

**VULNERABILITY, RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT: THE TRIPARTITE  
TYPOLOGY FOR ADDRESSING MODERN SLAVERY IN GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** Modern slavery in global value chains is an emerging topic of interest across various fields, including in international business, but is often fragmented in its approach. This research aims to provide a practical framework for studying relationships between participants in global value chains by exploring the nexus of three concepts —vulnerability, resilience and empowerment—in the context of modern slavery.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This article offers a deductive thematic analysis of 51 empirical and conceptual business research studies on modern slavery in global value chains published until mid-2021 according to the three categories of interest at the micro (within individuals and organisations), meso (between individuals and organisations) and macro (structural) levels.

**Findings:** Our findings have informed the development of three themes, each of which is an opportunity for future research with clear policy implications: a reductionist approach to vulnerability obscures its complexity; externalising the empowerment process and locating it outside of the agency of workers serves to further disempower them; and focusing exclusively on organisational resilience conceals the essentiality of resilience within individuals, communities and societies.

**Originality/value:** This article is among the first to extend the focus of business literature on modern slavery in global value chains beyond its current largely facile engagement with vulnerability, resilience and empowerment (VRE), offering an original descriptive VRE typology to engage with the nexus between these three concepts.

**Keywords**

Global value chains; modern slavery; vulnerability; empowerment; resilience; social sustainability

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary international business (IB) practice, global value chains (GVCs) involve the production of goods and associated services taking place in different regions and countries (Torres de Oliveira et al., 2021), inadvertently widening the Global North/South divide by creating the conditions for heightened vulnerabilities, uneven development patterns and power asymmetries between value chain participants (Huq and Stevenson, 2020; Kubacki et al., 2023). Within this ubiquitous VUCA world (i.e., volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous; Van Tulder et al., 2019), substantial evidence is emerging that, amongst other factors, the global search for skills, knowledge and economic efficiencies has contributed to the fragmentation of production through offshoring and outsourcing (Ambos et al., 2021), hiding lower-tier suppliers from scrutiny and creating new and previously unrecognised risks such as acute labour exploitation for all participants in predominantly globalised—hence extended beyond the horizon of a single organisation or government—value chains.

While globalisation facilitates “international economic exchange relationships” (Verbeke et al., 2018, p.1101) and has the potential to provide a foundation for sustainable development, the intersections between the IB and GVCs literatures and their respective social impacts remain under-researched. Notwithstanding that, the future evolution of globalised value chains as an IB practice depends on their ability to create a more level playing field for all, mitigating their potential and unintended negative consequences. In this context, the debates on globalisation and de-globalisation remain influential, with the latter woven through the IB literature and focusing on ensuring the socio-economic freedoms of local citizens, and supported by influential voices (e.g., Czinkota, 2018) arguing that globalisation is not necessarily inconducive to those freedoms. Another important stream in the IB literature on GVCs and social sustainability relates to a global convergence in IB decision-making (Ozturk and Cavusgil, 2019), particularly from the perspective of multinational corporations (MNCs).

With regard to the negative impact of GVC structures and activities on sustainable development, GVCs orchestrated by MNCs have been recently recognised as an environment favourable to modern slavery (Caspersz et al., 2022), involving grievous forms of exploitation of vulnerable individuals and

communities (Szablewska, 2022a). It is estimated that nearly 50 million people are trapped in modern slavery worldwide, including 27.6 million who experience forced labour, 86% of which takes place in the private economy (ILO, Walk Free Foundation and IMO, 2022). Yet, there is a paucity of research into the impact of GVCs on various social issues, including labour exploitation (Siemieniako et al., 2022b). This presents a significant obstacle to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), in particular in relation to the social aspects of development and the eradication of modern slavery in all its forms (target 8.7). Modern slavery exists as a result of power asymmetry in the value chain, whereby vulnerable individuals lack the resilience to resist the myriad economic, social and often political drivers that lead towards engagement with exploitative pressures.

In 2018, Michailova and Stringer rightly observed the conspicuous silence of IB literature on modern slavery and called on IB scholars to engage in conversations on modern slavery to avoid falling behind others in influencing “discussions that really matter in our world” (p. 8). Acknowledging that the recent progress has been piecemeal, we respond to their call with an attempt to spark those conversations and advance our understanding of modern slavery in GVCs. Specifically, this research aims to explore the nexus of three central concepts —vulnerability, resilience and empowerment (VRE) —in the context of business research, and in particular contributing to the IB literature on modern slavery in GVCs. In this study, we offer VRE as a form of descriptive typology. Descriptive typologies are used in business research to identify and describe the issue under analysis (Allen et al., 2022; McGovern, 2020). While the constituent concepts are known to researchers, this study argues for more comprehensive and critical engagement with these three concepts, which is currently lacking, and provides a practical framework for studying relationships between participants in GVCs. This research is informed by systems thinking (Bertalanffy, 1968; Boulding, 1956), an approach that considers interconnections and interdependencies within a system to address complex social issues. Systems thinking allows us to frame modern slavery as a product of interactions between diverse participants in GVCs, and to conduct our research through the lens of our proposed VRE typology that captures a myriad of actions and relationships between participants in GVCs. These relationships are replete with constantly evolving vulnerabilities, power asymmetries and resilience capabilities, responsible for the emergence of micro- (within individuals and

organisations), meso- (between individuals and organisations) and macro- (structural) level conditions that can lead to the emergence of labour exploitation and other practices leading to modern slavery.

In the next section of this paper, the concept of modern slavery is explained. Then, a brief overview of the current research into GVCs is provided to contextualise the issue of modern slavery and provide a platform for the subsequent conceptualisations of ‘vulnerability’, ‘resilience’ and ‘empowerment’. Following the description of the research approach, the emerging findings and three overarching themes are critically evaluated, leading to conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## **MODERN SLAVERY**

Modern slavery (referred to also as modern-day slavery, contemporary slavery or neo-slavery) is more common today than ever before in history—and despite a plethora of international and domestic attempts to outlaw its different forms—making it a persistent global problem that requires multisectoral and coordinated responses. As a legal category, modern slavery has no universally agreed definition, in contrast to historical slavery which is defined under the League of Nations Slavery Convention of 1926 as the “status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised” (Art 1(1)). There are similarities but also differences between modern slavery and slavery as practised historically (e.g., Bravo, 2007), including that today’s slavery is a legally divergent and largely hidden crime whose prevalence and manifestations are difficult to measure and monitor, making it necessary to remain cautious about how we apply lessons learnt to the modern forms, their underlying reasons and, hence, required responses. Based on the existing and emerging domestic and regional legislation, modern forms of slavery include similar but legally distinct practices, ranging from forced labour, human trafficking, forced marriage, and debt bondage to organ trafficking. Not all these practices are labour-related, but the focus of recent national and global anti-slavery responses has been predominantly on those in the context of labour exploitation as its dominant form. From a regulatory perspective, these legal differences create a particular challenge in dealing with what is a global issue, affecting all countries and regions but to a different degree and not necessarily with the same consequences.

Despite these obstacles, there have been global efforts to tackle the problem of modern slavery more systematically. A number of countries have passed relevant legislation to address it, including the state of California (United States) Transparency in Supply Chains Act 2010, the Modern Slavery Acts in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia (both at the federal and the state of New South Wales levels), along with those focusing on (mandatory) human rights, and increasingly environmental, due diligence of business operations and supply chains, such as those in France, the Netherlands, and more recently Germany, Norway and the currently considered legislative reforms in New Zealand and at the European Union (EU) level. Most of the recent responses focus on the role that the private sector plays in facilitating but also addressing modern slavery in business operations and global supply chains (Szablewska et al., 2022).

