

Manuscript Details

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to examine the previous and the current efforts and the priorities of sustainability initiatives in the public sector. **Design/Methodology/approach** – This study has been conducted in one industry, overcoming contextual bias as a judgmental sampling was used to select the public hospitals that were studied. Only knowledgeable key informants were approached and used. **Findings** – The examination of the previous and the current efforts and the priorities of the sustainability initiatives revealed in this study indicate the existence of different trends in the public hospitals studied. **Research limitations/implications** – The results report the key trends that were disclosed in the public hospitals studied in their efforts towards sustainability. In particular, the results show that there appears to be a lack of guidelines and homogeneity in sustainability planning in public hospitals in Spain, accompanied by the near universal absence of the evaluation phase in respect to the outcomes of the sustainability initiatives that have been put in place in these organizations. **Managerial Implications** – The multi-dimensional factors of sustainability initiatives provide managerial guidance to assess the previous and the current efforts and priorities. These factors also provide organizational guidance to assess the trends of an organization through time. **Originality/Value** – This study contributes to a selection of factors regarding the previous and the current efforts and the priorities of sustainability initiatives applicable in public hospitals. It provides a multi-dimensional framework of factors that can be used in order to describe sustainability trends.

Keywords	sustainable development; healthcare; trends
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Letter EPP editor.docx [Response to Reviewers (without Author Details)]

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Sustainability Trends in Public Hospitals - Title Page V0.docx [Title Page (with Author Details)]

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Sustainability Trends in Public Hospitals - Figures.docx [Figure]

Sustainability Trends in Public Hospitals - Tables.docx [Table]

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Dear Dr Marra,

Thank you for your positive comments about our revised paper and for giving us a chance to resubmit it based upon the suggestions of the reviewers for improvement to our paper.

The comments in respect of this revision were that,

"In brief, we would like your manuscript (including the abstract) to explicitly touch upon planning and evaluation implications besides your management-centered analysis."

These comments led us to consider how we could fulfil your request and after some reflection, we decided that the best way that we saw to do so was to expand our 'Managerial Implications' section from 9 recommendations to 22 recommendations.

When read in sequence, we hope that you will see these recommendations as a template by which the public hospitals in Spain can craft their sustainability initiatives moving forward.

If we may suggest here, we believe that this template is transferable to any organization wishing to establish a sustainability program or to revise its current sustainability program and that thus this template could also be used across a wider range of organizations than just the hospitals that were involved in this study.

Our changes to the paper are highlighted in **blue** within our re-submission.

We hope that you will find our changes acceptable to you, as we think that, based on the insightful suggestions of the reviewers, the paper has been improved and offers a more comprehensive set of recommendations than were in our other submissions.'

Best regards,
The authors

Sustainability Trends in Public Hospitals: Efforts and Priorities

HIGHLIGHTS

Report the main determinants of orientation and organization from hospitals' past and present sustainability

Reveals descriptive determinants of sustainable development in private hospitals

Divides these determinants into two categories, namely the orientation and organization

Sustainability orientation has changed from value-based initiatives to business-based ones.

The orientation changing from environmental initiatives to social ones.

The orientation changing from reactive initiatives to proactive ones.

Sustainability Trends in Public Hospitals: Efforts and Priorities

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Sustainability Trends in Public Hospitals: Efforts and Priorities

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

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Keywords: sustainable development, healthcare, trends.

Sustainability Trends in Public Hospitals: Efforts and Priorities

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are now cognizant of the prescient need to focus upon the concept of sustainability in all that they do. This need is not one that can be adopted to be seen to be doing the correct thing, as it needs to be embraced in an earnest and honest way where the motivation is to be doing the right thing in respect to sustainability, as it is the right thing to do. Present day society expects and demands nothing less.

One of these expectations that societies in the developed world have of organizations is that they need to exhibit the behaviours that the society deems as being sustainable for the society moving forward (Eriksson and Svensson, 2016).

Linnenluecke and Griffiths, (2013, p. 382) note that sustainability has “*drastically changed the way in which companies do business.*” In many organizations today, sustainability is: (i) a central element of the business itself (Yang et al., 2017); (ii) an integral part of a company’s strategy, vision and culture (Stead and Stead, 2000; Jin and Bai, 2011); and (iii) linked to decisions that are made at the strategic level of the organization (Engeert et al., 2016). Leuenberger and Bartle (2009) believe that a sustainable development plan integrates sustainability into the decision-making process of the organization. Whilst there is a belief that sustainability should be and in fact is an integral part of the decision-making processes in many organizations, Daily and Huang (2001) have suggested that there is currently a lack of clarity as to how organizations actually can and do implement sustainability initiatives into their business processes. Sridhara et al. (2007; p.105) added that “*planning for sustainability is challenging and is rarely incorporated in the planning process of an initiative*”.

In particular, there is in the healthcare industry not only a lack of clarity about the sustainability organization, but also there is a lack of research on sustainability aspects, despite the vital importance of sustainability in this sector. In the healthcare industry, it is critical to maintain the healthcare service not only to evaluate and monitor the healthcare service (Reeve et al., 2015), but also it is essential to make it sustainable for its survival, as pointed out by Oldewage-Theron et al. (2018). In this sense, Simmons et al. (2015) offer an example of the practical implementation of sustainable initiatives in the healthcare sector.

In this research, we seek to further develop an area that previously has been overlooked in the sustainability literature, which is the nature of the driving forces behind sustainability initiatives over time. As such, we seek to compare the similarities and the differences between value and business-driven sustainability initiatives across time. To the best of our knowledge, there is no such previous study with this aim. Value-driven organizations are those organizations that are not based on the notion of maximizing profits, but are motivated more so by working towards a set of goals based primarily upon other values of a more social nature. Business-driven organizations are those organizations whose first and foremost focus is upon profit maximization. The research focus of this study is upon hospitals operating within public hospital sector in Spain.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the latter days of the Twentieth Century, the need to consider the concept of sustainability has become de rigeur for all organizations if they are to be perceived as

serving their societies. As global warming has been accepted by most people as a force majeure in our future decision making, Government policy makers have led the way in the need to focus upon sustainability in all of its forms. Many organizations across the world have taken up this challenge.

