

An integrated fuzzy framework for analyzing barriers to the implementation of continuous improvement in manufacturing

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Abstract

Purpose – Delivering premium services and quality products are critical strategies for success in manufacturing. Continuous improvement (CI), as an underlying foundation for quality management, is an ongoing effort allowing manufacturing companies to see beyond the present to create a bright future. We propose a novel integrated fuzzy framework for analyzing the barriers to the implementation of CI in manufacturing companies.

Design/methodology/approach – We use the fuzzy failure mode and effect analysis (FMEA) and a fuzzy Shannon's entropy to identify and weigh the most significant barriers. We then use fuzzy multi-objective optimization based on ratio analysis (MOORA), the fuzzy technique for order of preference by similarity to ideal solution (TOPSIS) and fuzzy simple additive weighting (SAW) methods for prioritizing and ranking the barriers with each method. Finally, we aggregate these results with Copeland's method and extract the main CI implementation barriers in manufacturing.

Findings – We show “low cooperation and integration of the team in CI activities” is the most important barrier in CI implementation. Other important barriers are “limited management support in CI activities,” “low employee involvement in CI activities,” “weak communication system in the organization,” and “lack of knowledge in the organization to implement CI projects.”

Originality/value – We initially identify the barriers to the implementation of CI through rigorous literature review and then apply a unique integrated fuzzy approach to identify the most important barriers based on the opinions of industry experts and academics.

Keywords Continuous improvement, Failure mode and effect analysis, Fuzzy logic, Shannon's entropy, Copeland's method

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Companies are required to minimize the level of waste, preserve the quality-low price ratio, accelerate manufacturing the process and trim the product lines to foster core competencies. These core competencies can be achieved by implementing a rigorous continuous improvement (CI) (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2006). In competitive environments, organizations' prosperity depends upon the rate of process optimization and improvement (Salah *et al.*, 2010)



as well as the degree of progressive innovation (Bessant *et al.*, 1994). Grounded in total quality management principles, CI is considered as an essential strategy in attaining manufacturing excellence (Tanco *et al.*, 2012), minimizing failure and achieving success (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2006). “CI must be adopted by each member of the organization” (Cheng *et al.*, 1996), and one of the main challenges in implementing CI is the successful execution of its methodologies. The most widely used CI methodologies in manufacturing are lean manufacturing (Kovach *et al.*, 2008), Six Sigma (Kovach *et al.*, 2008; Savolainen and Haikonen, 2007), lean Six Sigma (Timans *et al.*, 2016), structural equation modeling (Kovach *et al.*, 2008; Lee, 2004; Ni and Sun, 2009; Singh and Singh, 2010), the interpretive structural model (Jurburg *et al.*, 2017), nonparametric tests (Oprime *et al.*, 2011), failure mode and effect analysis (Doshi and Desai, 2017), activity-based costing (Waeytens and Bruggeman, 1994), achieving competitive excellence (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2006), plan-do-check-act (Singh and Singh, 2015; Afrin *et al.*, 2019), balanced scorecard (Dabhilkar and Bengtsson, 2004), theory of Inventive Problem Solving (Maia *et al.*, 2015), Bayesian belief networks (Mark and Oppenheim, 2019), the Kaizen approach and just-in-time management (Afrin *et al.*, 2019) and decision-making trail and evaluation laboratory (Costa *et al.*, 2019).

CI can be either incremental or radical. In the incremental phase, minor changes are incurred, and in the radical phase, significant changes are made, which may result in idea generation or innovative technology (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2006). Even though it happens gradually, a successful CI is a long-run process (Ni and Sun, 2009), and it requires changes in cultural, behavioral and learning processes (Savolainen and Haikonen, 2007). In the manufacturing discipline, CI principles are applied for boosting quality and “diminishing costs while maintaining the same level of service” (Ross, 2015).

A science and technology parks (STPs) is an organization managed by specialized professionals, whose main purpose is increasing societal wealth and promoting justice and culture of competitiveness and innovation among its member companies and institutions (Tavares *et al.*, 2009). As policy tools, STPs foster growth and promote innovation (Arauzo-Carod *et al.*, 2018). They are also considered as driving forces of regional development. One of the main goals of the STPs is to create products and services based on the most current science practices and customers’ needs. The knowledge spillovers of STPs can also benefit out-park firms and other stakeholders, such as providers, research centers and clients (Díez-Vial and Fernández-Olmos, 2015). This requires them to improve their activities continuously, although there may be some barriers to its implementation.

Although the previous literature examined the impact of on-park location on companies’ sales growth, improved R&D (Vásquez-Urriago *et al.*, 2014), innovation (Vásquez-Urriago *et al.*, 2016), employment growth (Hobbs *et al.*, 2017) and cooperation with universities (Albahari *et al.*, 2019), research is scant on the barriers to implement CI in STPs. In this regard, with a rigorous literature review, this study initially explores the barriers of implementing CI. Secondly, based on the opinions of industry experts and academics active in STPs and using a unique integrated fuzzy approach, this study ranks the barriers to identify the most important factors.

The failure mode and effect analysis (FMEA) is a systematic and structured method for discovering potential failures in processes, products and/or services (Shaker *et al.*, 2019). FMEA evaluates three key process failure dimensions of severity, occurrence and detection. Severity measures the seriousness and occurrence measures the frequency of failures. A failure that occurs several times a day is more critical than a failure that occurs now and then. Detection measures the likeliness of detecting the failure before it occurs. FMEA has resulted in higher product quality and CI in manufacturing. In addition, FMEA documents current knowledge about the risks of failures, for use in CI. In FMEA, a matrix is constructed based on the three dimensions of severity, occurrence and detection. This matrix is then analyzed with various multi-criteria decision-making methods such as multi-objective

optimization based on ratio analysis (MOORA), the technique for order of preference by similarity to ideal solution (TOPSIS) or simple additive weighting method (SAW). Finally, Copeland's method is used to determine the most important factors.

The novelty of this research is twofold. First, this study sheds light on the CI implementation barriers in STPs. Understanding the potential barriers are crucial for STPs as [Cumming et al. \(2019\)](#) argue technology parks are more likely to grow and succeed if they are supported by eliminating their barriers to success. Policymakers and top managers can nurture creativity and innovation in organizations if they recognize the CI implementation barriers and develop policies and procedures to alleviate them. Second, the novelty of this research also resides on a unique and seamless integrated fuzzy framework where the fuzzy FMEA and fuzzy Shannon's entropy are methodically combined to identify and weigh the most significant barriers; and fuzzy MOORA, fuzzy TOPSIS, fuzzy SAW and Copeland's method are systematically combined to prioritize and rank the barriers. This integrated framework is novel and has not been implemented in previous research.

This paper is organized as follows. In [Section 2](#), we review the literature and pinpoint factors associated with the barriers to CI implementation. In [Section 3](#), we introduce an integrated model for analyzing barriers to CI implementation. The proposed model integrates fuzzy FMEA, fuzzy Shannon's entropy, fuzzy MOORA, fuzzy TOPSIS and fuzzy SAW. In [Section 4](#), we present a case study in the consumer electronics industry to demonstrate the applicability and efficacy of the proposed model. In [Section 5](#), we present our conclusions and discussions. In [Section 6](#), we discuss the managerial implications of our study followed by the limitations and future research directions in [Section 7](#).