Notwithstanding the varied national efforts to introduce modern slavery legislation, focusing often on the responsibilities of buyers (mainly MNCs based in the Global North) vis-à-vis their suppliers (predominantly but not exclusively based in the Global South), the globalisation of value chains and their growing complexity increasingly obscures the visibility of lower tiers of value chains, spanning across different jurisdictions with different standards and expectations around responsibilities over labour practices. Concurrently, global and local (e.g., national and regional) efforts to raise awareness of modern slavery have created public pressure and expectation of transparency when it comes to human and environmental impacts of business operations (e.g., Mani and Gunasekaran, 2018) leading to a progressive introduction of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) (OHCHR, 2011) implementing the UN ‘protect, respect and remedy’ framework. However, there is still a paucity of evidence that businesses take corrective action when they can. For example, an independent review of modern slavery regulation in Australia showed that only 27% of reviewed companies demonstrated any action to address modern slavery risks by improving working conditions among their suppliers or tackling the root causes of modern slavery (Human Rights Law Centre, 2022a) and, according to a follow-up report, 56% of commitments made by companies in their first round statements to progress their modern slavery responses remained unfulfilled in the second round of

reporting (Human Rights Law Centre, 2022b). Modern slavery has become endemic in the VUCA world and, as one of the key challenges brought by globalised value chains, requires new perspectives to inform global business practices.

## **GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS**

According to Gereffi and Lee (2016) the GVCs framework “was created to better understand how value is created, captured, sustained, and leveraged within all types of industries” (p.27). Further broadening the view of GVCs beyond just the production chain, Murphree and Anderson (2018) included in the GVCs framework the management of knowledge assets through either globally distributed specialised companies or globally distributed vertical integration. Research on GVCs has been conducted extensively since the early 2000s (e.g., Gibbon et al., 2008; Neilson et al., 2014; Sturgeon, 2002), and more recently GVCs are an essential feature of the globalised economy and international trade (Ambos et al., 2021; Suder et al., 2015). GVCs are also emerging as a subject of enquiry in IB studies (e.g., Colovic et al., 2022; De Marchi, et al., 2020), focusing on large MNCs as orchestrators of multiple tiers of suppliers across national borders (McWilliam et al., 2021; Murphree and Anderson, 2018; Torres de Oliveira et al., 2021). In their systematic review of the GVCs literature, De Marchi and colleagues (2020) found a broad overlap between the GVCs and IB research interests and identified extensive opportunities for future research, yet their review provides evidence that until very recently there has been a paucity of published research combining the two areas.

A North-South value chain (Pasquali, 2021) has emerged as the dominant pattern of GVCs, with MNCs as the leading companies representing the richer Global North (Beugelsdijk et al., 2009). These powerful orchestrators obtain the highest rent due to their involvement in a range of production, requiring specialised knowledge (Gereffi et al., 2021). Whereas suppliers, predominantly from emerging economies located in the Global South, obtain a much lower margin due to their involvement in the production of commodity components and their final assembly. Such a division of the rent is generally associated with the power structure of MNCs and suppliers in a complex business network (Murphree and Anderson, 2018; Siemieniako et al., 2022a; Siemieniako and Kaliszewski, 2022), especially in

relation to SMEs suppliers (Lacoste and Johnsen, 2015; Torres de Oliveira et al., 2018). The existing power structures are often reinforced by the need for costly adjustments of production processes that SMEs undertake to meet the MNCs' requirements within GVCs (Siemieniako and Mitreęa, 2018).

In addition to economic efficiencies and effectiveness in globalised value chains (Mukherjee et al., 2019), another important motivation for MNCs to participate in GVCs is to be able to develop complex products and improve innovation (Buciuni and Pisano, 2021), as recently discussed in depth in a special issue of the *Journal of World Business* devoted specifically to innovation in GVCs (Ambos et al., 2021). Kumar et al. (2019) emphasise the importance of competitive dynamics and co-evolution between MNCs and local counterparts. For suppliers important motivating factors for participation in GVCs are, in addition to the obvious economic benefits arising from the large scale of contracts, the potential transfer of technology (Hatani, 2009) and learning from powerful buyers (Pérez and Cambra-Fierro, 2015), which support, among other things, improved management processes, as well as increased competitiveness (Siemieniako and Mitreęa, 2018).

Essential to understanding GVCs are therefore the concepts of governance and upgrading (De Marchi, et al., 2020). Governance refers to the ability of orchestrators in GVCs to appropriate or distribute work and resulting value amongst other participants and influence the ability of all participants to enhance their operations. The process of governance, hence, captures how the power of MNCs as orchestrators actively influences the distribution of profits and risks in GVCs, consequently affecting the upgrading potential of all participants (Gereffi and Lee, 2012). However, there is evidence showing that economic upgrading often takes place without corresponding improvements in social upgrading, and consequently can exacerbate social challenges (Lee et al., 2011; Lee and Gereffi, 2015).

The GVCs literature notes the increasing pressure on MNCs and micro-multinationals regarding social upgrading as a process of improving labour and other human rights of workers and the standards of employment (e.g., Barrientos et al., 2011; De Marchi, et al., 2020; Gereffi and Lee, 2016). As highlighted by Gereffi and Lee (2016), the concept of social upgrading is rooted in the International



Labour Organization (ILO)'s Decent Work framework, which covers employment, standards and rights at work, social protection and social dialogue (ILO, 2017). In its essence, therefore, social upgrading relates to improving the overall well-being of workers, as well as their dependents and communities.

There is another important element in GVCs that restricts the opportunities for social upgrading in many industries, and that is the informal sector. Although the informal economy is difficult to measure, the International Monetary Fund estimates that approximately 60% of the world's population, predominantly the most vulnerable people in emerging and developing countries, participates in the informal sector (IMF, 2021). According to the data collected in 51 countries, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) estimated that two-thirds of start-ups are unregistered (Autio and Fu, 2015). Newly established unregistered companies, including suppliers to formal buyers (Beladi et al., 2016), are often located in lower tiers of GVCs (Colovic et al., 2022) where they can avoid scrutiny. Colovic et al. (2022) suggest that the longer a company remains informal, the less probable it becomes for them to engage formally in GVCs, creating conditions ripe for avoiding legal scrutiny or any form of oversight from buyers and orchestrators. Many suppliers also engage in mock compliance (Huq and Stevenson, 2020) and, therefore, prefer to remain invisible in the informal sector. Switching from the informal to the formal sector is encouraged by many governments to improve socio-political legitimacy within GVCs (Assenova and Sorenson, 2017), and knowledge transfer between the informal and formal sectors in GVCs may also serve as a mechanism for increasing formality (Narula and van der Straaten, 2021). However, the fact remains that informal structures are more open to unequal power dynamics which, combined with lesser economic wherewithal of informal sector participants, may lead to exploitative situations.

Many of the existing complexities of GVCs apply to both formal and informal sectors in that the multiplicity of supply tiers fosters the trend of buyers not disclosing the lists of suppliers within GVCs (e.g., to financial institutions granting working capital loans), because, among other reasons, many suppliers prefer to remain invisible (Li et al., 2018; Sodhi and Tang, 2019; Wang et al., 2023). The resulting lack of value chain transparency leads to increases in labour violations by suppliers, including

child labour (see, e.g., Cho et al., 2019). More attention, therefore, needs to be drawn to the impact of GVCs on social issues (Siemieniako et al., 2021; Siemieniako et al. 2022b), including the phenomenon of modern slavery in and as facilitated through GVCs.