It needs to be recognized that this need to live up to the expectations of society in a range of areas including social responsibility is not new. In 1938, Barnard, "*addressed the need to analyze the economic, legal, moral, social and physical elements of the environment when making decisions*" (Joyner and Payne, 2002, p. 301).

In 1945, Barnard's work was further developed by Simon who concluded that business managers were looking to consider their responsibility to their communities that exceeded those legal obligations already mandated by the society that governed their behaviours (Joyner and Payne, 2002).

Bowen (1953) suggested that organizations needed to be aware of that which was of value to the members of their society and to act accordingly, so as to be seen to be contributing to the overall value of their society.

The work of Davis in 1973 (Wood 1991, p. 695) further added to this concept by stating that,

"Society grants legitimacy and power to business. In the long run, those who do not use power in a manner which society considers responsible will tend to lose it. (Davis, 1973, p. 314)."

Robin and Reidenbach (1987) suggested that the concept of a 'social contract' tacitly existed between the organization and the society in which it operates. This social contract was based upon the expectation that businesses are allowed to exist as long as they create benefits for their society (Moore, 1999). Thomas et al. (2004, p. 56) developed this idea further by postulating that business is now viewed as an "*essential part of the social fabric*" to which it needs to contribute and to which it is expected to contribute. Cohan (2002, p. 291) stated that the purpose of business should be for organizations, "*to make society better off, and to create societal wealth, not just create wealth for shareholders.*"

The aftermath of the Global Financial Crash of the late 1980s, reinforced to a new generation the idea that organizations have expectations placed upon them by their society that lead to obligations to that society by these organizations (Benson, 1989; Mahoney, 1990; Grant, 1991; Fraedrich, 1992; MacLagan, 1992; Milton-Smith, 1995; Handleman and Arnold, 1999; Cragg, 2000). This idea was brought again in to stark focus twenty years later as a result of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008.

As Wood (2002, p. 72) stated in his Partnership Model of Corporate Ethics,

"Business is a partnership among the society, its citizens, and corporations. We all benefit if this arrangement is viewed that we all thrive individually on the success of the whole."

Defining sustainability is not an easy task as people and organizations operationalize the concept in a number of ways (Langhelle, 1999). It can be suggested that the concept of

sustainability is perhaps best understood through a definition of sustainable development, which is stated in the Brundtland Report (Rodriguez et. al., 2018; p. 755) that it is: “...*development which meets the needs of the current without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs...*” (WCED, 1987; p. 43).

Sustainability has come to include three different areas of performance: economic, environmental and social that is commonly referred to as the ‘triple bottom line’ (Carter and Rogers, 2008; Elkington, 1997; Winter and Knemeyer, 2013) or can also be seen as ‘people, planet and profit’ (Glavas and Mish, 2015).

Insert Figure 1 about here.

Within public sectors across the developed world, the adoption of the principles of sustainability and the flow on policies from such a change has put all organizations in these public sectors on notice that an adherence to the principles of sustainability would be in the interests of all stakeholders (Nijaki and Worrel, 2012).

Klettner et al. (2014) believe that to implement sustainability in organizations that these principles must be implemented in a strategic manner that will only succeed if there is the necessary management support to bring the principles of sustainability to fruition. There needs to be a commitment to the principles, then an acceptance by the organizations, then leadership support within each organization, followed by the implementation and the communication of the principles of sustainability to all stakeholders of each organization.

The Omnipresence of Time

Time is a constant in our lives and it is time that governs our lives. We live in the present, cognizant of our past and looking towards our future Medlin (2004). As Ancona et al. (2001, p. 512) observed, “...*time and timing are everywhere...*”.

In order to have an understanding of any phenomenon under consideration through the research process there is a need to include the impacts of the subjective aspects of time (Halinen and Törnroos, 1995; and Peters et al., 2012) as they do impact upon our decisions and the courses of action taken (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002; Mason and Leek, 2012; Halinen et al., 2012; Medlin, 2004).

It has been suggested by a number of authors that organizations and the members of those organizations perform their tasks impacted upon by time and space and subsequently that time can be used as a frame of reference by which to understand organizational managerial and marketing processes (Lee and Liebenau, 1999; Langley, 1999; Plakoyiannaki and Saren, 2006; Quintens and Matthyssens, 2010).

George and Jones, (2000, p. 670) believe that if one is trying to build theory then in order to provide an accurate description or explanation of a phenomenon, “...*explicitly considering and incorporating time in business studies will help researchers to give a more realistic explanation of business and individuals behavior...*”.

A number of authors have pointed out that they believe that there is a lack of current knowledge in terms of the associated effects on business and society of the function of

time (Quintens and Matthyssens, 2010; Hedaa and Törnroos, 2008). In addition, Lee and Liebenau (1999, p. 1035) state that:

“...every member of any organization performs his/her role within the dimensions of time and space...” but “...where there is much time related research, there is little research on time in the management and organizational literature...” (p. 1035).

George and Jones (2000, p. 658) suggested that: *“...the time condition (...) plays a much more important and significant role in theory and theory building because time directly impacts the what, how, and why elements of a theory...”*

Medlin (2004) contended that all business relationships form through previous perceptions, current interactions as well as future expectations that can only be understood as a series of actions: *“...as interfirm interaction occurs in the current, both the previous and the future are involved... ...the previous provides cause and effect reasons that explain the current relationship, while the future holds the planned relationship outcomes...”* (p. 190). For their part, Rodriguez et al. (2019; p. 78) pointed out that, *“Sustainable development implies closing a gap between two points in time”*.

Sustainability in healthcare

Despite the existence of sustainability research focusing on healthcare (e.g. Ahsan and Rahman, 2017; Pantzarzis et al. 2017) where it is known that to offer a healthcare service in a sustainable mode leads to maintaining not only health, but also the environment and the society (Ostrom *et al.*, 2010). The literature review undertaken as a precursor for this study revealed a very limited amount of research centered upon sustainability performance in public hospitals, however, it is recognized that health is a fundamental economic and social subject (Loane, Webster and D'Alessandro, 2015) that could involve potential major problems (Kennedy and Parsons, 2012). As such, this study finds itself in an emerging area, where one could contend that important knowledge is waiting to be revealed.