Literature review

Continuous improvement

Previous researches referred to CI as a process of continuous and focused incremental innovation extending throughout a company ([Bessant et al., 1994](#), [Bessant and Francis, 1999](#); [Caffyn, 1999](#); [Kumar et al., 2018](#); [Savolainen and Haikonen, 2007](#); [Tanco et al., 2012](#)). [Deming \(1982\)](#) defines CI as improving continuously in the system of service and production (Principle 5 of transformation) ([Sanchez and Blanco, 2014](#)). CI also denotes a methodical endeavor undertaken to find and use novel approaches to continuous process improvement. [Anand et al. \(2009\)](#), [Jha et al. \(1996\)](#) and [Terziovski \(2002\)](#) indicate that CI is a set of activities which is consists of a process aimed to bolster performance improvement. The notion of a CI system refers to the intertwined collection of systematic, organized and planned processes of steady transformation within the whole organization emphasizing on reaching higher quality, ergonomics, safety, business productivity and competitiveness ([Jurburg et al., 2016, 2017](#)). In this study, CI is defined as an ongoing effort to improve processes, products and/or services through incremental and breakthrough improvements.

CI is about "constant focus on achieving better outcomes" ([Langabeer, 2008](#)). The CI has its roots in the Kaizen concept and the Deming cycle ([Terziovski and Sohal, 2000](#)). Kaizen, which means improvement and perfection in Japanese ([Singh and Singh, 2010](#)), is intertwined with four characteristics: incremental, participative, continuous ([Tanco et al., 2012](#)) and betterment of the standard way of work ([Singh and Singh, 2014](#)). Deming adopted the CI concept as his main quality criterion and the core of the popular "plan-do-check-act" cycle ([Eaidgah Torghabehi et al., 2016](#)). In addition, the CI concept is also a part of quality management ([Nilsson-Witell et al., 2005](#)) and previous research considers the strategic pillars of TQM as CI, employee involvement, teamwork, process and customer focus ([Dean and Bowen, 1994](#); [Murray and Chapman, 2003](#); [van Assen, 2018](#)), fact-based emphasis and management devotion ([Dahlgard et al., 1998](#)).

Savolainen (1999) mentions that ideological views bring forward practical intuitions and new conceptual ideas to CI implementation resulting in a unique competitive advantage. Drawing on five-year research work, Bessant and Caffyn (1997) investigate the issues pertinent to CI implementation. Based on a comprehensive case study, they develop a behavioral framework model of CI performance pinpointing its enablers and barriers, and they argue that “CI is about behavioral change, and it involves both learning and unlearning” (p. 21). In addition, examining CI strategies in the context of manufacturing companies in Australia, Terziovski and Sohal (2000) indicate that the stimulation to CI adoption is contingent upon several factors, namely cost reduction, enhanced delivery reliability, high productivity and refined quality conformance. Thus, managers should comprehend the merits of CI activities in terms of “soft” management initiatives.

In a rigorous case-based investigation, Bessant *et al.* (2001) consider CI as organizational merit that is empowered by high involvement in behavioral transformation (culture change). They also indicate that, as this merit evolves, it triggers innovative capabilities, which leads to a reference model of progress appraisal. Investigating ten Singaporean and Australian case studies, Hyland *et al.* (2003) propose a methodology for delineating learning behaviors, and they construct a framework for persistent, innovative activities in product development practices.

Oprime *et al.* (2011) conduct a study on the main variables of CI initiatives in Brazilian firms. The results of their explorative research highlight the significance of employees’ reciprocal interaction, motivations for suggestions and training for using problem-solving tools in CI success. They also indicate that CI operational activities are conducive to firm performance in terms of higher quality and customer satisfaction, lower associated cost and improvement in staffs’ capabilities.

Davison *et al.* (2005) have a different perspective on improving CI success. The CI effectiveness results from recognizing the knowledge resources for disseminating the best practice by utilizing a knowledge structure mapping technique. The study by Barber *et al.* (2006) showed an applied methodology for a knowledge-based system in aiding CI activities by using the data being stored in the company’s maintenance, quality and production databases. They argue that such process-based systems can instigate CI. Furthermore, Anand *et al.* (2009) have a different perspective toward CI, while, in their proposed model, they view it as a dynamic potency to the organizations which broadens the knowledge on the CI concept, and their framework provides the crucial dimensions of infrastructure for CI.

Heavey *et al.* (2014) validated a new framework consisting of the main forces of CI. These forces are enhanced methodology, better experts who are knowledgeable about employee performance, customer centralized strategic goals and customer-driven co-leadership. They argue that their proposed model sheds more light on process-based organizations, improves employees’ role in companies and results in positive outcomes, namely ROI.

More researches are required for investigating the forces/barriers to CI implementation, as the relevant variables may change across the context/industry of the study. Moreover, Murray and Chapman (2003) raise the issue of lacking proper methodologies for CI, and they underline the need for an advanced, holistic and unified CI methodology. Thus, this research proposes a unique integrated fuzzy approach. Finally, as shown in Table 1, this study summarizes the barriers of CI implementation based on a rigorous literature review.

Science and technology parks (STPs)

STPs are locations where R&D facilities and startup incubators are gathered together to conduct joint R&D for universities, public research institutions and private research labs in support of high-tech industries (Kang, 2017). STPs are relatively new phenomena, arising from the idea of promoting economic and social development, acting on the undiscovered or

	Barrier to CI	Resources	Methodology
B1	Lack of management commitment to CI activities	Anh <i>et al.</i> (2015), Singh and Singh (2015), Ngai and Cheng (1997), Singh and Singh (2018), Ahmad <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Case study (Anh <i>et al.</i> , 2015) Literature review (Singh and Singh, 2015) Lean Manufacturing tool (Ahmad <i>et al.</i> , 2017) Principal component analysis (PCA) and Correspondence analysis (CA) (Ngai and Cheng, 1997) Options Field Methodology (OFM), Options Profile Methodology (OPM), Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), Fuzzy Set Theory (FST) and Structural Equation Modelling SEM (Singh and Singh, 2018)
B2	Limited support from management to CI activities	Stelson <i>et al.</i> (2017), Fryer <i>et al.</i> (2007), Newham <i>et al.</i> (2016), Garcia-sabater and Marin-garcia (2011)	Literature review (Stelson <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Choudhury and Pattnaik, 2020) Literature review (Fryer <i>et al.</i> , 2007) Multiple case study approach (Newham <i>et al.</i> , 2016) Grounded theory (Garcia-sabater and Marin-garcia, 2011) Survey (Message Costa <i>et al.</i> , 2020)
B3	Lack of management involvement in CI activities	Lodgaard <i>et al.</i> (2016), Talib <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Case study (Lodgaard <i>et al.</i> , 2016) Best-Worst-Method (Talib <i>et al.</i> , 2019)
B4	Lack of a specific strategy in the field of CI	Bessant <i>et al.</i> (1994)	Literature review (Choudhury and Pattnaik, 2020) Case study (Bessant <i>et al.</i> , 1994)
B5	Lack of organizational culture and environment to support CI	Mclean <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Literature review (Systematic reviews) (Mclean <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
B6	Lack of employee motivation in the organization	Oprime <i>et al.</i> (2011), Ahmad <i>et al.</i> (2017), Garcia-sabater and Marin-garcia (2011)	Nonparametric tests (Oprime <i>et al.</i> , 2011) Lean Manufacturing tool (Ahmad <i>et al.</i> , 2017) Grounded theory (Garcia-sabater and Marin-garcia, 2011)
B7	Low employee involvement in CI activities	Oprime <i>et al.</i> (2011), Mclean <i>et al.</i> (2017), Ngai and Cheng (1997), Singh and Singh (2015)	Nonparametric tests (Oprime <i>et al.</i> , 2011) Principal component analysis (PCA) and Correspondence analysis (CA) (Ngai and Cheng, 1997) Literature review (Systematic reviews) (Mclean <i>et al.</i> , 2017) Literature review (Singh and Singh, 2015)
B8	Lack of knowledge in CI implementation	Ahmad <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Survey (Sola and Mota, 2020; Message Costa <i>et al.</i> , 2020) Lean Manufacturing tool (Ahmad <i>et al.</i> , 2017) Literature review (Swuste <i>et al.</i> , 2020)
B9	Lack of a culture of knowledge capturing among employees	Lodgaard <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Survey (Sola and Mota, 2020; Message Costa <i>et al.</i> , 2020) Case study (Lodgaard <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Jing <i>et al.</i> , 2020)

