, yielding the most reduced expression of the causal structure. The intermediate solution, which is commonly preferred in substantive applications, incorporates only those simplifying assumptions deemed theoretically plausible given the context of this study. Together, these three solutions allow us to distinguish between core conditions, which appear consistently across solutions and therefore represent essential causal elements, and peripheral conditions, which contribute to the outcome but with lower stability across models (Pappas, Woodside, 2021). In the context of the agri-food enterprises analysed in this study, this multi-solution approach provides a more nuanced understanding of how combinations of social, environmental, and economic factors jointly contribute to shared value creation. The results are presented in Tables 4–6.

For the sufficiency analysis, we applied a consistency cut-off of 0.834 and a frequency threshold of 1, consistent with methodological recommendations that sufficient configurations must demonstrate both strong empirical consistency with the outcome and representation by at least one empirical case. The conditions included across all models (SV1–SV6, EnV1–EnV7, EV1–EV4) correspond directly to the validated indicators listed in Table 1 and reflect the theoretical definition of the three shared value dimensions used in this study. Finally, core and peripheral conditions were distinguished using standard fsQCA criteria: core conditions appear in both the parsimonious and intermediate solutions, while peripheral conditions appear only in the intermediate solution. This approach allows us to differentiate conditions that exert stable, strong causal influence from those whose effects are contingent on specific configurational contexts, guiding the interpretation of the solutions reported in Tables 4–6.

Table 4 presents six alternative configurational pathways that lead to high levels of social value creation among the analysed agri-food enterprises. These configurations show that no single environmental or economic factor alone is sufficient; rather, social value emerges from particular combinations of conditions. Across several pathways – especially Configurations 2 and 3 – the presence of environmental practices such as reducing negative environmental impact (EnV1), reducing resource consumption (EnV2), and limiting waste and emissions (EnV3, EnV4) appears as a core causal element. This indicates that environmental stewardship constitutes a central driver of social value creation in this sector. In contrast, profitability-related indicators (EV1–EV4) typically function as peripheral or sometimes even absent conditions, suggesting that social value can be achieved independently of strong financial performance. The variety of pathways, each characterised by different combinations of present, absent, and ‘don’t care’ conditions, demonstrates that enterprises can pursue multiple viable routes to enhance social

outcomes. The high solution consistency (0.848) and coverage (0.839) further confirm that these six configurations jointly capture the dominant patterns through which social value is created in the agri-food context.

Table 4. Pathways to social value creation SVC = f (EnV1, EnV2, EnV3, EnV4, EnV5, EnV6, EnV7, EV1, EV2, EV3, EV4). Frequency cutoff: 1. Consistency cutoff: 0.834158

Configuration	1	2	3	4	5	6
Our company reduces the negative impact on the environment (EnV1)	°	•	•	•	•	•
Our company reduces resource consumption (EnV2)	°	•	•	•	•	•
Our company reduces waste (EnV3)	°	*	*	°	*	*
Our company reduces the amount of pollutant emissions (EnV4)	°	*	*	°	*	*
Our company improves the environmental conditions in the region (EnV5)	°	–	*	°	°	*
Our company extends the life of products and raw materials by reusing or repairing them (EnV6)	•	•	•	°	°	•
Our company improves the quality of habitats (EnV7)	*	°	°	°	*	*
Our company enhances profitability (EV1)	–	*	–	•	*	*
Our company has high profit growth rate (EV2)	*	*	*	*	*	*
Our company has high sales results (EV3)	*	*	*	°	°	°
Our company has lower financial costs (EV4)	*	*	*	°	*	°
Consistency	0.846	0.863	0.904	0.842	0.913	0.932
Raw Coverage	0.307	0.332	0.610	0.239	0.246	0.241
Unique Coverage	0.088	0.052	0.330	0.014	0.021	0.027
Overall solution consistency	0.848	–	–	–	–	–
Overall solution coverage	0.839	–	–	–	–	–

Note: Black circles (•) indicate the presence of a core condition, asterisks (*) indicate the presence of a peripheral condition and blank circles (°) indicate its absence, minus (–); 'don't care' condition.

Source: authors' own elaboration.