Høgevold and Svensson (2016) and Høgevold *et al.* (2014) identify multiple organizational directions from which to assess the organizational efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives through time. This study combines and applies their developed frameworks in the service-oriented industry of public hospitals. The research objectives of this study are to assess the trends (efforts and priorities) of sustainability initiatives in the hospitals studied. As shown in Figure 1, the gap between the previous and the current efforts and the priorities of sustainability initiatives provide guidance to assess the possible trends into the future.

Olsen (1998) concluded that there was at that time a significant interest in studying this issue of sustainability in the healthcare sector, in order to make services more sustainable and to reinforce the role of service delivery in being successful. Additionally, Quintens and Matthyssens (2010, p. 91) commented that *“...one particular type of research where time and processes may play a major role is case study research...”*, hence, this work is based upon a longitudinal case study analysis of public hospitals in the Spanish healthcare industry, as we seek to provide a foundation for the trends of sustainability initiatives in the area in respect of the approaches of public hospitals to sustainability.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Context and Selection of the Sector and Key Informants

The healthcare sector, in respect to public hospitals in Spain, has been selected in which to conduct this study. The selection of a unique industry and this research design led to the research team being able to avoid the potential interference of several industries in the data and thus control and minimize the contextual bias of this study (Hartline and Jones, 1996).

Public hospitals have been selected for this research using a judgmental sampling (e.g. Fischhoff and Bar-Hillel, 1982). The concept of sustainability intrinsically involves social, environmental and economic care to be considered by the parties involved. The main activity of a hospital is precisely to provide a social service of caring for its patients.

The knowledge about the current and the previous sustainability initiatives of the public hospital was the criteria followed in order to select the key informants.

Data Collection

This research is based on the case study method. Yin (1994; p.1) points out that case studies are the preferred research strategy in such circumstances: “...*when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context...*”. As a guide for the data collection, this study also has followed the framework of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) as proposed by Elkington (1997).

The research team has followed an inductive approach in this study to collect data. The main reasons for using this approach are justified by Thomas (2006) as: i) establishing an overview with the complete information collected from the key informants in the in-depth interviews; ii) setting up connections between current and previous efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives and summarizing the information obtained from the in-depth interviews; and iii) developing a framework through gathering the data detailed as experiences by the key informants.

Three in-depth interviews were arranged with the executive responsible for CSR in each of the public hospitals surveyed. Each in-depth interview had two rounds: one initial round and a follow up round. The main aim of the meetings was to collect information about the previous and the current efforts and the priorities of the sustainability initiatives in the hospitals selected.

Each interview lasted around 90 minutes during which time the research team was taking notes and recapping the information gathered. Depending upon the responses given to the lead questions put to the respondents, between 78 and 100 questions were asked of the respondents. The purpose of asking these questions was to acquire knowledge about the sustainability trends of the hospitals across various areas. Høgevold and Svensson (2016) was the study that was used as a guide for setting up the themes for the questions.

The interviewees were asked about the previous and the current efforts and priorities in multiple areas of each hospital and about what they thought would be the future trend of

their sustainability initiatives. The results are supported through 105 quotes taken from the conversations with the respondents. The study offers for each hospital one quote in each different dimension of the framework followed and are shown in Table 1. Consequently, the study provides 105 quotes related to the efforts and the priorities of the sustainability initiatives of the hospitals studied.

The information collected, from the public hospitals in respect to their previous and their current sustainability initiatives, was structured across the areas of interest used in the study. Furthermore, after each in-depth interview the information obtained was transcribed into text documents.

Dimensions of Examination

Høgevold *et al.* (2014) and Høgevold and Svensson (2016) use fifteen areas to study the sustainability trends through time in an organization. As stated above, it is this framework upon which this study was based and the elements of the framework were used to formulate the questions that were asked of the interviewees in terms of the previous sustainability initiatives and which are the current ones in respect of their hospital. The dimensions examined in this research are shown in Table 1. Each dimension was analysed asking ‘Why?’ and ‘How?’ in respect to the efforts and the priorities of sustainability initiatives that were carried out previously by each hospital and which are the current ones that they are addressing.

From the input of the key informants, the trends of sustainability initiatives based on previous and current efforts and priorities in the public hospitals selected are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here.

RESULTS

This section reports on the results of our questions and in this section a selection of gathered responses from key respondents in public hospitals (Hosp 1 to 3) is included. These responses demonstrate the reasoning of the hospitals in respect of each area of assessment (see Table 1) that was discussed during the interviews with the key informants. Examples of citations from key informants are shown in the text for each area, while all citations on this area are displayed in Tables 2ⁿ (previous) and 3ⁿ (current).

The first section focuses on previous organizational efforts and priorities of these hospitals, while the second section focuses on their current efforts and priorities. Combining the previous with the current in the discussion of the results offers insights into the evolutionary drivers of sustainability initiatives in public hospitals in the Spanish healthcare industry.

Previous Efforts and Priorities

Insert Table 2 about here.

Area – ‘that it was the right thing to do’

All of the public hospitals studied [100%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives were based on the conviction ‘that it was the right thing to do’

at the time. Table 2¹ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp1 told us that: “...it was our obligation as a hospital...”.

Area – ‘employee/staff initiatives’

All of the public hospitals studied [100%] also revealed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on employee and staff initiatives. Table 2² displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 commented that: “...a manager was really involved...”.

Area – ‘intuitive reasons’

Only one of the public hospitals studied [33%] acknowledged that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on intuitive reasons. Table 2³ displays citations in this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 mentioned that: “...we did not have a clear idea about how to manage the sustainability initiatives due to our large size...”.

Area – ‘basic environmental actions’

All of the public hospitals studied [100%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on basic environmental actions. Table 2⁴ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 said that: “...we were not ready for complex ones...”.

Area – ‘limited social considerations’

All of the public hospitals studied [100%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on limited social considerations. Table 2⁵ displays citations in this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 said that: “...we had a basic budget, so we could only perform basic social actions...”.