Table 1.
Barriers to the implementation of continuous improvement

(continued)

Barrier to CI	Resources	Methodology
B10	Lack of knowledge sharing culture among employees	Lodgaard <i>et al.</i> (2016)
B11	Lack of abilities and skills in problem solving of the teams in CI implementation	Oprime <i>et al.</i> (2011), Stelson <i>et al.</i> (2017), Bessant and Caffyn (1997)
B12	Low cooperation and integration of the team in CI activities	Oprime <i>et al.</i> (2011), Stelson <i>et al.</i> (2017)
B13	Lack of teamwork	Fryer <i>et al.</i> (2007), Newham <i>et al.</i> (2016), Ahmad <i>et al.</i> (2017), Chan <i>et al.</i> (2018)
B14	Lack of covering all relevant CI initiatives	Lodgaard <i>et al.</i> (2016)
B15	Not user-friendly system [technical] in CI method	Lodgaard <i>et al.</i> (2016)
B16	Lack of employee reward system	Anh <i>et al.</i> (2015), Ngai and Cheng (1997)
B17	Lack of defined role and responsibilities of each person in the team in CI implementation	Lodgaard <i>et al.</i> (2016)
B18	A weak communication system in the organization	Oprime <i>et al.</i> (2011)

Table 1.

unused potentialities of science, technology and innovation (Rubini, 2002). STPs play an increasingly influential role in the promotion and development of the knowledge economy (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2016). STPs provide technical substructure, logistics and administration for small businesses to expand their products, increase their competitiveness, by creating an innovation culture (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2016).

Murat Ar and Baki (2011) examined the antecedents of firms' performance by using data collected from 270 managers in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in Turkish STPs. The results show that product and process innovation, strategy, top management support, customer focus, organizational learning, creative capability, organizational collaboration and supplier relationship have a positive association with a firm's performance in STPs.

Magalhaes and Zouain (2008) proposed an innovation service structure model for STPs in local or regional development. They created tools used to consider basic stakeholders' needs in the STPs, especially SMEs, to increase their ongoing partnership with firms, universities and R&D centers and government agencies.

Basile (2011) investigated the relationship between networking and science parks' innovative capability in providing the connection to all companies and agents in an inter-

organizational system of innovation. The empirical evidence of this research included 15 Italian STPs. The results showed that displaying the networking process facilitates innovation projects, but it will not necessarily lead to innovation success.

Herrero-Villa *et al.* (2014) evaluated the performance of STPs by utilizing the SIGRID model, which is based on the sustainable models of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and the balanced scorecard. They showed (1) most of the factors in their proposed model are coincidental in importance and comparability, (2) the model in its primary proposal is not helpful in the comparison of parks and (3) the model offers helpful information for the interior management and exterior relationship of every park.

Martínez-Cañas *et al.* (2011) used the concept of social capital to analyze how STPs facilitate the generation of goodwill and resources that companies obtain from their communications with other economic agents in the park. In their theoretical method, they proposed a model to understand how STPs make a valuable substructure for generating social benefits. They also proposed a theoretical approach for checking sources and materials, which create value at the company level.

Mian *et al.* (2012) showed successful STPs could operate as platforms for incubating science and technology businesses. In addition, Díez-Vial and Fernández-Olmos (2015) evaluated the role of STPs as places fostering local knowledge exchange. Empirical evidence was collected between 2007 and 2011 in a longitudinal analysis of 11,201 companies by using the Spanish database PITEC (Technological Innovation Panel). They concluded product innovation is higher when companies with interior R&D reciprocally share their knowledge with other companies active in R&D.

Vásquez-Urriago *et al.* (2016) investigated how STPs influence the cooperation between park companies and how this influence is channeled. Their findings indicated that being part of an STP increases the likelihood of collaboration for innovation and the intangible results of working with major innovation partners, mainly because of the higher degree of communication.

In summary, previous studies show the role of STPs is crucial in achieving economic prosperity. STPs need a structure that fits their purposes, prophecies (prospects), functions, duties and activities for accomplishing their goals. STPs should stay current with the rapidly increasing up-to-date knowledge and scientific practices in a broad range of disciplines to implement CI in an ongoing and effective manner. STPs contribute to the growth and regional development when they are supported by creative and innovative stakeholders regularly. Furthermore, CI is a process allowing manufacturing companies to envision beyond the present time and focus on building a bright future. According to Albahari *et al.* (2019), there is no unanimity on how companies inside the STPs create value. In this study, we reveal the STPs' successful implementation gaps by identifying the barriers to CI implementation. We further develop a unique, systematic and integrated fuzzy framework to identify, weigh, prioritize and rank the most significant CI implementation barriers. The elimination of the CI implementation barriers is a prerequisite to STPs successfully appraise their goals, programs and prospects and achieve competitive advantage.

Methodology

In this study, a questionnaire was designed and distributed among industry experts and academics. The process of selecting the experts is purposeful/judgmental sampling. Purposeful/judgmental sampling seeks information-rich cases that can be studied in depth (Hoepfl, 1997) and is a conscious selection of a small number of data sources that meet particular criteria (Russell and Gregory, 2003). In this sampling method, the goal is to select experts who are knowledgeable about the study and its purposes. This is one of the few sampling methods that can be used to get information from specific people who have knowledge about the study

and can provide the researcher with insightful information. This method is applicable when the number of qualified people in the field of the study is limited. Therefore, the current study used fuzzy FMEA, and the decision matrix of expert opinions was obtained in the pattern of linguistic variables, which were converted to triangular fuzzy numbers. For the fuzzy FMEA method, we used the opinions of three experts who are professors and active participants in STPs. We used a purposeful/judgmental sampling method since the number of qualified people who have the required knowledge and are willing to participate in the study is limited. In addition, for obtaining weighted and importance of expert opinions for failure modes (*S*, *O*, and *D*), this study applied fuzzy Shannon's entropy method, based on the expert opinions in the form of linguistic variables, and for this reason, we utilized the opinions of two other experts who are active members of the STPs.

In the next stage, for prioritizing and ranking the barriers, this research used fuzzy MOORA, fuzzy TOPSIS and fuzzy SAW methods. Finally, this study applied the Copeland method to compare the result of the rankings. All the necessary steps of the proposed approach are illustrated in Figure 1.

The steps described in this research are as follows:

Step 1: Identify barriers using a literature review.