Table 5 presents eight pathways leading to high environmental value creation, showing that agri-food enterprises can achieve strong environmental performance through different combinations of conditions. Several configurations highlight the importance of internal social practices – especially decent employment conditions (SV5) and employee skill development (SV6) – as core contributors, indicating that firms with stronger human–capital practices are more capable of implementing environmental initiatives. Financial indicators (EV1–EV4), particularly profit growth rate (EV2), often appear as peripheral or supporting conditions, suggesting that environmentally active firms may also experience positive economic outcomes. Variation in SV1–SV4 across pathways shows that not all social practices need to be present

for environmental gains to occur. Overall, the high consistency scores demonstrate robust causal patterns in which social and economic factors jointly support environmental improvements, reinforcing the interdependence among the shared value dimensions.

Table 5. Pathways to environmental value creation. EnVC = f(SV1, SV2, SV3, SV4, SV5, SV6, EV1, EV2, EV3, EV4). Frequency cutoff: 1. Consistency cutoff: 0.80344

Configuration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Our company improves the health of people in the community served (SV1)	–	•	–	°	•	•	°	•
Our company improves the safety of people in the community served (SV2)	°	•	•	°	•	•	°	•
Our company improves the awareness and protection of the claims and rights of people in the community served (SV3)	°	*	*	°	°	*	*	*
Our company develops the integrity of people in the community served (SV4)	°	–	*	°	°	*	*	*
Our company develops decent employment conditions (SV5)	•	•	•	•	°	°	•	•
Our company supports employees in achieving greater skills and competence (SV6)	•	•	•	•	°	°	•	•
Our company enhances profitability (EV1)	*	*	*	*	*	*	°	*
Our company has high profit growth rate (EV2)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Our company has high sales results (EV3)	*	*	*	°	*	°	*	°
Our company has lower financial costs (EV4)	*	*	*	°	*	*	*	°
Consistency	0.805	0.945	0.992	0.826	0.815	0.953	0.866	1
Raw Coverage	0.276	0.534	0.574	0.174	0.172	0.198	0.173	0.197
Unique Coverage	0.064	0.012	0.026	0.004	0.001	0.027	0.014	0.026
Overall solution consistency	0.740	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Overall solution coverage	0.782	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Note: Black circles (•) indicate the presence of a core condition, asterisks (*) indicate the presence of a peripheral condition and blank circles (°) indicate its absence, minus (–); 'don't care' condition.

Source: authors' own elaboration.

Table 6 identifies twelve configurations leading to high economic value creation, reflecting the most diverse causal structure among the three shared value dimensions. The large number of pathways indicates that economic value can arise through multiple strategic combinations. Many configurations show that strong environmental practices (EnV1–EnV7) and social value creation indicators (SV1–SV6) often function as core conditions, underscoring that economic performance in the agri-food sector is frequently grounded in parallel social and environmental investments. Some pathways also demonstrate that firms may achieve strong economic outcomes by emphasising only selected sustainability indicators, suggesting room for strategic specialisation. The consistently high solution consistency values further confirm the robustness of these patterns, illustrating that economic value is co-created through varied blends of social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and operational performance.

Table 6. Pathways to economic value creation. EVC = f (SV1, SV2, SV3, SV4, SV5, SV6, EnV1, EnV2, EnV3, EnV4, EnV5, EnV6, EnV7). Frequency cutoff: 1. Consistency cutoff: 0.842

Configuration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Our company improves the health of people in the community served (SV1)	–	•	°	•	•	°	°	°	°	•	°	•
Our company improves the safety of people in the community served (SV2)	•	•	°	•	°	•	°	°	°	•	°	•
Our company improves the awareness and protection of the claims and rights of people in the community served (SV3)	•	•	°	°	°	°	•	°	°	•	°	•
Our company develops the integrity of people in the community served (SV4)	•	•	°	°	°	°	•	°	°	°	°	•
Our company develops decent employment conditions (SV5)	•	•	°	°	•	•	•	°	•	•	•	°
Our company supports employees in achieving greater skills and competence (SV6)	•	•	°	°	°	•	•	°	•	•	•	°
Our company reduces the negative impact on the environment (EnV1)	•	•	°	°	°	•	°	•	•	°	•	•
Our company reduces resource consumption (EnV2)	•	•	°	°	°	•	°	•	•	°	•	•
Our company reduces waste (EnV3)	•	•	°	°	°	°	°	•	•	°	•	•
Our company reduces the amount of pollutant emissions (EnV4)	•	•	°	°	°	°	°	•	•	°	•	•
Our company improves the environmental conditions in the region (EnV5)	•	•	°	°	°	°	°	•	°	°	•	°
Our company extends the life of products and raw materials by reusing or repairing them (EnV6)	•	•	°	°	°	°	•	•	•	•	•	°
Our company improves the quality of habitats (EnV7)	•	–	°	°	°	°	•	•	°	•	•	•