Area – ‘cost-oriented economic effects’

Two of the public hospitals studied [67%] acknowledged that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on cost-oriented economic effects. Table 2⁶ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 said that: “...we tried to administer public funds properly...”. On the other hand, Hosp3 staff commented that: “...economic aspects are always current but are not the most important ones...”.

Area – ‘within our organizational barriers’

Two of the public hospitals studied [67%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based within their organizational boundaries. Table 2⁷ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 commented that: “...it was easier to start for oneself...”. Hosp2 expressed a different view and responded that: “...our hospital was a test in a broader regional context...”.

Area – ‘myopic challenges’

Not one of the public hospitals studied [0%] acknowledged that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on myopic challenges. Table 2⁸ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 revealed that: “...it was the first step to planning for broader actions...”. Hosp2 suggested that: “...it was the test of a bigger plan that included the whole healthcare system...”.

Area – ‘general solutions’

Two of the public hospitals studied [67%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on general solutions. Table 2⁹ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 stated that: “...*the final aim was the whole region...*”, however, Hosp1 stated that: “...*at that moment, solutions were thought through in a reduced context and for particular purposes...*”.

Area – ‘short-term orientation’

Only one out of the three public hospitals studied [33%] acknowledged that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on a short-term orientation. Table 2¹⁰ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 stated that: “...*we did not have capacity to be more than short term...*”. Hosp3 proffered another view and said that: “...*the initial reason was to start and keep doing things well for a long time...*”.

Area – ‘a limited operational perspective’

Only one of the public hospitals studied [33%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based upon a limited operational perspective. Table 2¹¹ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 stated that: “...*we are public, so we were not really concerned about the economic aspect...*”. Hosp1 expressed the view that: “...*our CEO thought in terms of planning to move towards real sustainability...*”

Area – ‘intrinsic organizational values’

All public hospitals studied [100%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based upon intrinsic organizational values. Table 2¹² displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 told us that: “...*thanks to our values, we are the test hospital, the first one in the region ...*”

Area – ‘an inside-out perspective’

All of the public hospitals studied [100%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on an inside-out perspective. Table 2¹³ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp1 explained that: “...*our manager started thinking about things that we could do internally...*”

Area – ‘an unchanged organizational structure’

None of the three public hospitals studied [0%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on an unchanged organizational structure. Table 2¹⁴ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 explained that: “...*first we had to create the structure for sustainability initiatives...*”

Area – ‘reactive organizational actions’

None of the three public hospitals studied [0%] agreed that their previous efforts and priorities of sustainability were based on reactive actions. Table 2¹⁵ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 commented that: “...*we decided on the actions to plan...*”.

Current Efforts and Priorities

Insert Table 3 about here.

Area – ‘to do the right thing and do things right’

All of the public hospitals studied [100%] commented that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on the conviction ‘to do the right thing and do things right’. Table 3¹ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 told us that: “...*is the reason why we started trying to do things better...*”.

Area – ‘top leadership initiatives’

Only one of the public hospitals studied [33%] commented that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based upon top leadership initiatives. Table 3² displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 commented that: “...*we still need to reinforce our initiatives for employees...*”. Hosp1 indicated that in their case: “...*doctors are maintaining the actions planned in the previous and promoting new ones in the current...*”.

Area – ‘conscious reasons’

Two of the public hospitals studied [67%] agreed that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based upon conscious reasons. Table 3³ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 told us that: “...*it is nowadays almost an obligation to perform sustainability actions for public hospitals ...*”. Hosp1 had a different approach and responded that: “...*new top management does not seem really aware of the sustainability importance, it is in a pause...*”.

Area – ‘complex environmental actions’

Two of the public hospitals studied [67%] agreed that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on complex environmental actions. Table 3⁴ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp1 told us that: “...*needed in order to be considered a quality hospital...*”, however, Hosp3 stated that: “...*our economic budget does not let us perform complex actions...*”.

Area – ‘extensive social considerations’

Two of the public hospitals studied [67%] acknowledged that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on extensive social considerations. Table 3⁵ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 told us that: “...*social initiatives are more extensive, because the main streams are addressed by the central healthcare system of our region...*”. Hosp1 had a different perspective and commented that: “...*with a previous manager, it was more extensive in the previous, but not now...*”.

Area – ‘value-oriented economic effects’

Only one of the public hospitals studied [33%] commented that their current efforts and priorities in respect of sustainability initiatives are based on value-oriented economic effects. Table 3⁶ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 concluded that: “...*our hospital works with a budget... we take into account not wasting money...*” whilst Hosp1 expressed that: “...*we are not really concerned about economic aspects...*”.

Area – ‘beyond our organizational boundaries’

Only one of the public hospitals studied [33%] agreed that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on considerations beyond their organizational boundaries. Table 3⁷ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 concluded that: “...*our hospital is part of the public hospital network...*”. Hosp1 expressed that their focus was internal as: “...*at the moment, we have at least to reconstruct our previous sustainability initiatives...*”.

Area – ‘holistic challenges’

Two of the public hospitals studied [67%] acknowledged that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on holistic challenges. Table 3⁸ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 mentioned that: “...*our hospital is aware that society is moving towards more sustainability...*”. Hosp1 surprisingly commented that: “...*at the moment, sustainability initiatives are not really considered...*”.

Area – ‘specific solutions’

Only one of the public hospitals studied [33%] agreed that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based upon specific solutions. Table 3⁹ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp1 stated that: “...*our hospital is running actions established by the previous CEO...*”. Hosp2 commented differently that: “...*the actions are general in terms of affecting all the public hospitals in this area...*”.

Area – ‘long-term orientation’

Two of the public hospitals studied [67%] consented that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on a long-term orientation. Table 3¹⁰ displays citations on this area from the key informants. Hosp3 revealed that “...*we are building the bases carefully to achieve a robust sustainability project with a long-term orientation...*”. Hosp1 differed and said that: “...*not sure... we depend on changes in top leadership...*”.

Area – ‘an extended operational perspective’

Two of the public hospitals studied [67%] consented that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on an extended business perspective. Table 3¹¹ displays citations on this area from the key informants. Hosp2 commented that: “...*the central government is planning the whole public healthcare system...*” however, Hosp1 explained that: “...*our top leadership just maintains a few sustainability actions and keeps them alive...*”.