Step 2: Create the FMEA team, and make a list of the possible failure modes and explain the relevant barriers.

Step 3: Assess expert opinions on barrier factors concerning the failure mode.

Step 4: Aggregate the fuzzy normalized matrix for "S, O and D."

Step 5: Evaluate and obtain the subjective weights of the experts for the significance of "S, O and D" of the barriers by fuzzy Shannon's entropy approach:

- (1) The team members' linguistic assessments of every failure mode for "S, O and D."
- (2) Determine the decision matrix normalized for "S, O and D."

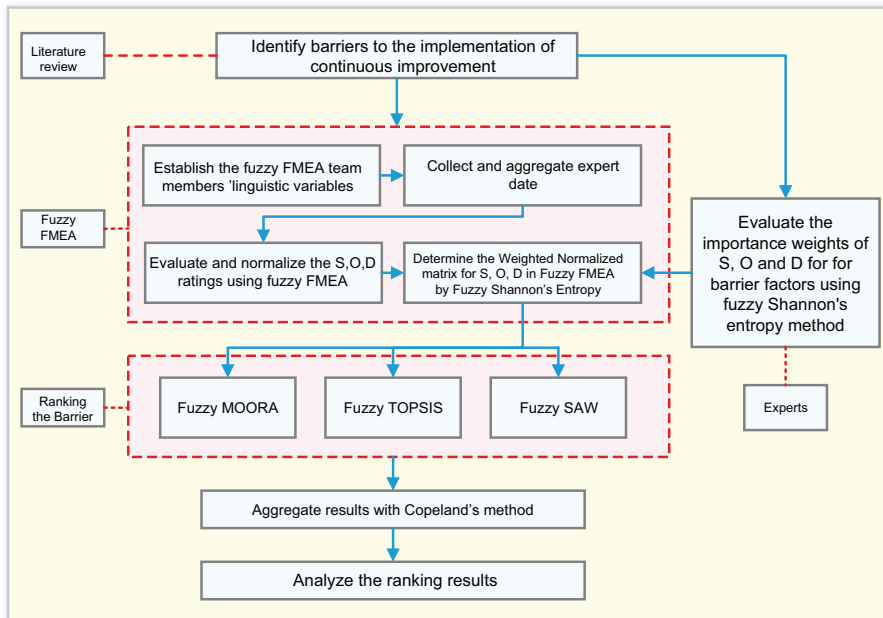


Figure 1. Proposed flowchart of the study

(3) Acquire the subjective fuzzy weights of the barrier variables.

Step 6: Determine the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix for “ S , O and D .”

Step 7: Rank the barriers using fuzzy MOORA concerning the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix obtained in Step 6.

Step 8: Rank the barriers using fuzzy TOPSIS concerning the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix obtained in Step 6.

Step 9: Calculating the fuzzy SAW method and ranking of the barriers by fuzzy SAW, concerning the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix obtained in Step 6.

Step 10: Using aggregation techniques by Copeland’s method.

Step 11: Final ranking of the barriers.

The followings describe the details of the integrated approach used in this study.

Fuzzy FMEA

FMEA is generally applied as a strong method for determining and evaluating possible failures in different stages of the product lifecycle (Zhang and Zhang, 2015) and is typically used as a problem prevention tool (Shahin, 2004). FMEA is “a systematic method of analysis and ranking the risks associated with various product (or process) failure modes (both existing and potential), prioritizing them for remedial action, acting on the highest-ranked items, reevaluating those items and returning to the prioritization step in a continuous loop until marginal returns set in” (Paciarotti *et al.*, 2014). The main goal of FMEA is to find and rank the possible failure modes that harm the performance of a system (Sharma and Sharma, 2010). FMEA includes the review of the following steps in its processes: Severity of the failure modes (what could go wrong?), denoting the extent of the “end effect” of a system failure. The occurrence of the possibility of the failure causes (why would the failure happen?), denoting the rate at which a “root cause” is probable to happen, which is portrayed in qualitative terms. Detection of the failure modes (what would be the consequences of each failure?), denoting the probability of discovering a “root cause” before a failure that could happen (Victor *et al.*, 2014; Jain, 2017).

The fuzzy FMEA is an appropriate method for a review of disorders and problems in a CI project. For example, the study by Doshi and Desai (2017) showed that in the context of automotive SMEs, continuous quality improvement is obtained by efficient FMEA implementation. Their study also indicated that even though FMEA’s implementation needs to be monitored, it has the potency to determine the associated risks of the processes and their remedies.

Researches of the fuzzy FMEA method consider the experts that define the elements of risk in terms of O , S and D by applying the fuzzy linguistic variables (Kutlu and Ekmekciođlu, 2012). The merit of this rule-based fuzzy method to FMEA (Chanamool and Naenna, 2016; Kumru and Kumru, 2013) is outlined below:

- (1) Using the linguistic elements of the fuzzy method allows the experts to allocate the relevant values for the variables being examined; therefore, improving the FMEA’s pertinence. In addition, it aids the analysts to apply the linguistic elements to evaluate the related risks of failure instantly.
- (2) Another merit is that both qualitative and quantitative data, implicit information and ambiguity can be applied in the FMEA’s evaluation and management consistently.
- (3) The arrangement in the composition of the parameters S , O and D , has more flexibility.

As experts allocate the different level of weights to the measures, they need to comprehend the implication of the linguistic terms as well as their assigned fuzzy numbers. The notion of linguistic variables is important for handling complicated instances which are not specified in

detail and is less likely to be delineated by common quantitative statements (Zadeh, 1975). Fuzzy linguistic variables refer to the lingual statements or expressions such as sentences or words that are expressed in normal or unnatural language. In addition, a fuzzy digit that is suitably established for indicating the linguistic variable can be considered as a set value. The domain of this set value range between 0 and 1 and consists of real positive numbers (Zadeh, 1975).

Table 2 shows the set of linguistic terms and their relevant fuzzy numbers to evaluate the rating as well as the preference weight versus the expert assessment indices (Amiri, 2010).

Fuzzy Shannon’s entropy in terms of α -level sets

Shannon (1948) introduced the entropy method as a measurement for indeterminacy in a discrete distribution whose origin is grounded in the “Boltzmann entropy” of traditional statistical methods (Pourhamidi, 2013; Shannon, 1948). Shannon’s entropy is a useful approach in achieving the weights for a MADM method (Lotfi and Fallahnejad, 2010), and it is referred to as a measure of uncertainty which has its roots in probability theory as well (Liu et al., 2015). Lotfi and Fallahnejad (2010) enhanced this method for obscure data, particularly for fuzzy data and interval cases (Ebrahimi et al., 2016; Mohamadi et al., 2017). This study also employs fuzzy Shannon’s entropy method. The details of the fuzzy Shannon phases are expressed below:

Step 1: Converting the fuzzy digits into set-level data by applying the α -level sets. The α -level set of a fuzzy variable \tilde{x}_{ij} refers to a class of terms about the fuzzy variable \tilde{x}_{ij} with the participation of at least α , i.e., $(\tilde{x}_{ij})_{\alpha} = \{X_{ij} \in R \mid u_{\tilde{x}_{ij}}(X_{ij}) \geq \alpha\}$. The α -levels set formula is shown subsequently:

$$\left[(\tilde{x}_{ij})_{\alpha}^l, (\tilde{x}_{ij})_{\alpha}^u \right] = \left[\text{Min}_{x_{ij}} \{x_{ij} \in R \mid u_{x_{ij}}(X_{ij}) \geq \alpha\}, \text{Max}_{x_{ij}} \{x_{ij} \in R \mid u_{x_{ij}}(X_{ij}) \geq \alpha\} \right]$$

where $0 < \alpha \leq 1$.

