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Sustainable Transport Practices in Shipping Managing Emissions and Reducing Environmental Impact

Rafid Zayan[1*], Tawhid Farhan Alam[2]
[1-2]Bangladesh Marine Academy, Bangladesh

Abstract. *The shipping industry plays a crucial role in global trade, but it also significantly contributes to environmental degradation, particularly through emissions and fuel consumption. This research aims to explore sustainable transport practices in the shipping sector, focusing on the management of emissions and efforts to reduce environmental impacts. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to analyze existing literature, case studies, and data from shipping companies implementing sustainable practices. The findings highlight the potential of alternative fuels, emission-reducing technologies, and operational efficiency improvements in mitigating the sector's environmental footprint. Additionally, the research explores the regulatory frameworks and incentives that drive sustainability in shipping. The study underscores the importance of collaboration among industry stakeholders and policymakers to achieve long-term environmental goals. The implications of the findings provide valuable insights for shipping companies, environmental advocates, and policymakers aiming to advance sustainability in maritime transport.*

Keywords: *Alternative fuels, Emission reduction, Environmental impact, Shipping sustainability, Sustainable transport*

1. BACKGROUND

The shipping industry, which is a cornerstone of global trade, is also one of the largest contributors to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. According to the International Maritime Organization (IMO, 2020), the sector is responsible for approximately 2-3% of global CO2 emissions. As the demand for international trade continues to grow, so does the environmental footprint of maritime transport, primarily due to its heavy reliance on fossil fuels such as bunker fuel (Lindstad et al., 2020). While shipping is considered more energy-efficient per ton of cargo transported compared to road or air transport, its emissions continue to pose a significant threat to climate change mitigation goals (McKinsey & Company, 2020). In this context, the implementation of sustainable transport practices is becoming an urgent priority for the shipping industry to address its environmental impacts.

The concept of sustainability in the shipping sector is not only focused on reducing emissions but also involves improving operational efficiency, minimizing fuel consumption, and optimizing logistics and fleet management. Recent studies have suggested that there are several avenues for reducing emissions in shipping, such as the introduction of alternative fuels like liquefied natural gas (LNG), ammonia, hydrogen, and biofuels (Aldrich et al., 2020). Furthermore, technological innovations, including energy-saving devices (ESDs), hull modifications, and wind-assisted propulsion systems, have been explored as ways to improve the energy efficiency of ships (Van Reijsbergen et al., 2021). The adoption of these technologies, however, is still limited by the high capital costs, infrastructure gaps, and regulatory challenges that many shipping companies face.

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In recent years, international regulatory bodies, particularly the IMO, have made significant efforts to set stricter emission reduction targets for the sector. The adoption of the IMO's Initial Strategy on GHG emissions reduction (IMO, 2018) set the stage for achieving a 50% reduction in emissions by 2050, compared to 2008 levels. This strategy includes both operational measures, such as speed optimization and energy efficiency measures, and the development of low-carbon technologies and fuels. However, the complexity of global shipping operations and the diversity of fleets means that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to emissions reduction, creating a gap in the existing literature regarding the effectiveness of different strategies across varying shipping operations (Buhaug et al., 2019). This gap presents an opportunity for research that assesses the effectiveness and barriers to the widespread implementation of sustainable practices.

The transition towards more sustainable shipping is also hampered by the economic considerations of adopting green technologies. For instance, while some of the alternative fuels and emission-reduction technologies show promise in reducing carbon footprints, their implementation comes with substantial initial investment costs, particularly for smaller shipping companies and those operating in developing countries (Lindstad et al., 2020). Furthermore, the global regulatory landscape remains fragmented, with inconsistent policies and incentives between different regions, making it challenging to drive uniform change (Heidari et al., 2021). As such, there is a pressing need for research that not only explores technological innovations but also analyzes the role of policy frameworks, economic incentives, and international cooperation in fostering a more sustainable maritime transport system.

This research aims to fill this gap by examining current sustainable practices within the shipping sector, analyzing their effectiveness in reducing emissions, and identifying the obstacles to their broader adoption. A key focus will be to explore how alternative fuels, emission-reducing technologies, and operational efficiencies contribute to sustainability efforts. Additionally, this study will assess the role of international regulations, such as those proposed by the IMO, and evaluate the impact of global and regional policies on the adoption of sustainable practices in the shipping industry. The findings from this study will provide valuable insights for shipping companies, policymakers, and environmental organizations seeking to mitigate the environmental impact of shipping and contribute to the global effort to combat climate change.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the current state of sustainable transport practices in shipping, identify successful case studies, and propose recommendations

for overcoming barriers to the implementation of these practices. By focusing on emission reduction and minimizing environmental impacts, this research aims to offer actionable insights for stakeholders within the shipping industry to help achieve sustainability goals and accelerate the sector's transition towards a low-carbon future.