### **VULNERABILITY, RESILIENCE, AND EMPOWERMENT IN GVCs**

One of the main challenges for global and local efforts designed to address social issues such as modern slavery in GVCs, is that of context. Macroenvironmental and societal level concerns such as political, legal, economic, public, cultural, technological, and other contextual factors are all sources of root causes contributing to modern slavery and, in turn, have an impact on how efforts to combat modern slavery are developed, implemented and received. Therefore, understanding the wider contexts in which modern slavery is embedded is vital to the degree of success and failure of any efforts designed to address the causes and issues associated with modern slavery. Additionally, there are individual, microenvironmental and localised contextual factors, such as community, local institutions and even family dynamics that impact individuals' actions. While we introduce next the three components of the tripartite typology used in this research to understand the contexts of modern slavery in GVCs, it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a comprehensive review of extensive academic literature on each of the concepts which can already be found elsewhere (see, for example, Linnenluecke (2017); Kamin et al. (2022); Kubacki et al. (2020)). Although these constituent concepts are known to researchers, bringing them together into a descriptive typology (Allen et al., 2022; McGovern, 2020) is a novel contribution that offers a more comprehensive and practical framework to study modern slavery as a complex and systemic social issue emerging from relationships between participants in GVCs.

Working on the premise that GVCs predominantly involve interconnectedness between flows of goods, services, people, capital and ideas, we contend that people are affected by the entire system in which their actions take place (Brennan et al., 2016). Based on the diverse profile of victims (Hesketh and Johnstone, 2021; ILO, Walk Free Foundation and IOM, 2022), anyone can be vulnerable to modern slavery depending on how empowered they are to respond to systemic factors and pressures and, therefore, how resilient they are overall (Kubacki et al., 2020). It is only with abundant individual and

social agency that an empowered and resilient individual can respond to modern slavery pressures. However, given the nature of social systems, and in particular globalised value chains, individuals are often insufficiently powerful in their own right to affect change even in a micro-level context. A combination of participants and their coordinated efforts are needed to address systemic concerns. Subject to the issues driving an individual towards vulnerability and their ability to respond to modern slavery pressures, the response may be, for example, economic (e.g., higher salaries, provision of low-cost housing, etc.), or political (e.g., changes in public policy). This requires resilience and empowerment beyond the reach of an average individual.

Individuals and organisations in GVCs are more or less vulnerable to modern slavery according to their capacity to respond to the myriad pressures that surround them (Kubacki et al., 2023). Vulnerability stems from inequality of power, social capital, economic wherewithal, and so on. People are vulnerable as an outcome of systemic factors that lead to poverty, dislocation or displacement (e.g., due to climate change), social isolation or other social, physical and psychological risks (Szablewska and Bradley, 2015; Willison, et al., 2022). Further, it is our contention that individuals' vulnerability heightens along with increases in uneven power dynamics in the system (Clapp, 2023) that either aim at or lead to inequalities. Organisations are vulnerable when they are faced with power asymmetry in inter-organisational relationships and associated economic threats. GVCs, as business ecosystems where there is limited, or no, transparency (Cho et al., 2019), become replete with opportunities for exploitation, deliberate or otherwise. Vulnerability is, therefore, not limited to the exploited. It comprises various actors in the system, acting and reacting to systemic pressures and risks.

GVCs participants who are able to anticipate, cope, recover from and adapt to these systemic pressures are considered 'resilient' (Dau et al., 2023; DiBella, 2022). Resilient societies, communities, organisations or individuals are those that 'bounce back' from adverse circumstances and begin to set up structures (social, physical, economic, political, etc.) that enable them to uphold themselves in the future (Liddle and Addidle, 2022). In the contemporary VUCA world, critical to building systemic resilience appears to be an understanding of connections and interactions between participants in GVCs.

Hence, resilience in GVCs is a process of relational adaptations involving, amongst others, MNCs and workers (You, 2023). Yet despite there being a well-established body of literature on organisational resilience in response to external threats (see, for example, Linnenluecke, 2017; Williams et al., 2021), societal, community and individual resilience of workers remain background themes in the IB literature (Berkes and Ross, 2013; Williams et al., 2017), located predominantly within environmental rather than social sustainability discourses (e.g., Di Stefano et al., 2023; Rajesh, 2021). Therefore, understanding the three concepts as *contextualised*, *localised* and *relational* practices involving, among others, governments, organisations and local communities can facilitate more effective approaches to tackling modern slavery. Thus, this study aligns with an emergent trend to consider resilience from a systemic perspective (Kennedy and Linnenluecke, 2022), across micro, meso and macro levels, and in relation to the related concepts of vulnerability and empowerment (Kubacki et al., 2020; Manyena, 2006).

Finally, central to the concepts of vulnerability and resilience is the idea of empowerment, understood here as being able to (re)gain autonomy and exercise self-determination to resist the system as participants act in a complex social and economic environment (Bradley and Szablewska, 2016; Ryan and Deci, 2000). Empowerment of GVC participants to change their circumstances requires individuals and organisations to have agency over their actions. As Kamin et al. (2022) posit, empowerment needs to be embedded at the individual, organisational and community levels, and rather than it being merely a goal or a desired outcome, empowerment processes should be integrated into all emancipatory efforts. In practical terms, empowerment enables resilience-building for individuals and organisations to “gain greater control, self-efficacy, access to and control over resources, social justice, personal, interpersonal or political power, and awareness of the socio-political environment to address issues of powerlessness and to influence decisions that affect their lives” (ibid., p.6). On the flip side, the lack of empowerment, ineffective empowerment or negative empowerment processes often lead to vulnerability.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is part of a multiphase research project that, as a first step, involved a systematic review of peer-reviewed journal articles published in English until July 2021 and reporting business studies on

modern slavery in supply/value chains (with the full search protocol reported in Szablewska and Kubacki, 2023). Following the PRISMA-P Protocol for systematic reviews (Shamseer et al., 2015), search terms, divided into two search strings, were used to identify relevant articles: (“modern slavery” OR “modern-day slavery” OR “contemporary slavery” OR “neo-slavery”) AND (business OR “supply chain\*” OR “value chain\*”) in four comprehensive business journal databases (Scopus, Business Source Complete, Emerald Insight, and Web of Science), using titles, abstracts, and keywords. The PRISMA flow diagram summarising the screening process is available in Appendix 1. The initial comprehensive review process allowed for minimising any potential and actual bias in the selection and reporting of sources, notwithstanding the method’s limitations as reported (Szablewska and Kubacki, 2023), and aided the identification of relevant 26 empirical and 25 conceptual business research studies on modern slavery in GVCs for further thematic analysis performed by the first two authors. The list of all 51 studies presented alphabetically is available in Appendix 2, Table A1.

Full texts of the 51 studies were read by the first two authors to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of each study. For the purpose of this research all full paragraphs including pre-set terms of *vulnerab\**, *resil\** and *empower\** were extracted for further analysis into NVivo (a qualitative analysis software) to aid the sorting and organising of the data set. We refrained from using synonyms of any of these concepts as their interpretations can vary significantly, affecting the integrity of our thematic analysis without adding much benefit as these three concepts are widely recognisable and used in the context of modern slavery research. Themes were identified by reading, re-reading and discussing the emerging observations within the research team, focusing on patterns of meaning and creating thematically coherent groups of issues (Braun and Clarke, 2006). By merging overlapping themes, the final three themes were agreed on by the research team.