Based on situating a disparate degree of the confidence interval, specifically $1-\alpha$, the fuzzy data are hereupon converted to varying α -level sets $\{(\tilde{x}_{ij})_{\alpha} \mid 0 < \alpha \leq 1\}$, where all of them are interval values.

Step 2: The normalized numbers of p_{ij}^l and p_{ij}^u are computed using the following formulas:

$$p_{ij}^l = \frac{x_{ij}^l}{\sum_{j=1}^m x_{ij}^u}, p_{ij}^u = \frac{x_{ij}^u}{\sum_{j=1}^m x_{ij}^u}, j = 1, \dots, m; i = 1, \dots, n \tag{1}$$

Linguistic variables for rating the failure modes		Linguistic variables for the weighting of each criterion		Interval values for linguistic variables
Linguistic variables	Triangular fuzzy number for fuzzy FMEA	Linguistic variables (priority weights)	Triangular fuzzy number for fuzzy Shannon	Interval data at 0.3c
Very low (VL)	(0,0,1,0,3)	Unimportant (UI)	(0,0,0,2)	[0,0,17]
Low (L)	(0,1,0,3,0,5)	Slightly important (SI)	(0,0,2,0,4)	[0,07,0,42]
Medium (M)	(0,3,0,5,0,7)	Fairly important (FI)	(0,2,0,4,0,6)	[0,32,0,67]
High (H)	(0,5,0,7,0,9)	Important (I)	(0,4,0,6,0,8)	[0,57,0,92]
Very High (VH)	(0,7,0,9,1)	Very important (VI)	(0,6,0,8,1)	[0,82,1]

Table 2. Linguistic variables

Step 3: In this step, the lower limit of h_i^l and the upper limit of h_i^u in the interval entropy are extracted in the following formulas:

$$h_i^l = \text{Min} \left\{ -h_0 \sum_{j=1}^m p_{ij}^l \cdot \ln p_{ij}^l, -h_0 \sum_{j=1}^m p_{ij}^u \cdot \ln p_{ij}^u \right\}, i = 1, \dots, n$$

$$h_i^u = \text{Max} \left\{ -h_0 \sum_{j=1}^m p_{ij}^l \cdot \ln p_{ij}^l, -h_0 \sum_{j=1}^m p_{ij}^u \cdot \ln p_{ij}^u \right\}, i = 1, \dots, n$$
(2)

where $h_0 = (\ln m)^{-1}$, and $p_{ij}^l \cdot \ln p_{ij}^l$ or $p_{ij}^u \cdot \ln p_{ij}^u$ has a value of 0 if $p_{ij}^l = 0$ or $p_{ij}^u = 0$.

Step 4: Assigning the lower limit and upper limit of the diversification interval of d_i^l and d_i^u as shown below:

$$d_i^l = 1 - h_i^u, \quad d_i^u = 1 - h_i^l, \quad i = 1, \dots, n$$
(3)

Step 5: Set $w_i^l = \frac{d_i^l}{\sum_{s=1}^n d_s^l}$, $w_i^u = \frac{d_i^u}{\sum_{s=1}^n d_s^u}$, $i = 1, \dots, n$, as the lower limit and upper limit of the interval weight of attribute i .

Step 6: To obtain the final weight, this study calculated $w_i' = \frac{w_i^l + w_i^u}{2}$, then computed $\sum_i^n w_i'$

$$\text{and subsequently calculated } w_i = \frac{w_i'}{\sum_i^n w_i'}$$

Fuzzy MOORA

In the literature, the MOORA method is characterized as an MCDM method (Akkaya *et al.*, 2015). Initially indicated in a study by Brauers and Zavadskas (2006), MOORA refers to an optimization process of two or more contradictory attributes happening synchronously, which is conditional upon specified constraints. This method is applicable to a variety of complicated decision-making issues in different industries: process/product design problems, the manufacturing sector, automobile design, the oil and gas industry, aircraft design, finance and in any instances where the best decisions are desired considering the balance between two or more contradictory attributes (Chakraborty, 2011; Gadakh *et al.*, 2013).

Previous research builds upon a ranking criterion diverging from three computations: the "Ratio System," the "Reference Point" and the "Full Multiplicative Form of Multiple Objectives" (Ceballos *et al.*, 2016). Then Brauers and Zavadskas (2006) introduced fuzzy MOORA as an MCDM method, and their study was the first that applied the method in the subsistence economy. According to the current literature, there are three distinguished ways to treat the issues emerging from fuzzy MOORA: the fuzzy ratio method, the full multiplicative form and the reference point method. This study follows the guidelines of (Akkaya *et al.*, 2015) in the fuzzy ratio approach. Following are the phases of the fuzzy ratio method applied in the current study:

Step 1: Determine the decision matrix by applying for the relevant triangular fuzzy numbers.

Step 2: Change the decision matrix to the normalized fuzzy decision matrix (according to the subsequent Equations (4), (5), and (6).

$$\text{As } \tilde{X}_{ij}^* = (x_{ij}^{l*}, x_{ij}^{m*}, x_{ij}^{u*}) \text{ and } \forall i, j;$$

$$x_{ij}^{j*} = x_{ij}^j / \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^m [(x_{ij}^l)^2 + (x_{ij}^m)^2 + (x_{ij}^u)^2]} \quad (4)$$

$$x_{ij}^{m*} = x_{ij}^m / \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^m [(x_{ij}^l)^2 + (x_{ij}^m)^2 + (x_{ij}^u)^2]} \quad (5)$$

$$x_{ij}^{u*} = x_{ij}^u / \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^m [(x_{ij}^l)^2 + (x_{ij}^m)^2 + (x_{ij}^u)^2]} \quad (6)$$

Step 3: Determine and calculate the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix by applying W , which is computed using the fuzzy Shannon method (please refer to step 6 of the fuzzy Shannon method).

$$\text{As } V_{ij} = (v_{ij}^l, v_{ij}^m, v_{ij}^u);$$

$$v_{ij}^l = w_j x_{ij}^{j*} \quad (7)$$

$$v_{ij}^m = w_j x_{ij}^{m*} \quad (8)$$

$$v_{ij}^u = w_j x_{ij}^{u*} \quad (9)$$

Step 4: Calculate the normalized performance values by deducting the wasteful measures from the overall value of the determined beneficial measures.

$$\tilde{y}_i = \sum_{j=1}^g \tilde{v}_{ij} - \sum_{j=g+1}^n \tilde{v}_{ij} \quad (10)$$

$$\sum_{j=1}^g \tilde{v}_{ij} : \text{Benefit criteria for } 1, \dots, g$$

$$\sum_{j=g+1}^n \tilde{v}_{ij} : \text{Cost criteria for } g+1, \dots, n$$

g : refers to the utmost number of measures

$(n-g)$: refers to the least number of measures

Step 5: Because normalized performance measures refer to fuzzy elements too, therefore, these measures ought to be converted to a nonfuzzy performance measure known as “best nonfuzzy performance” (BNP). In this research, the subsequent formula is applied to compute the BNP values:

$$\text{As } \tilde{y}_i = (y_i^l, y_i^m, y_i^u);$$

$$\text{BNP}_i(y_i) = \frac{(y_i^u - y_i^l) + (y_i^m - y_i^l)}{3} + y_i^l \quad (11)$$

Finally, the calculated y_i values are ranked.