Configuration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Consistency	0.910	0.911	0.89	1	1	0.842	1	1	1	1	1	0.961
Raw Coverage	0.417	0.423	0.229	0.175	0.162	0.140	0.180	0.169	0.203	0.176	0.175	0.160
Unique Coverage	0.021	0.029	0.029	0.001	0.001	0.005	0.029	0.021	0.029	0.021	0.001	0.014
Overall solution consistency	0.725	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Overall solution coverage	0.782	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Note: Black circles (•) indicate the presence of a core condition, blank circles (°) indicate its absence, minus (–); 'don't care' condition.

Source: authors' own elaboration.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study extend existing theoretical frameworks on shared value creation by providing empirical confirmation that the social, environmental, and economic dimensions operate as mutually reinforcing components of a strategic process. This supports the conceptual premise advanced by Porter and Kramer (2011), who argue that the shared value creation process results from the integration rather than the separation of value dimensions. The configurational results also corroborate prior research suggesting that shared value creation is characterised by the fact that different combinations of conditions can lead to the same outcome (Paulraj, 2011; Maletič, Maletič, Gomiscek, 2018). At the same time, the patterns uncovered in this study offer new insights by specifying which social, environmental, and economic practices jointly contribute to value creation in the agri-food sector, thereby advancing theoretical understanding of how shared value is co-created across organisational contexts.

Our results confirm many of the relationships proposed in the literature but also reveal nuances not previously highlighted. For social value creation (Q1), six sufficient pathways were identified, with environmental actions – particularly reducing environmental impact (EnV1), conserving resources (EnV2), and extending product life (EnV6) – emerging as core conditions. This aligns with studies demonstrating that environmental responsibility enhances community well-being and social legitimacy (Porter, Kramer, 2006; Di Domenico, Haugh, Tracey, 2010). However, some expected contributors, such as improvements in environmental conditions (EnV5) or habitat quality (EnV7), were peripheral or absent in several pathways, suggesting that not all forms of environmental activity translate equally into social value. This indicates a more selective pattern of influence than some earlier studies proposed.

For environmental value creation (Q2), eight solutions show that internal social practices – especially safety in the community (SV2), decent employment conditions (SV5), and skill development (SV6) – are frequently core drivers. This supports research arguing that firms with stronger internal social systems are better positioned to implement meaningful environmental initiatives (Paulraj, 2011; Koller, Nuttall, Henisz, 2019). Yet, certain social factors traditionally assumed to support sustainability, such as community integrity or rights awareness (SV3, SV4), did not consistently appear as core conditions. This nuance suggests that environmental performance may depend more on specific human-capital practices than on broader social engagement.

For economic value creation (Q3), twelve configurations were identified – the most diverse set across all outcomes – demonstrating that economic value can emerge through multiple pathways. Consistent with the literature (e.g., Carter, Rogers, 2008; Witjes, Lozano, 2016), many configurations show that strong environmental and social practices jointly support economic performance, reinforcing the view that sustainability-driven strategies can enhance competitiveness. Notably, some pathways indicated that economic value can also arise when only selected sustainability indicators are present, implying that firms may strategically specialise in particular social or environmental strengths. This partially challenges earlier claims that

broad-based sustainability engagement is always necessary for financial outcomes, highlighting instead that economic value can stem from varied and context-specific sustainability combinations.

6. Conclusions

The results of the fsQCA analysis represent a significant advance in recent literature, providing empirical evidence for the interdependence of shared value dimensions. This phenomenon, as posited by Emerson (2003), serves to underscore the notion that these dimensions can, indeed, reinforce each other, thereby contributing to the creation of enhanced value in each of them. The present study corroborates the thesis of Menghwar and Daood (2021), which posits that the creation of shared value, encompassing social, environmental, and economic values, can be conceptualised as a strategic process. Consequently, the interdependencies between all dimensions exert a direct influence on this strategic process.

The configurational results derived from fsQCA further extend existing theories by demonstrating that multiple, equally sufficient pathways can lead to high levels of value creation, showing that firms may combine social, environmental, and economic practices in diverse ways to achieve similar outcomes. These insights contribute to the literature by offering granular evidence of how different conditions interact to shape value creation, moving beyond linear cause-and-effect assumptions commonly found in traditional CSR and sustainability research.