The thematic analysis followed a deductive process of coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2012), whereby the themes (or codes) emerging from the prior evidence became our categories for analysis. The centrality of ‘vulnerability’, ‘resilience’ and ‘empowerment’ in anti-modern slavery policy and literature is well-documented, but it is often taken for granted what these concepts denote in the context, or how

they relate one to another. The appearance of these terms in the initial dataset instigated our interest in their use in the identified literature and provided the inductive impetus for further investigation of the three concepts through the lens of systems thinking focusing on the emergence of micro- (within individuals and organisations), meso- (between individuals and organisations) and macro- (structural) level conditions that may facilitate modern slavery in GVCs.

To increase the validity and reliability of the qualitative analysis, Altheide and Johnson's (1994, 2011) approach to accessing, collecting, analysing, and interpreting data was employed. An analytic realism was deemed appropriate as a guiding framework for the underlying analysis as it allows for combining reflexivity of research practices and judgments with an emphasis on knowledge verification. In a practical sense, developing a clear research process and reflexive reporting between the researchers allowed for an integral mode of interpreting the data and demonstrating rigour in the analysis.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, we provide an overview of the thematic analysis of findings that emerged in our study, focusing on our proposed VRE typology and the presence of each concept, or lack thereof, at the micro (within individuals and organisations), meso (between individuals and organisations) and macro (structural) levels. While our discussion positions the emerging findings within the wider body of literature that informed the development of our themes, to improve readability and transparency, references to any of the 51 studies are provided in *italics* as examples of relevant studies. Appendix 2 shows the presence of which of the three concepts was identified in each study.

### **Theme 1: Reductionist approach to vulnerability obscures its complexity**

#### *Micro level*

Our thematic analysis of business research on modern slavery revealed that vulnerability was the dominant concept used to study modern slavery in GVCs. Although a distinction in wider social science was earlier made between behavioural, cognitive and physical vulnerabilities (Pavia and Mason, 2014), in the analysed studies a clear focus on one type of behavioural vulnerability emerged. While at the

micro level, cognitive risks (e.g., being uneducated, unskilled and unable to speak the local language) and physical characteristics (biological sex, race, mental health and age) were sporadically referred to as factors increasing the risk of modern slavery, migration emerged as the fundamental behaviour that made individuals vulnerable to modern slavery. Analysed business studies considered both domestic migration (usually from a rural location to a city) and cross-border migration in search of employment, frequently employing the words ‘vulnerable’ and ‘migrant’ as synonyms in the context of modern slavery, conflating those two distinct issues without considering their unique characteristics (Szablewska, 2022b), a practice which in itself leads to exclusionary attitudes (re)producing the hegemony of the dominant narratives and limiting available protections (Gilodi et al., 2022; Hruschka and Leboeuf, 2019).

While the act of migration exposes an individual to various risks, it is reductionist to assume that the behaviour makes an individual vulnerable without considering the meso and macro environments within which it occurs. Not all migration is the same (see, e.g., McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021), and equally not all migrants experience the labour market in the same way, with many intersecting grounds, such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, language etc., affecting these experiences and creating ‘hierarchies’ of migrants (Consterdine, 2023). The risk of abuse and exploitation increases for migrants in vulnerable situations, including those with unsettled legal status and who might have been excluded from regular/legal migration channels (see also Bylander, 2019), and engage in social and economic relationships (e.g., loans, debt-bondage) with labour brokers who employ deceptive recruitment practices (e.g., *Christ and Helliar, 2021*; David et al., 2019). Unable to seek protection from authorities, excluded from labour protection and welfare policies available to domestic workers, and devoid of alternative employment options (Szablewska, 2022b), migrants are often left with no choice but to accept working conditions that amount to modern slavery, or else face deportation into difficult conditions at home (*Berg et al., 2020*; *Crane et al., 2019*). Their exclusion from regular employment practices is further exacerbated by anti-migration rhetoric and host countries’ anti-migration policies (Portice and Reicher, 2018), creating a barrier of distrust between migrants and law enforcement agencies (*Crane et al., 2019*).

### *Meso level*

At the meso level, four situational vulnerability risk factors were identified in the analysed studies, all concentrating on different aspects of employment conditions. First, unscheduled, informal, seasonal, and transactional work, and workers deprived of their leave entitlement (*Begum and Solaiman, 2016; Christ and Burritt, 2018*) all contribute to the informal and precarious organisation of work. The use of intermediaries, agents, and unregulated sub-contracting leads to the absence of any employment documentation (*Christ and Helliard, 2021*), making it difficult for workers to provide evidence of their employment and entitlements. Second, as many factories are located in lower tiers of GVCs, they are often able to escape from government inspections and buyers' audits (*Christ et al., 2020*). This is when the health and well-being of workers are put at risk in poor working conditions violating health and safety regulations, such as the lack of provision of appropriate ventilation, inadequate fire exits and high labour intensity (*Begum and Solaiman, 2016; Benstead et al., 2018*). Third, work is delegated to unregulated shadow factories which become sites of psychological and physical abuse of workers where physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment (*Begum and Solaiman, 2016; LeBaron, 2021*) and different forms of manipulation and psychological control (*Salmon, 2020*) become common issues. Finally, workers become vulnerable to modern slavery via financial exploitation when unscrupulous employers and agents use financial mechanisms to make individuals dependent on them, expecting workers to work without payment, making irregular or below minimum-wage payments, introducing arbitrary 'fines' for alleged misdemeanours or unexplained deductions, or paying in cash to avoid leaving any electronic record of, e.g., working hours or underpayments (see, e.g., *David et al., 2019; Khadem, 2023; Fair Work Ombudsman v Maroochy Sunshine Pty Ltd & Anor, 2017; Begum and Solaiman, 2016; Burmester et al., 2019*).

### *Macro level*

The issue of workers' vulnerability was also identified in the analysed studies at the macro level, focusing on a wide range of systemic risks such as economic, legal and political; social and socio-spatial; and business and management models. First, individuals living in poverty in low- and middle-income



countries are considered, within the capitalist system and GVCs, as human resources whose role is to provide cheap and agile labour so the costs of production can remain low. Their domestic economic, legal and political systems afford them little protection from exploitative labour practices, and without property, credit history or regular income they become excluded from formal economic life (*Christ and Burritt, 2021; Crane, 2013*). The national and international economic systems they are absorbed into often offer them no meaningful alternative to succumbing to modern slavery, and limited or no social security, weak governance, political instability, government and international community inaction, along with widespread corruption and conflicts, push them further into poverty (*Begum and Solaiman, 2016; Wheaton et al., 2010; Cole and Shirgholami, 2022; Van Buren et al., 2021*). Orchestrators in GVCs have limited motivation to change workers' vulnerability to modern slavery, as that is likely to increase costs. Workers have no capacity to be resilient against these pressures.

Second, social issues such as the disintegration of families, domestic violence, marginalisation of women and children and often silent acceptance of brutalisation in the global economy contribute to the systemic creation of vulnerability resulting in modern slavery (*Wheaton et al., 2010; Van Buren et al., 2021*). Further, environmental degradation creates, for example, rural deprivation and poverty amongst farmers (*Burki et al., 2021*), and the concentration of employment opportunities in large industrial centres decreases the quality of life and increases a sense of isolation for workers separated from their traditional communities and families (*Chesney et al., 2019; Gold et al., 2015; Wheaton et al., 2010; Van Buren et al., 2021*). MNCs are primarily located in large industrial centres and are often out of touch with the vagaries of rural life. Consequently, they rely on other entities to close the gap between MNCs and workers within the value chain. However, such intermediation is fraught with issues of vulnerability and power with tightly constrained opportunities to resist systemic pressures.