Fuzzy TOPSIS

Hwang and Yoon (1981) initially introduced the TOPSIS technique, which is a classic approach to untangle MCDM problems and provides a solution from a limited set of variables (Han and Trimi, 2018). This method is mainly applied to rank the issues (Sirisawat and Kiatcharoenpol, 2018). The notion of the TOPSIS method is contingent upon the criterion that the selected alternative need to have the smallest distance from the “positive ideal solution” (PIS) and the greatest distance from the “negative ideal solution” (NIS) (Keshteli and Davoodvandi, 2017; Kutlu and Ekmekçiöğlü, 2012). In addition, the fuzzy TOPSIS method was introduced by Chen (2000) to untangle MCDM problems in a fuzzy setting to address indeterminacy in adjudication and assessments (Seyedmohammadi et al., 2018). Research indicates that the fuzzy TOPSIS technique is more efficient than the traditional TOPSIS technique in solving MCDM problems in addressing the uncertainties in decision-makers’ assessments (Sirisawat and Kiatcharoenpol, 2018; Ighravwe and Ayoola Oke, 2017). This study follows the guidelines of Sun (2010) for the fuzzy TOPSIS technique as mentioned below:

- Step 1. Determining the fuzzy decision matrix.
- Step 2. Creating the normalized fuzzy decision matrix by Equations (4), (5) and (6).
- Step 3. Calculating the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix by Equations (7), (8) and (9).
- Step 4. Calculating the fuzzy PIS and the fuzzy NIS.

Based on the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix, it can be noticed that elements of \tilde{v}_{ij} are positively normalized TFN, and the spans of the sets are placed in the range between 0 and 1. Afterward, the fuzzy PIS A^+ (aspiration levels) and the fuzzy NIS A^- (the worst levels) can be specified as shown in the following formulas:

$$A^+ = (\tilde{v}_1^*, \tilde{v}_2^*, \dots, \tilde{v}_n^*) \tag{12}$$

$$A^- = (\tilde{v}_1^-, \tilde{v}_2^-, \dots, \tilde{v}_n^-) \tag{13}$$

Here:

$$\tilde{v}_j^* = (1, 1, 1) \otimes \tilde{w}_j = (lw_j, mw_j, uw_j) \text{ and } \tilde{v}_j^- = (0, 0, 0); j = 1, 2, \dots, n. \tag{14}$$

Step 5. Calculating \tilde{d}_i^+ and \tilde{d}_i^- of each criterion by Equations (15), (16) and (17).

$$d_i^+ = \sum_{j=1}^n d(\tilde{v}_{ij}, \tilde{v}_j^*), \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, m; \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, n \tag{15}$$

$$d_i^- = \sum_{j=1}^n d(\tilde{v}_{ij}, \tilde{v}_j^-), \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, m; \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, n \tag{16}$$

$$d(\tilde{A}, \tilde{B}) = \sqrt{\frac{1}{3} [(a_1 - b_1)^2 + (a_2 - b_2)^2 + (a_3 - b_3)^2]} \tag{17}$$

Step 6. Calculating the closeness coefficients using Equation (18):

$$CC_i = \frac{d_i^-}{d_i^- + d_i^+} \tag{18}$$

Fuzzy SAW

This method was initially introduced by Churchman and Ackoff (1954), and they used the SAW approach in solving a portfolio selection problem. The SAW approach is one of the optimal methods which has been extensively applied for MADM problems. One of the reasons for its popularity is the simplicity of the method in addressing MADM issues. Some studies also refer to the SAW approach as the “weighted summation approach” (Deni *et al.*, 2013; Kumar *et al.*, 2013). This study follows the guidelines of Roszkowska and Kacprzak (2016) for the fuzzy SAW approach where positive trapezoidal ordered fuzzy numbers are explained by the phases mentioned below:

- Step 1: Create a fuzzy decision matrix $\widehat{X} = (\widehat{X}_{ij})$.
 Step 2: Determine the normalized fuzzy decision matrix.
 Step 3: Calculate the weighted normalized decision matrix by applying the important measures of every benchmark $\widehat{V} = (\widehat{r}_{ij})$, where

$$\widehat{r}_{ij} = w_j \cdot \widehat{z}_{ij} \quad (19)$$

Step 4: Cumulate the performance ratings considering the whole specifications for every available possibility utilizing the subsequent formula:

$$\text{FSAW}(A_i) = \sum_{j=1}^n \widehat{r}_{ij} (i = 1, \dots, m) \quad (20)$$

Step 5: The rank ordering of the alternatives.

Results

We applied the method proposed in this study to find the barriers that hinder creativity and innovation in CI. Barriers to the implementation of the CI are identified through a rigorous and exhaustive literature review. Next, we formed the FMEA team and made a comprehensive list of the possible failure modes. We then used the fuzzy FMEA method to determine the *S*, *O* and *D*, by using the assessments provided by the three experts, as shown in Table 2. This table shows the linguistic terms and their associated fuzzy numbers used to evaluate the ratings as well as the preference weights. Table 3 presents the expert judgments on the barriers concerning the failure modes.

Subsequently, we aggregated the evaluation matrices of the fuzzy failure modes obtained by the three experts into one evaluation matrix, as shown in Table 4. We then normalized the evaluation matrix using Equations (4), (5) and (6), as shown in Table 4.

In the next step, the evaluation of two experts in linguistic variables is presented in Table 2 to assess and obtain the subjective weight of barriers by using fuzzy Shannon’s entropy method. Next, the team members’ linguistic judgments are assessed for the *S*, *O* and *D* failure modes, and the decision matrix is normalized for *S*, *O* and *D*. Based on the interval data provided in Table 5, we calculated the values of the weights using Equations (1), (2) and (3). The fuzzy values are expressed as intervals using α -level sets. Jafarnejad Chaghooshi *et al.* (2012) found 0.3 alpha as an appropriate value for the Likert scale (see Table 2). The weighted barriers obtained by fuzzy Shannon’s entropy provided in Table 6.

After identifying the barrier weights according to fuzzy Shannon’s entropy method, we calculated the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix. The results of the weighted normalized values are presented in Table 7. We then use the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix given in Table 7 and Equations (10) and (11) to rank the barriers based on fuzzy MOORA, fuzzy TOPSIS and fuzzy SAW methods. The ranking results for the fuzzy MOORA method are presented in Table 8.