Area – ‘extrinsic organizational values’

Only one of the public hospitals studied [33%] agreed that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on extrinsic organizational values. Table 3¹² displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 commented that: “...*it is both intrinsic and extrinsic, but it is true that the public health system has advanced a lot in recent years transmitting important values to us...*” however, Hosp1 stated that: “...*nowadays the hospital focuses on itself...*”.

Area – ‘an outside-in perspective’

Only one of the public hospitals studied [33%] acknowledged that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on an outside-in perspective. Table 3¹³

displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp2 mentioned that: “...our perspective always includes the rest of the hospitals...” Hosp3 explained differently that: “...we are still not ready to think outside of our organization...”.

Area – ‘changes in organizational structure’

None of the public hospital studied [0%] suggested that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on changes in organizational structure. Table 3¹⁴ displays citations on this area from the key informants. Hosp2 reported and explained that: “...not because of sustainability reasons... ...but because the central system is already organized...”

Area – ‘proactive organizational actions’

Two out of the three public hospitals studied [67%] agreed that their current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives are based on proactive organizational actions. Table 3¹⁵ displays citations on this area from the key informants. For example, Hosp3 told us that: “...really proactive to achieve consolidated sustainability initiatives...” Hosp1 expressed a different set of circumstances and explained that: “...our leadership is not proactive at the moment...”

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section offers a summary of the results derived from the three public hospitals studied in Spain. The discussion of results is divided into three sub-sections as follows: (i) a view of previous efforts and priorities; (ii) a view of current efforts and priorities describing differences and similarities between hospitals; and (iii) trends between the previous and the current efforts and the priorities considered during each time period.

Previous Efforts and Priorities

A decade ago, the public hospitals studied did not consider the efforts and the priorities of sustainability initiatives. They had no plans to implement sustainability initiatives. The hospitals did merely perceive that they did not have sustainability initiatives in place, however, they undertook some sustainability initiatives, but it was not a conscious choice to commit to sustainability. At the time, the concept of sustainability was not well established, and the awareness was less than it is today.

Committed staff members were engaged in promoting sustainability initiatives, while the organization itself did not really do it. The sustainability initiatives done were top-down oriented and if so, they were promoted by top staff members in the hospitals or they were bottom-up oriented that were promoted by other employees. The organizational level of staff members in the hospitals that promoted sustainability initiatives affected the extension of the penetration in the organization of these sustainability initiatives.

Previously, the reason to engage in sustainability initiatives was based upon staff member values, not upon organizational ones. The environmental component of sustainability initiatives was the core emphasis for all public hospitals studied to behave in a proactive way. It was the organization of the hospital that caused limits as to what extent the sustainability initiatives were undertaken or not, and/or were continued or discontinued.

Across the hospitals studied, the public resources to undertake sustainability initiatives were limited. It was considered as additional efforts and priorities at that time imposed from outside influences, not a core focus of the hospitals themselves.

Current Efforts and Priorities

The current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives across the hospitals studied reveal differences and similarities.

Differences

The public hospitals studied communicate a series of reasons for their commitment to sustainability initiatives. For example, what they want to achieve with their sustainability initiatives differs. The hospitals also invest their efforts and priorities in sustainability initiatives differently and these initiatives are not of equal importance to them.

The hospitals prioritize sustainability initiatives differently and the extent of that implementation of the initiatives varies as well. In consequence, each hospital has chosen a different roadmap of efforts and priorities towards trying to achieve sustainability. They have been either more committed nowadays than previously or less committed today than previously. There are hospitals that have not made progress in their efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives at all, but still do the same actions as they did since the inception of their commitment efforts and priorities. Their efforts are not evolving.

The current efforts and priorities in this area of each hospital have evolved based on factors such as: the roadmap decided by the CEO and/or the economic or social circumstances of the hospital in the society. The hospital profile affects the focus of its sustainability initiatives.

The differences found in this study between the public hospitals studied are about factors in the surrounding environment and other conditions in the society. Altogether, these factors determine what the hospitals do or do not do. For example, key factors of the trends of public hospitals of sustainability initiatives are: a change of leadership, public funding, the public healthcare system, organizational values, and or top-staff focus.

The results presented in this study show that the public hospitals are not eager to compare their sustainability initiatives with other hospitals, which is a missed opportunity for all of them and for all of us.

Similarities

The key informants of the public hospitals studied communicated that sustainability initiatives are a timely topic at present. The public hospitals studied consider that it is important for them to engage in sustainability initiatives, but it may not be necessarily based on a genuine commitment to sustainability. On the contrary, the reason may be for publicity purposes only with internal and external stakeholders of the hospitals so as to be seen as doing the right thing.

The sustainability initiatives in the public hospitals studied are undertaken based on the efforts and priorities determined by top staff. The hospitals studied communicated that they need to direct more of their attention to social sustainability initiatives. They also proffered that their sustainability initiatives should be generally improved. Furthermore, the hospitals explain that they have public funding to engage in sustainability initiatives, so there is an expectation that they will be advancing their sustainability footprint. There are hospitals that have planning to some extent, while others have hardly any plans. As

the old adage attributed to Benjamin Franklin goes: if you fail to prepare you are preparing to fail!

The hospitals studied acknowledge that sustainability initiatives are important to their common view of people in the society, however, there is not one roadmap or default blueprint to follow in respect of the hospitals' planning and implementation of sustainability initiatives. In particular, the social sustainability initiatives are handled in different ways.

Sustainability initiatives are commonly initiated by external consultants and reasoned by the public hospitals to demonstrate their organizational achievement to meet a selection of standards of sustainability. The sustainability initiatives undertaken that are proposed by external stakeholders commonly are based on the logic that there are common denominators between the efforts and priorities in public hospitals. This study shows that the efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives undertaken are only similar to a minor extent and, as previously presented, sustainability initiatives are rather different to a major extent than they are common denominators between hospitals.

Trends between Previous and Current Efforts and Priorities

Overall, there are positive trends of sustainability initiatives across the public hospitals studied, however, the investments made in sustainability initiatives vary between hospitals. Nevertheless, the notion of sustainability initiatives is currently considered important to the public hospitals.