Finally, business and management models employed by MNCs to orchestrate their GVCs put their corporate needs and goals ahead of those of local workers. Increased productivity and cost reductions are achieved through approaches such as 'just-in-time' production or managing volatile demand by transferring the risks to workers who vacillate between excessive work hours and no work at all (*Begum*

and Solaiman, 2016; Schenner et al., 2018). Further, unethical business standards and irresponsible business practices including, for example, circumventing supply chain audits by creating temporarily compliant workspaces (LeBaron et al., 2017), aggravate the vulnerability of workers. Both MNCs orchestrators and their suppliers are complicit in undermining the power of workers in this situation and by pre-empting any efforts to resist the pressures and effect change.

## **Theme 2: Externalising the empowerment process and locating it outside of the agency of workers serves to further disempower them**

### *Micro level*

While empowerment was commonly presented in the analysed business studies as an important approach to overcoming workers' vulnerabilities (e.g., Christ and Helliar, 2021), unlike vulnerability, it was predominantly understood as a micro-level empowerment of workers who were victims of modern slavery. Workers described as disadvantaged, overlooked and impoverished were seen as needing to be empowered, and moral and legal responsibility for their empowerment lies with MNCs (Begum and Solaiman, 2016). MNCs are expected to partner with third parties including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), locating the empowerment processes as external to the workers and reducing them to victims without agency. Ironically, externalising the empowerment process and locating it outside of the agency of workers serves to further disempower them. Reinforcing the victim narrative was also the construction of collaborative empowerment processes that involved organisations (e.g., MNCs, NGOs, suppliers) and positioned workers as voiceless victims of a "disproportional power balance" and passive recipients of empowerment (Benstead et al., 2021; Byerly, 2012; New, 2015).

For example, some argued that the empowerment of workers was a process that originated outside of the individuals, for instance through awareness-raising training sensitising them to violations of their rights and entitlements and involving them in modern slavery audit protocols through detection and remediation processes (Benstead et al., 2021; Van Buren et al., 2021). NGOs were seen to become mediators and facilitators of empowerment, transferring modern slavery awareness between organisations and workers, presumably empowering both sides. Yet others believed mediated

engagement tools such as awareness-raising training and audits aggregate individual's 'voices' without creating an empowered collective voice (*Berg et al., 2020*).

### *Meso and macro levels*

Providing a rare recognition of the meso and macro dimensions of empowerment, *Chesney et al. (2019)* acknowledged that a micro-focus on empowering individual workers might be futile if slavery-free employment options available to them were limited or unavailable. The role of MNCs appeared to be crucial in encouraging meso- and macro-level changes, for example, by aligning global value chain processes with modern slavery legislation (*Christ and Helliard, 2021*), without which micro-level empowerment risks becoming an information provision process devoid of authentic solutions that provide options for reducing modern slavery. Further, *Hewamanne (2021)* also offered a word of warning against global legal narratives that restrict local, context-specific cultural and economic arrangements that provide economic empowerment to local residents. In her study, Hewamanne described Sri Lankan part-time sex workers who were also factory workers who transgressed externally imposed normative order to achieve social and economic empowerment through land ownership, giving them a voice and agency. In an effort to meet the UK Modern Slavery Act requirement for clean supply chains, instead of paying a living wage, local employers made suspected sex workers redundant, limiting their ability for lasting empowerment. Like *Chesney et al. (2019)*, *Hewamanne (2021)* acknowledged the importance of choices available to workers, giving them a sense of agency to achieve empowerment.

Consequently, meso- and macro-level focus on empowerment stretching beyond individual workers is needed to facilitate wider transformation and eradicate modern slavery in GVCs. Business research applying a wider, possibly even systemic, approach to empowerment processes in GVCs can provide insights beyond individual workers and their agency (or lack thereof), bringing to the fore structural conditions that may be created and reinforced by MNCs, suppliers and governments who benefit from the existing norms and practices (*Mende and Drubel, 2020*). Amongst the identified business studies, there was only a handful of instances of empowerment extended beyond workers. For example, at the meso level, alliances with churches, and student and consumer groups may give workers a more level-

playing field in their negotiations with MNCs (*Rosile et al., 2021*). Long-term collaborations between participants in GVCs may also empower them to act collectively against modern slavery (*Van Buren et al., 2021*). At the macro level, NGOs can use their reputation to empower consumers so they can make informed choices about the products they buy (*Byerly, 2012*), motivating them to act against MNCs when there is evidence of modern slavery in their GVCs (*Stevenson, 2022*).

### **Theme 3: Focusing exclusively on organisational resilience conceals the essentiality of resilience within individuals, communities and societies**

#### *Meso level*

While empowerment was predominantly considered as a micro-level issue focusing on individual workers and their vulnerabilities, resilience in the analysed business research was frequently conceptualised as a meso-level issue that organisations rather than workers need to grapple with (e.g., *Cole and Shirgholami, 2022; Trautrimis et al., 2020*). Resilience was presented as an infrastructure characteristic or strengthening activity that aimed to enhance the infrastructure's ability to cope with stress. Congruent with the logic of the capitalist market, people are treated as human resources that are used to strengthen the resilience of GVCs, presumably by making the individual workers more vulnerable. Yet, as *Christ et al. (2020)* argued, putting market logic and efficiency ahead of individual suffering is unlikely to eradicate modern slavery. Resilience being limited to infrastructure, and people to human resources, neglects the micro-level resilience as a personal characteristic of individual workers and as an approach to overcoming their vulnerability.

#### *Macro level*

When resilience was discussed in the identified studies, it was closely linked to environmental turbulences, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the 2008 financial crisis by changing the direction and speed of globalisation processes (e.g., *Cole and Shirgholami, 2022; Trautrimis et al., 2020*), resulting in an increase in individual workers' vulnerability due to dislocation effects, and weakened social capital and group empowerment. As the fragmentation and isolation of participants in GVCs, such as lower-tier suppliers, and individual workers increase, disempowering processes reduce their resilience.

Concurrently, organisations, and in particular MNCs that fulfil the role of orchestrators in GVCs, have resources and capabilities to respond to the environmental turbulences and increase their resilience through working together at a global level, drawing up more restrictive contracts or downsizing the partnership pool. MNCs are hence empowered to strengthen their future organisational resilience by being aggressively anti-competitive and disempowering other participants in their GVCs (Thwaites and Glaister, 1992), further increasing vulnerability for smaller participants in the GVCs (including individual workers) (Gomes et al., 2021).

