

Drivers of Environmental Effectiveness: Gap Between Organisational and Expert Perspectives

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Abstract

This manuscript investigates the perceived impact of factors in four categories (economic, legal, social, and organisational) on the environmental effectiveness of organisations. The paper compares the views of academic experts with the views of business practitioners (representatives of organisations). The findings reveal a gap between theory and practice. Academic experts tend to adopt a more critical, systemic perspective, identifying significant barriers to environmental performance. In contrast, organisational representatives, rooted in operational realities, evaluate these same factors as generally supportive or neutral.

The largest discrepancies appear in the legal and social categories. While businesses perceive regulatory frameworks and societal expectations as strong enablers (stimulating factors), experts highlight weak enforcement, fragmented legislation, and limited public pressure as major inhibitors. In the economic category, businesses emphasise investor demands and cost drivers, whereas experts stress the lack of systemic incentives and awareness of long-term financial benefits. Interestingly, both groups agree on the positive influence of internal organisational capabilities, stakeholder engagement and leadership.

These contrasting perceptions were summarised across all four categories, revealing that experts more frequently highlight barriers and systemic deficiencies, whereas businesses tend to focus on existing strengths and enabling conditions. This disconnect may reflect a deeper dual cognitive trap. Organisations may fall into a “knowledge trap,” overestimating their environmental performance due to limited awareness of broader requirements or risks. Meanwhile, experts may fall into a “practicality trap,” overemphasising structural imperfections while underestimating the adaptive learning that comes from implementation. This tension between “thinkers” and “doers” highlights the need for better integration between academia and industry and the need for knowledge transfer in both directions.

Keywords: environmental management, environmental performance, environmental effectiveness, stimulators and inhibitors of environmental effectiveness