Theoretical Review

The shipping industry plays a pivotal role in the global economy, but its environmental impact is a growing concern. Theories on sustainability in transport, specifically in shipping, are rooted in both environmental science and economic optimization. Sustainability in maritime transport focuses on minimizing adverse environmental impacts through a combination of technological innovation, efficient operations, and policy frameworks (Lindstad et al., 2020). The concept of sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Commission (1987), emphasizes balancing environmental, social, and economic factors, and this theory has been widely applied to the shipping sector. In the context of shipping, this theory underlines the importance of reducing emissions while maintaining economic viability and meeting international trade demands.

A critical component of sustainability in shipping is the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which contribute significantly to global warming. Theories related to GHG reduction focus on technological advancements and operational efficiencies. The application of energy-saving technologies, such as wind-assisted propulsion, hull modifications, and the use of alternative fuels (e.g., LNG, biofuels), are often viewed through the lens of environmental and economic efficiency (Van Reijsbergen et al., 2021). The Energy Efficiency Design Index (EEDI), introduced by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2013, is an example of a regulatory framework that aims to reduce the energy consumption of new ships (IMO, 2013). This index measures the energy efficiency of ships by factoring in the ship's fuel consumption relative to its size and type, and it provides a theoretical foundation for improving energy efficiency across the industry.

Another relevant theory is the **Technological Innovation System (TIS)**, which addresses how innovation in technology leads to structural changes within an industry. In the case of the shipping sector, the adoption of sustainable technologies such as alternative fuels and emission-reducing devices is seen as a key driver of transformation. Research by McKinsey & Company (2020) indicates that technological innovations, especially in the area of alternative fuels, play a critical role in reducing the shipping industry's carbon footprint.

However, the implementation of these innovations is often hampered by high initial investment costs and lack of adequate infrastructure, a point discussed in Lindstad et al. (2020).

Furthermore, the **Institutional Theory** plays a significant role in shaping sustainability practices within the shipping industry. According to Scott (2008), institutions—both formal and informal—shape organizational behavior by establishing norms, rules, and regulations. In the context of shipping, international regulations such as the IMO's GHG emission reduction strategies and national policies are crucial for creating a legal and institutional framework that drives the adoption of sustainable practices (IMO, 2018). The interaction between policy frameworks, technological innovations, and economic incentives is a key theme explored in the literature (Aldrich et al., 2020). These frameworks not only influence the behavior of shipping companies but also affect global supply chains by promoting sustainable practices across all levels of the industry.

Lastly, the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**, as introduced by Ajzen (1991), provides a psychological perspective on how individuals' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control over behavior can influence their decisions. In the case of shipping companies, this theory can help explain why certain firms adopt sustainable practices while others do not. The TPB suggests that when shipping companies perceive that adopting sustainable practices aligns with their organizational goals and that they have control over the implementation process, they are more likely to make sustainability-oriented decisions.

Previous Research

Previous studies have examined various dimensions of sustainability in shipping. Buhaug et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive study on the environmental impacts of shipping, highlighting the need for international collaboration to address emissions. Lindstad et al. (2020) analyzed the economic and operational barriers to adopting sustainable technologies, emphasizing the role of financial incentives and subsidies in overcoming these barriers. Meanwhile, Aldrich et al. (2020) explored the role of biofuels in decarbonizing the shipping sector, identifying both technical potential and challenges in scaling up biofuel production and distribution.

Furthermore, McKinsey & Company (2020) provided insights into the future of green shipping technologies, focusing on innovations in alternative fuels and energy-saving devices. They highlighted the barriers to widespread adoption of these technologies, including high costs and regulatory hurdles. The literature also underscores the importance of policy and

regulation in promoting sustainable practices, with the IMO's GHG reduction strategy serving as a central point of reference (IMO, 2018).

This study builds on these foundational theories and previous research to examine the specific practices in the shipping industry that contribute to emissions reduction and environmental impact mitigation. The goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices and explore the barriers to their widespread adoption, providing insights into how the shipping sector can move toward a more sustainable future.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a **quantitative approach** to assess the sustainability practices within the shipping industry, specifically focusing on the emissions reduction strategies and their environmental impact. The design of this study is **descriptive-exploratory**, aimed at identifying the current practices, barriers, and potential solutions for achieving sustainable transport in shipping. The research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the relationship between technological innovation, regulatory frameworks, and organizational behavior in the context of emission reduction.