The reasons to engage in sustainability initiatives have evolved from the previous efforts and priorities to become more related to organizational strategy in order to manage current efforts and priorities. Quality concerns are related to sustainability concerns in the hospitals studied.

The public hospitals studied include a larger number of staff members involved in sustainability initiatives in current efforts and priorities than in comparison to the previous efforts. The hospitals communicate that sustainability initiatives should be a part of their ongoing actions, though as yet these efforts are not fully developed or fully implemented.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

A research implication from this study is that the areas reported by Høgevoid and Svensson (2016) and Høgevoid *et al.* (2014) to examine the trends of sustainability initiatives in organizations have made it possible to examine the previous and the current efforts and the priorities of sustainability initiatives in Spanish public hospitals.

Another research implication is the lack of guidelines around sustainability planning in these public hospitals. This situation may well be as a result of the observation that in the past that sustainability initiatives were not well enough developed across the public hospital sector and in this present time there now exist different degrees of planning efforts between public hospitals with some of them more advanced in their sustainability planning efforts than others. In respect of any strategic initiative in an organization, the Planning phase is key to developing an effective program, in order to bring the strategic goal to fruition.

In respect of the lack of homogeneity in the sustainability planning phase in public hospitals, this study shows how there are not any substantial evaluations undertaken in respect of the achievement of the sustainability initiatives put in place. The public hospitals do not know the outcomes of the execution of their sustainability actions, nor do they appear to know the degree to which in their hospitals they have moved their sustainability culture forward. Whilst in these hospitals they appear to have the best intentions in respect of the implementation of sustainability initiatives and we would not question their commitments to sustainability, in some cases, they do perhaps leave themselves open to the contention that some sceptics may question how genuine they really are in their efforts in this area or, even worse, that perhaps they are just checking a box to lead people to believe that they as an organization are into sustainability.

The framework consisting of 15 factors (see Table 1) of the previous and the current efforts and the priorities used in this study has made it possible to fulfil the research objective of this study which was to examine the trends (efforts and priorities) of sustainability initiatives in public hospitals.

Another research implication is that the results presented have revealed several trends in public hospitals in their efforts and priorities in respect of sustainability initiatives (see Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 about here.

The main trends influencing the efforts and the priorities of sustainability initiatives of public hospitals are based on: (i) a change of leadership, (ii) public funding, (iii) the public healthcare system, (iv) organizational policy, and or (v) top-staff focus.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results offer several managerial implications. For example, the examination of previous and current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives in this study reveal different trends amongst the Spanish public hospitals studied (see Figure 2).

The trends within the public hospitals studied appear to be either increasing or decreasing their efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives. The trends into the future appear to rest on a selection of factors previously presented in the research implications (see Figure 2).

The gap between previous and current efforts of sustainability initiatives reveals the need to develop an ongoing follow-up process combined with a top-down planning and implementation, and a bottom-up control and a set of feedback and control check-points.

The multiple factors of sustainability initiatives offer a managerial roadmap to examine previous and current efforts and priorities. These factors also provide a roadmap to examine the trends of sustainability initiatives in public hospitals and to make sustainability sustainable.

In a practical way, this study recommends some measures, which are basically a template to be used, in order to increase the quality and value of sustainability in public hospitals:

(i) ensure that senior management buy in to the suggested sustainability concept for the organization;

(ii) ensure that the hospital board members buy in to the suggested sustainability concept for the organization;

(iii) consult widely with the current staff to canvass their support for a suggested sustainability concept for the organization;

(iv) appoint a general manager who is to be truly involved with the genuine concerns and the significance of sustainability for the hospital and plan to maintain that person in the position for several years, as sustainability projects are not easy to plan and/or to run in a short time period as the person needs experience in the vision and the culture of the organization in order to implement and manage the area of sustainability successfully;

(v) conduct an audit of the current sustainability efforts of the hospital;

(vi) plan carefully the sustainability initiatives of the hospital moving forward, using benchmarking with other public hospitals or organizations in other industries, not only about the content of the sustainability program, but also about how you can organize and evaluate the program;

(vii) investigate how these suggested initiatives will mesh with the current systems in the organization;

(viii) set sustainable objectives to which the organization can realistically aspire and that can be measured;

(ix) cost out the budget implications of the sustainable objectives that have been set;

(x) ensure that senior management buy in to the suggested sustainability program developed for the organization including in respect of the budgetary implications;

(xi) ensure buy-in from the hospital board members to the suggested sustainability program developed for the organization including in respect of the budgetary implications;

(xii) ensure that the finances required to run the sustainability program are secured from the organization's budget and that they are allocated for the use for which they are required;

(xiii) ensure buy-in from the current staff to the suggested sustainability program developed for the organization;

(xiv) construct a staff education programme at first for all senior staff then once it has been run successfully, cascade the programme throughout the organization for all staff;

(xv) just as the subject of Occupational Health and Safety is always on the agenda for the meetings of senior executives in organizations ensure that Sustainability Initiatives are given the same status and that they appear as an agenda item at all Management meetings;

(xvi) include an evaluation phase which allows the hospital to compare the results with the previous objectives established in sustainability planning, in order to learn from its own experience;

(xvii) formally report on a regular basis, perhaps half yearly, on the actions accomplished in respect of the objectives set for sustainability initiatives in the organization;

(xviii) formally celebrate throughout the organization with all stakeholders when major sustainability objectives have been achieved;

(xix) create networks with other healthcare centres to agree on joint sustainability objectives and strategies; in order to review the internal and external protocols thinking in respect of sustainability objectives;

(xx) raise extra funding to implement sustainability initiatives, not only improving the relationships with local or state governors, but also with public initiatives such as public events by searching for sponsors;

(xxi) publish the organization's successes in respect to sustainability initiatives in the public domain in order to encourage other organizations to follow suit;

(xxii) every 2 years recommit to the process as outlined above, so that the sustainability program has currency for all and does not allow the organisation to become complacent about this crucial commitment to itself and to its community.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE

This study contributes to a set of factors to examine the previous and the current efforts and the priorities of sustainability initiatives in public hospitals. It is a framework consisting of multiple factors to reveal trends in sustainability initiatives. The factors as revealed above are: a change of leadership, public funding, the public healthcare system, organizational policy, and or top-staff focus.