Table 3.
Assessment of experts
in linguistic variables
of the barriers factors
according to any
failure mode

DM	Severity(S) DMI	Occurrence(O) DM2	Detection(D) DM3	DM	Severity(S) DMI	Occurrence(O) DM2	Detection(D) DM3
B1	0.5	0.7	0.9	B10	0.3	0.5	0.7
B2	0.5	0.7	0.9	B11	0.3	0.5	0.7
B3	0.5	0.7	0.9	B12	0.3	0.5	0.7
B4	0.3	0.5	0.7	B13	0.5	0.7	0.9
B5	0.5	0.7	0.9	B14	0.5	0.7	0.9
B6	0.7	0.9	1	B15	0.5	0.7	0.9
B7	0.7	0.9	1	B16	0.7	0.9	1
B8	0.5	0.7	0.9	B17	0.3	0.5	0.7
B9	0.3	0.5	0.7	B18	0.5	0.7	0.9

DM	Severity(S) Aggregate DM	Occurrence(O) Aggregate DM	Detection(D) Aggregate DM	DM	Severity(S) Aggregate DM	Occurrence(O) Aggregate DM	Detection(D) Aggregate DM
B1	0.433	0.633	0.433	B10	0.166	0.366	0.566
B2	0.566	0.766	0.433	B11	0.300	0.500	0.700
B3	0.500	0.700	0.300	B12	0.433	0.633	0.833
B4	0.433	0.633	0.233	B13	0.500	0.700	0.866
B5	0.433	0.633	0.300	B14	0.433	0.633	0.833
B6	0.566	0.766	0.366	B15	0.366	0.566	0.766
B7	0.633	0.833	0.200	B16	0.500	0.700	0.866
B8	0.566	0.766	0.433	B17	0.366	0.566	0.766
B9	0.433	0.633	0.233	B18	0.566	0.766	0.933

DM	Severity(S) Normalized	Occurrence(O) Normalized	Detection(D) Normalized	DM	Severity(S) Normalized	Occurrence(O) Normalized	Detection(D) Normalized
B1	0.037	0.080	0.139	B10	0.005	0.027	0.064
B2	0.064	0.118	0.017	B11	0.018	0.050	0.098
B3	0.500	0.980	0.163	B12	0.037	0.080	0.139
B4	0.037	0.080	0.139	B13	0.050	0.098	0.151
B5	0.370	0.800	0.128	B14	0.037	0.080	0.139
B6	0.064	0.118	0.175	B15	0.027	0.064	0.118
B7	0.080	0.139	0.188	B16	0.050	0.098	0.151
B8	0.064	0.118	0.175	B17	0.027	0.064	0.118
B9	0.037	0.080	0.128	B18	0.064	0.118	0.175

Table 4.
Aggregation of the
experts and evaluation
of the fuzzy normalized
matrix for *S*, *O* and *D*

Table 5.
Interval decision
matrix of fuzzy
Shannon's entropy
method

Barriers	Severity(S)		Occurrence(O)		Detection(D)		Barriers	Severity(S)	Occurrence(O) Aggregate DMs	Detection(D)
	DMI	DM2	DMI	DM2	DMI	DM2				
B1	0.57	0.92	0.57	0.92	0.07	0.42	B1	0.445	0.455	0.070
B2	0.57	0.92	0.57	0.92	0.57	0.92	B2	0.570	0.570	0.320
B3	0.57	0.92	0.57	0.92	0.32	0.67	B3	0.570	0.920	0.195
B4	0.32	0.67	0.57	0.92	0.82	1	B4	0.445	0.410	0.585
B5	0.57	0.92	0.42	0.57	0.92	0	B5	0.320	0.285	0.195
B6	0.82	1	0.57	0.92	0	0.17	B6	0.695	0.285	0.545
B7	0.82	1	0.82	1	0.07	0.42	B7	0.820	0.445	0.195
B8	0.57	0.92	0.57	0.92	0.32	0.67	B8	0.695	0.445	0.545
B9	0.32	0.67	0.32	0.67	0.42	0.32	B9	0.320	0.320	0.195
B10	0.07	0.42	0.07	0.42	0.57	0.92	B10	0.070	0.570	0.320
B11	0.32	0.67	0.07	0.42	0.07	0.42	B11	0.195	0.570	0.035
B12	0.32	0.67	0.32	0.67	0.82	1	B12	0.445	0.570	0.835
B13	0.57	0.92	0.32	0.67	0.32	0.67	B13	0.695	0.320	0.445
B14	0.57	0.92	0.32	0.67	0.07	0.42	B14	0.445	0.195	0.570
B15	0.57	0.92	0.07	0.42	0.32	0.67	B15	0.320	0.195	0.545
B16	0.82	1	0.32	0.67	0.57	0.92	B16	0.570	0.285	0.195
B17	0.32	0.67	0.32	0.67	0.32	0.67	B17	0.320	0.320	0.195
B18	0.57	0.92	0.57	0.92	0.07	0.42	B18	0.695	0.570	0.195

In the next step, we utilized the fuzzy TOPSIS method to obtain d_i^+ , d_i^- for each barrier, using the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix given in Table 8 and Equations (15), (16) and (17). The results are presented in Table 9. The fuzzy PIS (aspiration levels) and fuzzy NIS (the worst levels) are determined based on Equation (14), and the closeness coefficient of the barriers is determined based on Equation (18). The barriers are then ranked according to their closeness coefficients.

Afterward, we used the fuzzy SAW method to rank the barriers to CI implementation based on the weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix given in Table 7. We first determined the average fuzzy weight for each barrier, according to S , O and D , and then calculated the aggregated S , O and D based on Equation (20). Table 10 presents the rankings of the barriers to CI implementation.

MCDM approaches may produce different rankings for the same set of options, putting the decision-maker(s) in a dilemma on choosing the most suitable option (Azimi et al., 2014). In these situations, it is important to examine alternative solutions carefully. However, examining different solutions produced by various MCDM approaches may turn into a complicated process (Ustinovichius et al., 2007). Several methods, known as “aggregation techniques,” have been proposed to solve this problem. These techniques include the average rank method, the Borda’s technique and Copeland’s method. We use Copeland’s method to count the number of wins and the number of losses for each option because of its consistency

	Severity(S)	Occurrence(O)	Detection(D)
h^l	0.6880	0.6650	0.5210
h^u	0.9920	0.0992	0.9880
d^l	0.0072	0.0073	0.0111
d^u	0.3110	0.3340	0.4780
w^l	0.0064	0.0065	0.0099
w^u	12.069	12.962	18.528
W^l	6.0379	6.4840	9.2690
W_i	0.2771	0.2976	0.4254

Table 6. Final weight of fuzzy Shannon’s entropy method for S , O and D

Barriers	Severity(S)			Occurrence(O)			Detection(D)		
Weighted fuzzy Shannon	0.2770713			0.2975708			0.4253578		
B1	0.010	0.022	0.038	0.012	0.025	0.044	0.005	0.019	0.041
B2	0.017	0.032	0.048	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.010	0.041	0.065
B3	0.013	0.027	0.045	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.009	0.025	0.050
B4	0.010	0.022	0.038	0.01	0.020	0.034	0.005	0.019	0.041
B5	0.010	0.022	0.035	0.007	0.016	0.031	0.009	0.025	0.050
B6	0.017	0.032	0.048	0.004	0.012	0.025	0.004	0.013	0.033
B7	0.022	0.038	0.052	0.012	0.025	0.041	0.013	0.033	0.055
B8	0.017	0.032	0.048	0.012	0.025	0.044	0.013	0.033	0.055
B9	0.010	0.022	0.035	0.008	0.020	0.037	0.005	0.019	0.041
B10	0.001	0.007	0.017	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.019	0.041	0.065
B11	0.005	0.013	0.027	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.007	0.019	0.037
B12	0.010	0.022	0.038	0.02	0.037	0.052	0.033	0.060	0.083
B13	0.013	0.027	0.041	0.008	0.020	0.037	0.019	0.041	0.065
B14	0.010	0.022	0.038	0.005	0.016	0.031	0.026	0.050	0.077
B15	0.007	0.017	0.032	0.003	0.016	0.037	0.009	0.026	0.050
B16	0.013	0.027	0.041	0.007	0.016	0.031	0.009	0.025	0.050
B17	0.007	0.017	0.032	0.008	0.020	0.037	0.013	0.033	0.055
B18	0.017	0.032	0.048	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.009	0.025	0.050