Although the analysed business studies identified attitudes towards risk assessment, joint and common purpose between GVCs members, efficient and flexible flow of materials and information, pro-active, value-oriented and long-term approaches to value chain management as crucial to building organisational resilience (e.g., *Cole and Shirgholami, 2022, Trautrimis et al., 2020*), the business research on modern slavery in GVCs remains silent on the issues of building resilience among individual workers in response to global turbulences. Again, the emphasis here remained on organisational resilience rather than at the micro-level, i.e., individual resilience of workers. While the recent COVID-19 pandemic has increased workers' vulnerability to modern slavery, the need to strengthen their resilience as a coping strategy has not been widely acknowledged. Yet, individual, communal and societal resilience are necessary foundations for combating modern slavery.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

With nearly 50 million people trapped in modern slavery worldwide (ILO, Walk Free Foundation and IOM, 2022) and growing national and international efforts to combat it, modern slavery in GVCs has emerged as one of the main disruptions and challenges to achieving sustainable, fairer and more equitable development. MNCs and micro-multinationals can no longer avoid scrutiny when consumers, national governments and (international) non-profit organisations raise questions about business practices and labour standards in their GVCs. Increasingly, domestic and regional legislation and regulation are being introduced requiring organisations to engage more explicitly in their business strategies with the UN 'protect, respect and remedy' framework (OHCHR, 2011). The newly established

Global Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, following a scoping study commissioned by the Office of the Rt. Hon. Theresa May MP (Modern Slavery PEC, 2022), has been vested with promoting and facilitating international collaboration to tackle forced labour in supply chains and supporting effective national implementation of states' international commitments in this area (Global Commission, n.d.). There is a renewed legal and political momentum for states and other stakeholders to act towards achieving UNSDG 8.7 to eradicate forced labour and end modern slavery and human trafficking. In practical terms, the production of research and evidence on the drivers of modern slavery is considered critical for identifying what works to reduce modern slavery and improve an understanding of social and political causes of vulnerability to exploitation (Modern Slavery PEC, 2022). Yet, as found in the scoping study, “[o]ur understanding of the many inter-related factors which drive that vulnerability remains fairly rudimentary, and this hinders the development of effective preventative approaches” (ibid., p. 45).

In line with these global developments, there has been a recent call for researchers “to turn attention to some alternative research streams that can provide a fertile ground for building a new theory of global strategy for business ecosystems” (Cha, 2020, p.1). That being said, in the contemporary GVCs, with their global networks of relationships and interdependencies, insufficient attention has been paid to how local and global players can co-evolve (Kumar et al., 2019) to realise Zeneli et al.’s (2018) vision where globalisation is successfully accompanied by socio-economic freedoms of local citizens. In this paper, we attempted to extend the focus of business literature on modern slavery in GVCs beyond its current use of vulnerability, resilience and empowerment and provide a more comprehensive view of the nexus between these three concepts through the lens of systems thinking.

We proposed an original descriptive typology driven by the need to study modern slavery in GVCs as a systemic social issue in which vulnerability, resilience and empowerment are not limited to being individual characteristics of any one participant within that system but rather need to be viewed as constituents of the entire system. The VRE typology provides a practical framework for studying relationships between participants in GVCs. Despite the growing understanding that when organisations

have conflicting goals and operate in a business ecosystem based on power asymmetries (such as the divide running largely across the Global North/South), efforts are needed to protect the most vulnerable organisations and individual workers (Stock, 1997), a focus which is largely missing in GVCs literature. As value chain participants respond to adversities and risks by protecting their interests, more research is urgently needed to unpack the nature of vulnerabilities, resilience and empowerment in the context of modern slavery in GVCs at the micro, meso and macro levels. The proposed VRE typology and the emergent interdependencies between its constitutive concepts offer opportunities for further research beyond its descriptive character. In particular, looking into how vulnerability, resilience and empowerment operate at the different levels of analysis would allow for bringing this typology even closer to its practical application in the context of modern slavery.

Recognising, therefore, the importance of vulnerability, resilience and empowerment of various participants in GVCs for informing the co-evolution of MNCs and local suppliers and workers, this research has provided a thematic analysis of the empirical and conceptual business research on modern slavery in value chains. Our findings have informed the development of three themes, each of which is an opportunity for future research with clear policy implications. First, the vulnerability of workers is a significant contributing factor to modern slavery in GVCs. Yet, their vulnerability is often reduced to behavioural decisions (e.g., migration) and exacerbated by business strategies that disempower workers to minimise risks for the orchestrators in business relationships, be it MNCs, micro-multinationals or local suppliers. Change is unlikely until relationships shifting emphasis away from economic efficiencies towards the well-being of workers are enforced. Second, empowerment at the meso and macro levels is needed, and the ownership of empowerment processes must lie with workers rather than MNCs, suppliers or third-party organisations. Individual empowerment is likely to remain insufficient if efforts concentrate at the micro level, without equal consideration being given to inter-organisational relationships (meso) and systemic (macro) level changes (Kaimn et al., 2022). Third, the resilience of workers, communities and societies needs to be considered alongside organisational resilience, as empowerment processes strengthening organisational resilience may serve to increase workers' vulnerabilities. There has already been some recognition of resilience-building across the micro, meso

and macro levels as critical for business growth as well as delivering on the UNSDGs. The United Nations Global Compact, the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative uniting some 22,000 companies and non-business signatories and over 60 local networks, in its Forward Faster campaign focuses on five areas of action whereby the private sector can collectively make the biggest impact to accelerate progress across all 17 UNSDGs before 2030 (United Nations Global Compact, n.d.). All of the identified actions, two of which focus specifically on supply chains (i.e., 'living wage' and 'water resilience'), acknowledge that building a resilient company comes hand in hand with building resilient societies and the planet (ibid.). To do otherwise and follow a one-directional approach to enhancing the resilience of GVCs is likely to reinforce existing power asymmetries that exacerbate existing inequalities. In the VUCA world, global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic strengthen the existing inequalities, and thus resilience-building strategies should not exclusively focus on supporting MNCs but also suppliers and, above all, workers.

These themes also offer an opportunity for future research by identifying areas that remain unexplored in the IB literature and have further policy implications, as they are likely to provide useful perspectives on understanding and managing the risks of modern slavery in GVCs. Certainly, the vulnerability of workers remains an important source of risk in modern slavery. Yet, the vulnerability of workers is often enhanced in GVCs through power asymmetries reinforced by organisational resilience-building strategies. Notwithstanding this, empowerment processes and outcomes, re-considered at the meso and macro levels (Kamin et al., 2022), have the potential to inform proactive risk management strategy focusing on prevention, while resilience-building approaches focusing on individual workers can inform a risk management strategy focusing on mitigation. Global business practices need to evolve to adapt to the new business ecosystems reflecting the need and expectation to protect workers from modern slavery, respect their rights, and provide remediation when transgressions occur.

The systemic pressures that create conditions for modern slavery occur at all levels of the system, from micro to macro. However, the current research focus on the exploited worker denies social agency to meso-level actors and obscures the role that powerful MNCs play in creating those conditions.



Decreasing the specific vulnerabilities of workers is unlikely given these dynamics. All participants in GVCs need to be empowered to address the causal conditions leading to modern slavery outcomes, wherever they occur in the value chain. Harmonising the various forms of power that exist in the GVC is problematic given the current imbalances. However, if resilient organisations, societies, communities and individuals are to be developed—a necessary precondition for overcoming modern slavery—then providing a framework for empowering all actors in the GVCs to act, and in particular those with the least power to effect change, is vital.