We conclude that the factorial framework of the previous and the current efforts and the priorities used in this study provides a foundation to examine the trends in sustainability initiatives. We also conclude that this study offers a foundation for an examination of the trends of sustainability initiatives through time, as well as identifying differences and similarities between public hospitals in Spain regarding their sustainability initiatives as they intend to move forward in this area.

The results and concluding thoughts presented here are limited to healthcare organizations operating in the public sector of Spain, which provide possibilities for future studies in other service-based sectors and other public entities both in Spain and in other countries. Furthermore, this study has been done from the point of view of the public hospitals in Spain, so future research could focus on indicators and determinants of a sustainability strategy from the point of view of local and state governments which are responsible to address the public healthcare strategies that are happening in their jurisdiction.

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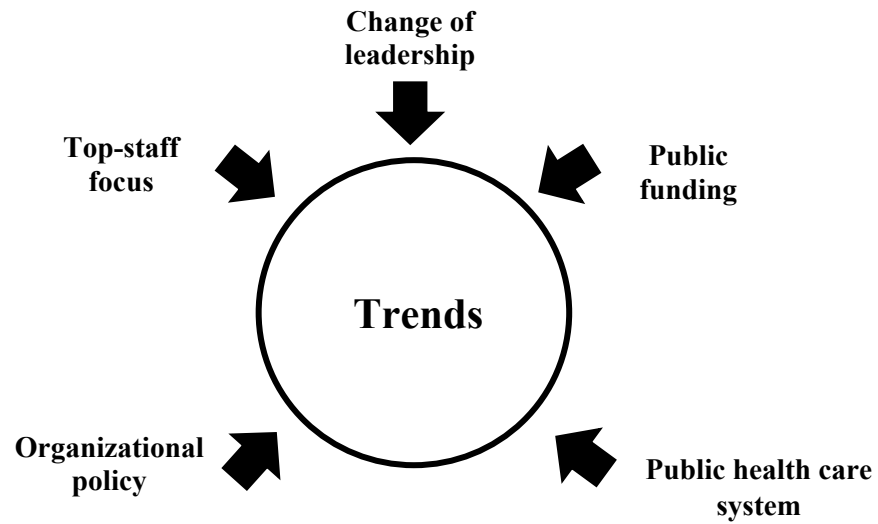
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Figure 1: Trends of Sustainability Initiatives – Efforts and Priorities.



Notes: The figure shows the gap between the previous and the current efforts and the priorities of sustainability initiatives and provide guidance to assess the trends into the future.

Figure 2: Factors of Sustainability Initiatives - Efforts and Priorities



Notes: The figure 2 shows the main factors that influence on efforts and priorities in public hospitals in their respective sustainability initiatives.

Table 1: Framing Efforts and Priorities of Sustainability Initiatives.

Framing Efforts and Priorities of Sustainability Initiatives	
Areas of Inquiry	
Previous	Current
1) <i>...that it was the right thing to do...</i> 2) <i>...employee/staff initiatives...</i> 3) <i>...intuitive reasons...</i> 4) <i>...basic environmental actions...</i> 5) <i>...limited social considerations...</i> 6) <i>...cost-oriented economic effects...</i> 7) <i>...within our organizational barriers...</i> 8) <i>...myopic challenges...</i> 9) <i>...general solutions...</i> 10) <i>...short-term orientation...</i> 11) <i>...a limited operational perspective...</i> 12) <i>...intrinsic organizational values...</i> 13) <i>...an inside-out perspective...</i> 14) <i>...an unchanged organizational structure...</i> 15) <i>...reactive organizational actions...</i>	1) <i>...to do the right thing and do things right...</i> 2) <i>...top leadership initiatives...</i> 3) <i>...conscious reasons...</i> 4) <i>...complex environmental actions...</i> 5) <i>...extensive social considerations...</i> 6) <i>...value-oriented economic effects...</i> 7) <i>...beyond our organizational boundaries...</i> 8) <i>...holistic challenges...</i> 9) <i>...specific solutions...</i> 10) <i>...long-term orientation...</i> 11) <i>...an extended operational perspective...</i> 12) <i>...extrinsic organizational values...</i> 13) <i>...an outside-in perspective...</i> 14) <i>...changes in organizational structure...</i> 15) <i>...proactive organizational actions...</i>

Notes: The Table 1 shows the fifteen areas to study the sustainability trends through time in an organization, bases on previous papers, such as Høgevold *et al.* (2014) and Høgevold and Svensson (2016).

Table 2: Previous Efforts and Priorities of Sustainability Initiatives.

No.	Theme	Hospital	Response	Extracts
1	...that it was <u>the right thing to do</u> .	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...it was our obligation as a hospital..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...sustainability was the most altruistic purpose that the hospital had..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...hospital is a public good belonging to the society... ...sustainability initiatives were implemented to care for society..."</i>
2	...employee/staff initiatives	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...our leading managers made great efforts in this sense..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...a manager was really involved..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...our top manager was really aware..."</i>
3	...intuitive reasons	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...a top manager before the current one made the organization aware..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...we did not have a clear idea about how to manage the sustainability initiatives due to our large size..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...it was not just intuitive, but not as conscious as now..."</i>
4	...basic environmental actions	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...step by step in the basic project first..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...we were not ready for complex ones..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...initiatives were not allowed to be more complex..."</i>
5	...limited social considerations	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...initially, our hospital started with rudimentary actions..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...we were the pilot hospital and needed time for adapting to sustainability initiatives..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...we had a basic budget, so we could only perform basic social actions..."</i>
6	...cost-oriented effects	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...a good administration of funds is part of good management..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...we tried to administer public funds properly..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...economic aspects are always present, but are not the most important ones..."</i>
7	...within our organizational	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...the CEO just managed this hospital, he could only propose internal actions..."</i>