Population and Sample

The population for this study includes maritime companies, port authorities, and relevant stakeholders in the global shipping industry. A **stratified random sampling** technique will be used to select companies based on their size, type, and geographical location. The sample will consist of 100 maritime organizations, ensuring a balanced representation of companies that have implemented sustainable practices versus those that have not.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data will be collected through **survey questionnaires** and **interviews**. The survey will be administered to managers, environmental officers, and engineers within shipping companies. The questionnaire will be developed based on a review of the existing literature and the theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review. It will include sections on the adoption of green technologies, energy efficiency practices, regulatory compliance, and challenges faced by shipping companies in reducing emissions.

In-depth **semi-structured interviews** will be conducted with key decision-makers to gather qualitative insights into the factors influencing sustainability adoption and the practical barriers to implementing emission-reducing technologies. This combination of quantitative and

qualitative methods ensures a robust analysis of the factors impacting sustainable shipping practices.

Data Analysis

The data collected will be analyzed using both **descriptive and inferential statistics**. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the survey data, providing insights into the frequency and distribution of sustainable practices across the sample. The inferential analysis will employ **regression analysis** to identify the relationship between various independent variables (e.g., technological innovation, regulatory pressure) and the dependent variable (emissions reduction). Additionally, **factor analysis** will be used to identify underlying factors affecting the adoption of sustainable practices in the shipping industry (Hair et al., 2010).

For hypothesis testing, the research will use **t-tests** and **ANOVA** to compare differences in emissions reduction across different types of shipping companies. These statistical tests will help determine whether certain factors, such as company size or geographical location, significantly influence the adoption of sustainable practices.

Research Model

The research model is based on the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**, which will be adapted to the shipping context to evaluate how perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of green technologies influence their adoption (Davis, 1989). The following equation represents the research model:

Where:

- YYY = Adoption of sustainable technologies (measured by energy efficiency improvements and emissions reductions)
- X1X_1X1 = Perceived ease of use (measured by the ease of implementing green technologies)
- X2X_2X2 = Perceived usefulness (measured by the economic and environmental benefits of green technologies)
- X3X_3X3 = Regulatory pressure (measured by the intensity of compliance with environmental regulations)
- $\beta 0$ = Intercept
- $\beta 1, \beta 2, \beta 3$ = Coefficients
- ϵ = Error term

Validity and Reliability

The validity of the research instruments will be tested using **content validity** through expert review, ensuring that the survey items and interview questions accurately reflect the constructs of sustainability, emissions reduction, and technological innovation. The reliability of the instruments will be tested using **Cronbach's Alpha** to assess the internal consistency of the survey items (Nunnally, 1978). A reliability score above 0.7 will be considered acceptable.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Collection Process

The data for this study were collected through a combination of surveys and semi-structured interviews. The survey was administered to a sample of 100 maritime companies over a period of six months, from January to June 2024. The sample was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diversity in terms of company size, geographical location, and operational focus. The survey data were collected via online platforms and paper questionnaires distributed to relevant respondents, including managers, environmental officers, and engineers.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 senior decision-makers in maritime companies, focusing on green technologies and emission reduction practices. These interviews were conducted from March to May 2024 and were transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the key characteristics of the sample, including the adoption rates of sustainable practices and the barriers faced by companies. Table 1 below presents the distribution of sustainable practices adopted by the sample.

Table 1: Distribution of Sustainable Practices Adopted by Shipping Companies

Practice	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Energy-efficient engines	45	45%
Use of low-sulfur fuel	30	30%
Carbon offset programs	25	25%
Waste heat recovery systems	20	20%

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The results show that 45% of companies have adopted energy-efficient engines, while 30% are using low-sulfur fuels to reduce emissions. This finding aligns with existing literature suggesting that energy efficiency is a primary strategy for reducing emissions in the shipping sector (IMO, 2021). A smaller proportion (20%) have implemented waste heat recovery systems, a technology recognized for its potential to improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental impact (Amini et al., 2020).

Inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses regarding the relationship between company size, regulatory pressure, and the adoption of sustainable practices. The results of the regression analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between regulatory pressure and the adoption of green technologies ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that companies operating in regions with stringent environmental regulations are more likely to adopt sustainable practices. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that regulatory frameworks drive the adoption of environmentally-friendly technologies (Jørgensen et al., 2020).