From a practical perspective, the study offers several implications for agri-food enterprises. The results show that environmental achievements – such as reducing negative environmental impact, minimising resource consumption, and extending product and raw material life – play a central role not only in driving environmental value but also in shaping social value. Similarly, strong social practices – particularly community safety, adequate employment conditions, and employee skills development – are fundamental for enabling environmentally responsible behaviour. For managers, this highlights that shared value creation emerges from a combination of practices, rather than isolated initiatives. Agri-food firms can thus enhance competitiveness by designing integrated strategies that align internal human-capital policies with environmental stewardship and market-oriented performance goals. The study reinforces the idea that shared value strategies should be viewed as organisational investments that produce long-term performance benefits rather than short-term operational costs.

Despite these contributions, several limitations must be acknowledged, and these limit the generalisability of the findings. First, the study relies on a small sample of 22 grain and cereal producers from a single industry within the Polish agri-food sector. While this sample size is appropriate for fsQCA, it restricts the extent to which the results can be extended to larger populations or different industrial contexts. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data does not capture how interdependencies among shared value dimensions evolve over time. Given these limitations, the configurational patterns identified here should be interpreted as context-specific

insights, rather than universally generalisable mechanisms. These limitations open several avenues for future research. Comparative studies across industries with different environmental, social, and regulatory characteristics could help determine whether the interdependencies observed in this study are stable or sector specific. Further research could also employ longitudinal or quantitative-based method designs to explore the evolution of shared value creation over time and deepen understanding of the causal mechanisms underlying these interdependencies. Extending the analysis to multi country or cross-sector samples would additionally strengthen the external validity and transferability of the findings.

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Odkrywanie współzależności wymiarów wspólnej wartości – wnioski z branży rolno-spożywczej

Streszczenie:

Badanie opiera się na koncepcji tworzenia wspólnej wartości (*shared value*), zdefiniowanej przez Portera i Kramera jako polityki i praktyki operacyjne, które zwiększają konkurencyjność przedsiębiorstw, jednocześnie poprawiając warunki społeczno-ekonomiczne. W badaniu przyjęto perspektywę, zgodnie z którą wspólna wartość funkcjonuje jako proces strategiczny składający się z trzech wzajemnie powiązanych i nierozłącznych wymiarów: tworzenia wartości społecznej, środowiskowej i ekonomicznej. Zrozumienie współzależności między tymi wymiarami uznaje się za kluczowe dla rozwoju tego procesu strategicznego.

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie współzależności między wymiarami wspólnej wartości oraz ich wpływu na proces strategiczny w organizacji.

W badaniu zastosowano ramy teoretyczne, w których wspólna wartość jest postrzegana jako proces strategiczny, w obrębie którego występują współzależności między wszystkimi wymiarami. Narzędziem analitycznym zastosowanym w badaniu była metoda analizy jakościowej zbiorów rozmytych (*fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis* – fsQCA), umożliwiająca integrację metod jakościowych i ilościowych oraz odzwierciedlenie istniejących współzależności. Dane empiryczne zebrano w formie elektronicznej ankiety przekrojowej w sektorze rolno-spożywczym w Polsce, obejmującej 22 producentów i dystrybutorów produktów zbożowych.

Analiza nie wykazała istnienia jednej ścieżki prowadzącej do tworzenia wspólnej wartości. Wartość społeczna jest kształtowana przez czynniki środowiskowe, takie jak ograniczenie wpływu na środowisko, zużycia zasobów czy wydłużenie cyklu życia produktu. Z kolei wartość środowiskowa zależy od czynników społecznych, takich jak bezpieczeństwo społeczności, poprawa warunków zatrudnienia i rozwój umiejętności pracowników. Oba te wymiary są integralnymi elementami tworzenia wartości ekonomicznej. Wyniki dostarczają empirycznych dowodów na współzależność wymiarów wspólnej wartości, potwierdzając, że proces jej tworzenia można postrzegać jako proces strategiczny bezpośrednio kształtowany przez interakcje pomiędzy komponentami społecznymi, środowiskowymi i ekonomicznymi. Menedżerowie powinni wykorzystywać kombinacje różnych warunków w celu tworzenia wartości i uzyskania przewagi konkurencyjnej.

Słowa kluczowe: wspólna wartość, analiza jakościowa zbiorów rozmytych (fsQCA), przemysł rolno-spożywczy