	boundaries	Hosp2	Disagree	<i>"...our hospital was a test in a broader regional context..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...it was easier to start for oneself..."</i>
8	...myopic challenges	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...a plan existed to consider further aspects..."</i>
		Hosp2	Disagree	<i>"...it was the test of a bigger plan that included the whole healthcare system..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...it was the first step planning for broader actions..."</i>
9	...general solutions	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...at that moment, solutions were thought through in a reduced context and for particular purposes..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...the final aim was the whole region..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...solutions previously planned..."</i>
10	...short-term orientation	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...our planning was long term..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...we did not have capacity to be more than short term..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...the initial reason was to start and keep doing things well for a long time..."</i>
11	...a limited operational perspective	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...our CEO thought in terms of planning to move towards real sustainability..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...we are public, so we were not really concerned about the economic aspect..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...although our hospital is public, we must manage all its actions bearing in mind the limited resources..."</i>
12	...intrinsic organizational values	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...our hospital culture wasn't accustomed to it, but the CEO implemented a sustainability culture..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...thanks to our values, we are the test hospital, the first one in the region..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...values are part of individuals and the hospital is composed of people, if we did actions, it was because people wanted them..."</i>
13	...an inside-out perspective	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...our manager started thinking about things that we could do internally..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...started in the hospital and applied the values to the surrounding system..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...started earlier than others because of our beliefs..."</i>
14	...an unchanged organizational structure	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...a new department was created and human support hired for other areas..."</i>

		Hosp2	Disagree	<i>“...some changes, but no so much as now...”</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>“...first we had to create the structure for sustainability initiatives...”</i>
15	...reactive organizational actions	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>“...our CEO defined the sustainability protocols and presented them to the local government...”</i>
		Hosp2	Disagree	<i>“...our sustainability team defined the pilot terms for the sustainability test...”</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>“...we decided on the actions to plan...”</i>

Note: The table 2 shows the citations on the fifteen areas from the key informants related with previos efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives.

Table 3: Current Efforts and Priorities of Sustainability Initiatives.

No.	Theme	Hospital	Response	Extracts
1	...to do the right thing and do things right	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...in the past, the hospital thought more about doing the right things..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...nowadays, we are restructuring our sustainability initiatives..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...is the reason why we started trying to do things better..."</i>
2	...top leadership initiatives	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...doctors are maintaining the actions planned in the past and promoting new ones in the present..."</i>
		Hosp2	Disagree	<i>"...our top management is new, so they need to adapt to the hospital and to our previous planning initiatives..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...we still need to reinforce our initiatives for employees..."</i>
3	...conscious reasons	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...new top management does not seem really aware of the sustainability importance, it is in a pause..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...our reasons are conscious, but the top hospital structure has recently changed and the way they address initiatives..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...it is nowadays almost an obligation to perform sustainability actions for public hospitals..."</i>
4	...complex environmental actions	Hosp1	Agree	<i>"...needed in order to be considered a quality hospital..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...more complex than at the beginning, but we depend on the tendencies of the healthcare system..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...our economic budget does not let us perform complex actions..."</i>
5	...extensive social considerations	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...with a previous manager, it was more extensive in the past, but not now..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...social initiatives are more extensive, because the main streams are addressed by the central healthcare system of our region..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...we do, but we would like to engage in social initiatives more extensively..."</i>
6	...value-oriented (economic) effects	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...we are not really concerned about economic aspects..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...our hospital works with a budget... ...we take into account not wasting money..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...we do not need to worry about the economic effects as we are public..."</i>
7	...beyond our organizational boundaries	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...at the moment, we have at least to reconstruct our past sustainability initiatives..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...our hospital is part of the public hospital network..."</i>

		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>“...we need more time to think beyond our hospital...”</i>
8	...holistic challenges	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>“...at the moment, sustainability initiatives are not really considered...”</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>“...most of the sustainability initiatives are coordinated by the public health system...”</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>“...our hospital is aware that society is moving towards more sustainability...”</i>
9	...specific solutions	Hosp1	Agree	<i>“...our hospital is running actions established by the previous CEO...”</i>
		Hosp2	Disagree	<i>“...the actions are general in terms of affecting all the public hospitals in this area...”</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>“...the sustainability planning is not advanced enough...”</i>

10	...long-term orientation	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...not sure... ...we depend on changes in top leadership..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...this is the tendency, but the central public system addresses the initiatives..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...we are building the bases carefully to achieve a robust sustainability project with a long-term orientation..."</i>
11	...an extended operational perspective	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...our top leadership just maintains a few sustainability actions and keeps them alive..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...the central government is planning the whole public health care system..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...we will be the first hospital adopting these initiatives, which will form a point of reference to others..."</i>
12	...extrinsic organizational values	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...nowadays the hospital focuses on itself..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...it is both intrinsic and extrinsic, but it is true that the public health system has advanced a lot in recent years transmitting important values to us..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...at this moment, our hospital focuses on intrinsic values... ...we are the leader in our region..."</i>
13	...outside-in perspective	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...sustainability is paused right now... ...perhaps in the future..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...our perspective always includes the rest of the hospitals..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...we are still not ready to think outside of our organization..."</i>
14	...changes in organizational structure	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...changes were made before..."</i>
		Hosp2	Disagree	<i>"...not because of sustainability reasons... ...but because the central system is already organized..."</i>
		Hosp3	Disagree	<i>"...it is more about what we have to do than changes in our organization at this time..."</i>
15	...proactive organizational actions	Hosp1	Disagree	<i>"...our leadership is not proactive at the moment..."</i>
		Hosp2	Agree	<i>"...our hospital is really proactive, but the central system is a little bit less so..."</i>
		Hosp3	Agree	<i>"...really proactive to achieve consolidated sustainability initiatives..."</i>

Note: The table 3 shows the citations on the fifteen areas from the key informants related with current efforts and priorities of sustainability initiatives.

Sustainability Trends in Public Hospitals: Efforts and Priorities

BIOGRAPHIES

Rocío Rodríguez holds a PhD from Murcia University, Spain. She has a wide experience in business to business context, in particular in sales and sales management. She works in an international healthcare software company, at the same time she works part time as Professor at Murcia University. She also works as Researcher at Kristiania University College. She has published in a variety of peer reviewed academic journals and presented papers at international conferences.

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Greg holds a Ph.D. in Management in the area of Business Ethics from Deakin University. During the 1980s, he worked for a multinational energy and resources company in commercial management, management education and he opened up a green fields site for the company in the Northern Pacific based on the island of Guam.