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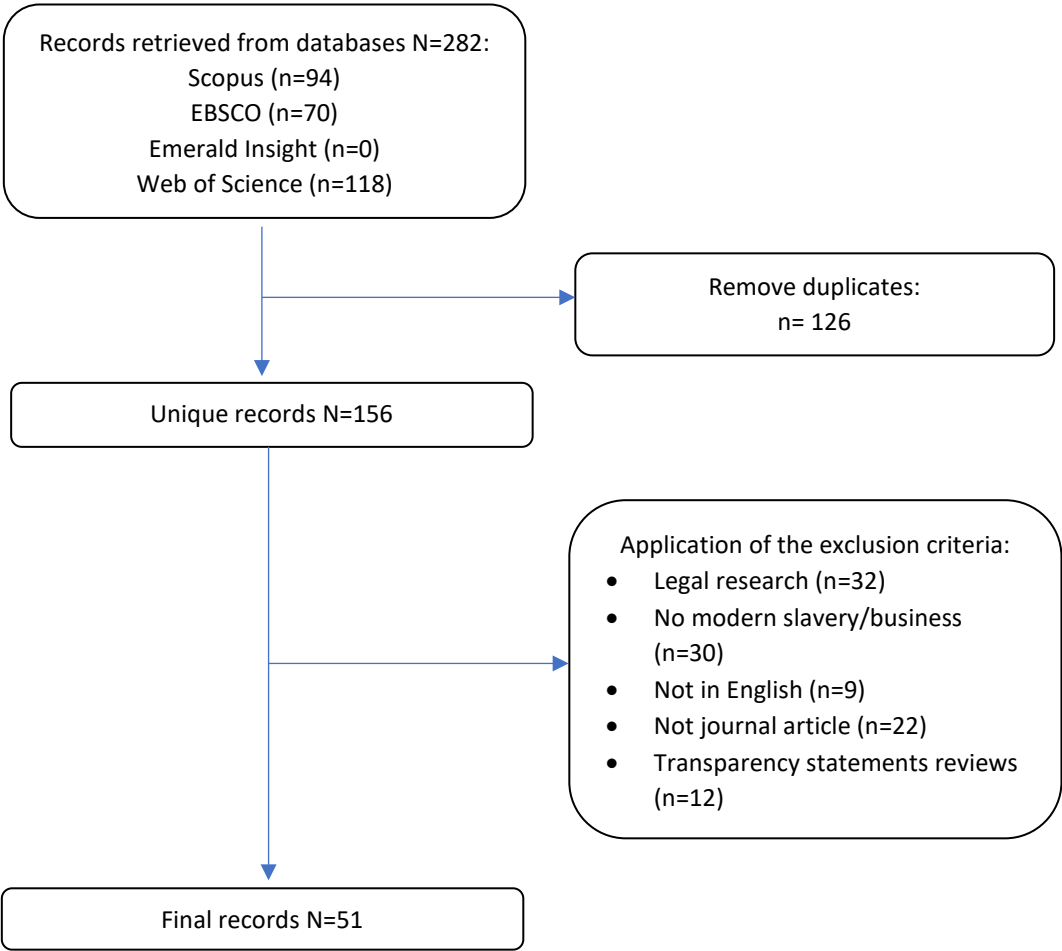
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### **Further reading**

Slavery Convention (adopted 25 September 1926, entered into force 9 March 1927) 60 LNTS 253.

**APPENDIX 1**



**APPENDIX 2, Table A1**

Article	Vulnerability	Resilience	Empowerment
Banerjee, B. (2021), "Modern slavery is an enabling condition of global neoliberal capitalism: commentary on modern slavery in business", <i>Business &amp; Society</i> , Vol. 60 No. 2, pp. 415-419.	X	X	X
Begum, A. and Solaiman, S.M. (2016), "Rana disaster: how far can we proceed with CSR?", <i>Journal of Financial Crime</i> , Vol. 23 No. 4, pp.748-768.	V	X	V
Benstead, A.V., Hendry, L.C. and Stevenson, M. (2018), "Horizontal collaboration in response to modern slavery legislation: An action research project", <i>International Journal of Operations &amp; Production Management</i> , Vol. 38 No. 12, pp.2286–2312.	V	X	X
Benstead, A.V., Hendry, L.C. and Stevenson, M. (2021), "Detecting and remediating modern slavery in supply chains: A targeted audit approach", <i>Production Planning &amp; Control</i> , Vol. 32 No. 1, pp.1136–1157.	V	X	V
Berg, L., Farbenblum, B. and Kintominas, A. (2020), "Addressing exploitation in supply chains: Is technology a game changer for worker voice?", <i>Anti-Trafficking Review</i> , No. 14, pp.47–66.	V	X	V
Burmester, B., Michailova, S. and Stringer, C. (2019), "Modern slavery and international business scholarship: the governance nexus", <i>Critical Perspectives on International Business</i> , Vol. 15 No. 2/3, pp.139-157.	V	X	V
Byerly, R.T. (2012), "Combating modern slavery: What can business do?", <i>Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics</i> , Vol. 9 No. 5, pp.25-34.	V	X	V
Carpenter, S. (2020), "Developing effective programmes to protect modern corporate supply chains against human trafficking and slavery", <i>Journal of Supply Chain Management, Logistics and Procurement</i> , Vol. 2 No. 3, pp.233-242.	X	X	X
Caruana, R., Crane, A., Gold, S. and LeBaron, G. (2021), "Modern slavery in business: The sad and sorry state of a non-field", <i>Business &amp; Society</i> , Vol. 60 No. 2, pp.251-287.	V	V	X
Chesney, T., Evans, K., Gold, S. and Trautrim, A. (2019), "Understanding labour exploitation in the Spanish agricultural sector using an agent based approach", <i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i> , Vol. 214, pp.696–704.	V	X	V

Christ, K.L. and Burritt, R.L. (2018), "Current perceptions on the problem of modern slavery in business", <i>Business Strategy and Development</i> , Vol. 1 No. 2, pp.103–114.	V	X	X
Christ, K.L. and Burritt, R.L. (2019), "Implementation of sustainable development goals: The role for business academics", <i>Australian Journal of Management</i> , Vol. 44 No. 4, pp.571-593.	V	V	V
Christ, K.L. and Burritt, R.L. (2021), "Accounting for modern slavery risk in the time of COVID-19: challenges and opportunities", <i>Accounting, Auditing &amp; Accountability Journal</i> , Vol. 34 No. 6, pp.1484-1501.	V	V	X
Christ, K.L., Burritt, R.L. and Schaltegger, S. (2020), "Accounting for work conditions from modern slavery to decent work", <i>Accounting, Auditing &amp; Accountability Journal</i> , Vol. 33 No. 7, pp.1481-1504.	V	V	V
Christ, K.L. and Helliari, C.V. (2021), "Blockchain technology and modern slavery: Reducing deceptive recruitment in migrant worker populations", <i>Journal of Business Research</i> , Vol. 131, pp.112-120.	V	X	V
Cole, R. and Shirgholami, Z. (2022), "The outlook for modern slavery in the apparel sector in a post-lockdown economy", <i>Supply Chain Management: An International Journal</i> , Vol. 27 No. 4, pp.526-537.	V	V	X
Cole, R., Stevenson, M. and Aitken, J. (2019), "Blockchain technology: implications for operations and supply chain management", <i>Supply Chain Management: An International Journal</i> , Vol. 24 No. 4, pp.469-483.	V	X	X
Cousins, P., Dutordoir, M., Lawson, B. and Neto, J.Q.F. (2020), "Shareholder wealth effects of modern slavery regulation", <i>Management Science</i> , Vol. 66 No. 11, pp. 5265–5289.	V	X	X
Crane, A. (2013), "Modern slavery as a management practice: Exploring the conditions and capabilities for human exploitation", <i>Academy of Management Review</i> , Vol. 38 No. 1, pp.49-69.	V	X	X
Crane, A., LeBaron, G., Allain, J. and Behbahani, L. (2019), "Governance gaps in eradicating forced labor: From global to domestic supply chains", <i>Regulation and Governance</i> , Vol. 13 No. 1, pp.86–106.	V	V	X