Moreover, the analysis showed that larger companies were more likely to adopt sustainable practices compared to smaller companies, suggesting that company size may play a role in the ability to invest in green technologies. These findings support previous research that highlights the role of financial and organizational resources in adopting sustainable technologies (Rodríguez et al., 2021).

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that sustainable practices are being increasingly adopted within the shipping industry, with energy-efficient technologies being the most prevalent. However, there is still room for growth, particularly in the adoption of waste heat recovery systems and carbon offset programs. This reflects the current challenges faced by shipping companies in balancing environmental sustainability with economic considerations. According to the respondents in the interviews, high initial costs and technical limitations are the main barriers to adopting more advanced technologies.

One key finding from this study is the significant role of regulatory pressure in driving the adoption of sustainable practices. Shipping companies in regions with stringent environmental regulations, such as the European Union, were more likely to implement green technologies. This is consistent with findings from other studies that emphasize the role of policy frameworks in accelerating the transition to more sustainable practices in the shipping industry (McKinnon, 2022). Regulatory pressure acts as both a motivator and a barrier, as companies must comply with regulations but also face high implementation costs.

Additionally, the research highlights the influence of company size on the adoption of sustainable practices. Larger companies, with more financial and technical resources, were found to be more likely to adopt green technologies. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that large firms have greater capacity to invest in advanced technologies (Bocken et al., 2016). Smaller companies may face financial constraints that hinder their ability to adopt such technologies, suggesting that policy measures should focus on providing financial incentives and support to smaller firms.

Implications

The findings of this study have important implications both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the research contributes to the understanding of the factors that influence the adoption of sustainable practices in the shipping industry. It extends the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by incorporating regulatory pressures and company size as key variables influencing the adoption of green technologies.

From a practical standpoint, the study suggests that policymakers should strengthen regulatory frameworks and provide financial incentives to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices in the shipping sector. Given the significant influence of regulations on the adoption of green technologies, creating clear and enforceable environmental standards can accelerate the transition toward more sustainable shipping practices. Additionally, supporting smaller companies through subsidies or low-interest loans could help overcome financial barriers to adopting energy-efficient technologies.

Comparison with Previous Research

The results of this study are consistent with earlier research on sustainable practices in the shipping industry. For example, McKinnon (2022) found that regulatory pressure is a key driver of sustainability in the sector, while Amini et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of energy-efficient technologies in reducing emissions. The findings of this study reinforce these conclusions and provide additional insights into the role of company size and the barriers to adopting sustainable technologies.

However, the study also uncovers new insights into the challenges faced by smaller shipping companies, an area that has not been extensively explored in previous literature. This gap highlights the need for further research into the factors influencing the adoption of green technologies in smaller organizations and the development of targeted policies to support them.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to investigate the adoption of sustainable transport practices in the shipping industry, focusing on emission reduction technologies and the environmental impact of these practices. The findings confirm that energy-efficient technologies, such as energy-efficient engines and low-sulfur fuels, are the most widely adopted practices among maritime companies. Furthermore, the research highlights the critical role of regulatory pressure in driving the adoption of green technologies. Companies in regions with stricter environmental regulations were more likely to implement these practices, emphasizing the significant influence of regulatory frameworks in shaping the shipping industry's sustainability efforts.

However, the study also identified several challenges, including the high initial costs of adopting more advanced green technologies and the technical limitations faced by companies, particularly smaller ones. This aligns with prior research, which has shown that while larger companies have the resources to invest in such technologies, smaller companies are often constrained by financial limitations (Bocken et al., 2016). Therefore, the results suggest that regulatory pressure alone may not be sufficient, and financial support mechanisms are crucial to enabling smaller companies to adopt sustainable practices.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that policymakers strengthen environmental regulations to promote the adoption of green technologies in the shipping industry. In addition, providing financial incentives or subsidies for smaller companies could help alleviate the financial burdens of adopting such technologies. Further research is needed to explore the specific barriers faced by small and medium-sized enterprises in the maritime sector and to develop tailored solutions to address these challenges. Moreover, future studies could investigate the long-term economic and environmental impacts of adopting green technologies in the shipping industry to better understand the trade-offs involved and to refine policy approaches.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the adoption of sustainable practices in the shipping industry, there are some limitations. The sample size, though comprehensive, was limited to maritime companies operating in certain regions, and thus the findings may not be fully generalizable to the global shipping sector. Additionally, the study focused primarily on technological adoption and did not explore other factors such as consumer demand and corporate social responsibility, which may also influence sustainability practices in shipping. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the sample to include companies

from diverse geographical locations and by examining additional factors that contribute to sustainability in the maritime sector.

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