Crane, A., LeBaron, G., Phung, K., Behbahani, L. and Allain, J. (2021), "Confronting the business models of modern slavery", <i>Journal of Management Inquiry</i> , Vol. 31 No.3, <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492621994904">https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492621994904</a>	V	X	X
Crotty, S.M. and Bouché, V. (2018), "The red-light network: Exploring the locational strategies of illicit massage businesses in Houston, Texas", <i>Papers in Applied Geography</i> , Vol. 4 No. 2, pp.205–227.	X	X	X
Fox, M., Mitchell, M., Dean, M., Elliott, C. and Campbell, K. (2018), "The seafood supply chain from a fraudulent perspective", <i>Food Security</i> , Vol. 10, pp.939-963.	V	V	X
Fransen, L. and LeBaron, G. (2019), "Big audit firms as regulatory intermediaries in transnational labor governance", <i>Regulation and Governance</i> , Vol. 13 No. 2, pp.260–279.	X	V	X
Gold, S., Trautrim, A. and Trodd, Z. (2015), "Modern slavery challenges to supply chain management", <i>Supply Chain Management: An International Journal</i> , Vol. 20 No. 5, pp.485-494.	V	V	X
Hewamanne, S. (2020), "Surveillance by another name: The modern slavery act, global factory workers, and part-time sex work in Sri Lanka", <i>Signs</i> , Vol. 45 No. 3, pp.653–677.	V	X	V
Howard, N. and Forin, R. (2019), "Migrant workers, 'modern slavery' and the politics of representation in Italian tomato production", <i>Economy and Society</i> , Vol. 48 No. 4, pp.579–601.	X	X	X
Korkmaz, E. E. (2019). The US ban on Turkmen cotton and its impact on Turkmenistan's trade relationship with Turkey. <i>Siyasal-Journal of Political Sciences</i> , 28(2), 237–255.	V	X	X
Koukoulou, I., Cakir, M.S., Kunz, N., Boyd, D.S., Trautrim, A., Hatzinikolaou, K. and Gold, S. (2021), "A multi-method approach to prioritize locations of labor exploitation for ground-based interventions", <i>Production and Operations Management</i> , Vol. 30 No. 12, pp. 4396-4411.	V	X	X
Lafargue, P., Rogerson, M., Parry, G.C. and Allainguillaume, J. (2021), "Broken chocolate: Biomarkers as a method for delivering cocoa supply chain visibility", <i>Supply Chain Management</i> , Vol. 27 No. 6, pp.728-741.	V	X	V
LeBaron, G. (2021), "The role of supply chains in the global business of forced	V	X	X

labour", <i>Journal of Supply Chain Management</i> , Vol. 57 No. 2, pp.29-42.			
LeBaron, G., Lister, J. and Dauvergne, P. (2017), "Governing global supply chain sustainability through the ethical audit regime", <i>Globalizations</i> , Vol. 14 No. 6, pp.958– 975.	V	X	X
Mende, J. and Drubel, J. (2020), "At the junction: Two models of business responsibility for modern slavery", <i>Human Rights Review</i> , Vol. 21 No. 3, pp.313-335.	V	X	V
Naheem, M.A. (2021), "Do cryptocurrencies enable and facilitate modern slavery?", <i>Journal of Money Laundering Control</i> , Vol. 24 No. 3, pp.491-501.	V	X	X
New, S.J. (2015), "Modern slavery and the supply chain: the limits of corporate social responsibility?", <i>Supply Chain Management: An International Journal</i> , Vol. 20 No. 6, pp.697-707.	V	X	V
Paraskevas, A. and Brookes, M. (2018), "Nodes, guardians and signs: Raising barriers to human trafficking in the tourism industry", <i>Tourism Management</i> , Vol. 67, pp.147–156.	V	X	X
Parente, T.C., Lucas, A.C. and Cordeiro, R.A. (2017), "Contemporary slavery in Brazil: What have companies (not) done to prevent it?", <i>Revista de Administracao Mackenzie</i> , Vol. 18 No. 4, pp.39–64.	V	X	X
Rosile, G.A., Boje, D.M., Herder, R.A. and Sanchez, M. (2021), "The Coalition of Immokalee Workers uses ensemble storytelling processes to overcome enslavement in corporate supply chains", <i>Business and Society</i> , Vol. 60 No. 2, pp.376–414.	V	X	V
Russell, E., Lee, J. and Clift, R. (2018), "Can the SDGs provide a basis for supply chain decisions in the construction sector?", <i>Sustainability</i> , Vol. 10 No. 3, pp.1–14.	V	X	X
Salmon, U. (2020), "Modern slavery in the criminal family firm: Misrecognition and symbolic violence in recruitment and retention practices", <i>Journal of Family Business Management</i> , Vol. 12 No. 2, pp.280-295.	V	X	X
Schenner, J.K. (2018), "The governance of the horticultural supply chain in the United Kingdom: A source of forced labour?", <i>Economia Agro-Alimentare</i> , Vol. 20 No. 1, pp.29–54.	V	X	X

Stevenson, M. (2022), "Hidden in plain sight: the bystander effect and the mobilisation of modern slavery whistleblowing", <i>Supply Chain Management: An International Journal</i> , Vol. 27 No. 1, pp.128-139.	V	X	V
Stringer, C. and Michailova, S. (2018), "Why modern slavery thrives in multinational corporations' global value chains", <i>Multinational Business Review</i> , Vol. 26 No. 3, pp.194-206.	V	X	X
Thornthwaite, L. and Sheldon, P. (2019), "Employer and employer association matters in Australia in 2018", <i>Journal of Industrial Relations</i> , Vol. 61 No. 3, pp.382-401.	V	V	X
Tickler, D., Meeuwig, J.J., Bryant, K., David, F., Forrest, J.A.H., Gordon, E., Larsen, J.J., Oh, B., Pauly, D., Sumaila, U.R. and Zeller, D. (2018), "Modern slavery and the race to fish", <i>Nature Communications</i> , Vol. 9, Article number 4643.	V	X	X
Trautrim, A., Gold, S., Touboulic, A., Emberson, C. and Carter, H. (2020), "The UK construction and facilities management sector's response to the Modern Slavery Act: An intra-industry initiative against modern slavery", <i>Business Strategy and Development</i> , Vol. 4 No. 3, pp.279–293.	V	X	X
Trautrim, A., Schleper, M.C., Cakir, M.S. and Gold, S. (2020), "Survival at the expense of the weakest? Managing modern slavery risks in supply chains during COVID-19", <i>Journal of Risk Research</i> , Vol. 23 No. 7-8, pp.1067-1072.	V	V	X
Van Buren III, H. J., Schrempf-Stirling, J. and Westermann-Behaylo, M. (2021), "Business and human trafficking: A social connection and political responsibility model", <i>Business and Society</i> , Vol. 60 No. 2, pp.341-375.	V	X	V
Wheaton, E.M., Schauer, E.J. and Galli, T.V. (2010), "Economics of human trafficking", <i>International Migration</i> , Vol. 48 No. 4, pp.114-141.	V	X	X
Wilhelm, M., Kadfak, A., Bhakoo, V. and Skattang, K. (2020), "Private governance of human and labor rights in seafood supply chains—The case of the modern slavery crisis in Thailand", <i>Marine Policy</i> , Vol. 115, 103833.	X	X	V
Wray-Bliss, E. and Michelson, G. (2021), "Modern slavery and the discursive construction of a propertied freedom: Evidence from Australian business", <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> , Vol. 179, pp.649-663.	V	X	X