Table 7. The weighted normalized fuzzy decision matrix for S , O and D

Table 8.
Best nonfuzzy
performance value and
ranking of the barriers
by fuzzy MOORA

Barriers	y_i^j	y_i^m	y_i^h	y_i	Ranks	Barriers	y_i^j	y_i^m	y_i^h	y_i	Ranks
B1	0.0280	0.0670	0.1240	0.073	12	B10	0.0370	0.0800	0.136	0.084	9
B2	0.0530	0.1050	0.1660	0.108	2	B11	0.0284	0.0640	0.116	0.070	13
B3	0.0390	0.0840	0.1470	0.090	8	B12	0.0640	0.1200	0.174	0.119	1
B4	0.0260	0.0620	0.1140	0.067	15	B13	0.0410	0.0890	0.145	0.092	7
B5	0.0260	0.0640	0.1170	0.069	14	B14	0.0420	0.0880	0.147	0.092	6
B6	0.0260	0.0580	0.1070	0.064	17	B15	0.0200	0.0550	0.109	0.061	18
B7	0.0483	0.0970	0.1480	0.098	3	B16	0.0300	0.0690	0.123	0.074	11
B8	0.0438	0.0917	0.1480	0.094	5	B17	0.0300	0.0716	0.126	0.075	10
B9	0.0240	0.0620	0.1149	0.067	16	B18	0.0430	0.0900	0.151	0.094	4

Barriers	d_i^+	d_i^-	CC_i	Ranks	Barriers	d_i^+	d_i^-	CC_i	Ranks
B1	2.926719	0.083746	0.0278182	12	B10	2.915815	0.094000	0.0312310	9
B2	2.891763	0.118140	0.0392505	2	B11	2.930209	0.078944	0.0262347	14
B3	2.909690	0.101156	0.0335972	8	B12	2.880546	0.128170	0.0425995	1
B4	2.932368	0.077142	0.0256327	15	B13	2.907983	0.101703	0.0337920	7
B5	2.930608	0.079112	0.0262854	13	B14	2.907469	0.102637	0.0340974	6
B6	2.935891	0.072933	0.0242397	17	B15	2.938520	0.071762	0.0238389	18
B7	2.902024	0.106741	0.0354766	3	B16	2.925745	0.084030	0.0279189	11
B8	2.905524	0.104162	0.0346089	5	B17	2.924341	0.085537	0.0284189	10
B9	2.932862	0.077048	0.0255980	16	B18	2.905410	0.105011	0.0348824	4

Table 9.
Determining d_i^+ , d_i^- ,
closeness coefficient
and ranking order by
fuzzy TOPSIS

Table 10.
Ranking of the barriers
by fuzzy SAW

Barriers	Severity(S)			Occurrence(O)			Detection(D)			Aggregate S, O, D				
	Average	Average	Average	Occurrence(O)	Average	Detection(D)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Ranks			
B1	0.01	0.022	0.038	0.031	0.012	0.025	0.044	0.033	0.005	0.019	0.041	0.019	0.0840	10
B2	0.017	0.032	0.048	0.042	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.040	0.01	0.041	0.065	0.035	0.1180	2
B3	0.013	0.027	0.045	0.037	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.040	0.009	0.025	0.05	0.024	0.1020	6
B4	0.01	0.022	0.038	0.031	0.01	0.02	0.034	0.026	0.005	0.019	0.041	0.019	0.0774	14
B5	0.01	0.022	0.035	0.029	0.007	0.016	0.031	0.022	0.009	0.025	0.05	0.024	0.0772	15
B6	0.017	0.032	0.048	0.042	0.004	0.012	0.025	0.017	0.004	0.013	0.033	0.015	0.0755	17
B7	0.022	0.038	0.052	0.047	0.012	0.025	0.041	0.032	0.013	0.033	0.055	0.029	0.1090	3
B8	0.017	0.032	0.048	0.042	0.012	0.025	0.044	0.033	0.013	0.033	0.055	0.029	0.1050	5
B9	0.01	0.022	0.035	0.029	0.008	0.02	0.037	0.027	0.005	0.019	0.041	0.019	0.0760	16
B10	0.001	0.007	0.017	0.012	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.040	0.019	0.041	0.065	0.035	0.0880	9
B11	0.005	0.013	0.027	0.020	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.040	0.007	0.019	0.037	0.018	0.0790	13
B12	0.01	0.022	0.038	0.031	0.02	0.037	0.052	0.043	0.033	0.06	0.083	0.049	0.1240	1
B13	0.013	0.027	0.041	0.035	0.008	0.02	0.037	0.027	0.019	0.041	0.065	0.035	0.0993	7
B14	0.01	0.022	0.038	0.031	0.005	0.016	0.031	0.022	0.025	0.05	0.077	0.043	0.0967	8
B15	0.007	0.017	0.032	0.025	0.003	0.016	0.037	0.017	0.009	0.025	0.05	0.024	0.0670	18
B16	0.013	0.027	0.041	0.035	0.007	0.016	0.031	0.022	0.009	0.025	0.05	0.024	0.0830	11
B17	0.007	0.017	0.032	0.025	0.008	0.02	0.037	0.027	0.013	0.033	0.055	0.029	0.0825	12
B18	0.017	0.032	0.048	0.042	0.016	0.031	0.052	0.040	0.009	0.025	0.05	0.024	0.1070	4

and simplicity (Purjavad and Shirouyehzad, 2011). If the number of nodes in the method is higher, we encode it with M , where the row is in the column, and if the column is in line or the number of votes is equal, we encode it with X . In this method, the basis for the ranking is the diversity among the number of M_s in row i and the number of X_s in the column j ($i = j$), where the difference between the wins and the losses will be the basis of ranking (Moghimi and Taghizadeh Yazdi, 2016). The last row in Table 11 (ΣR) shows the number of losses for each option. The score produced by Copeland's method for each option reduces the number of losses (ΣR) from the number of wins (ΣC). The final ranking results of the barriers in CI implementation are presented in Figure 2 in addition to the ranking results produced by fuzzy MOORA, fuzzy TOPSIS, fuzzy SAW and Copeland's methods.

Conclusions and discussion

STPs foster growth where creativity and innovation practices take place frequently, and they are considered the driving forces of regional development. Further, as the backbone of quality management and innovative practices, CI is an ongoing effort allowing manufacturing companies to see beyond the present and to create a bright future. In the first step of this study, a rigorous and exhaustive literature review was conducted to identify the barriers to CI implementation in the STP companies. In addition, this study used fuzzy FMEA and fuzzy Shannon's entropy to identify and weigh the most significant barriers. Fuzzy MOORA, fuzzy TOPSIS and fuzzy SAW methods were used to prioritize and rank the barriers with each method. Finally, the results for each fuzzy method were aggregated using Copeland's method to identify the pivotal CI implementation barriers in manufacturing. This research was first of its kind to develop a unique integrated fuzzy approach in CI. Organizations need to implement CI to improve the performance and develop products and services with less waste, less cost and higher quality to maintain their core competency in the competitive marketplace. Arauzo-Carod et al. (2018) quote that "being located inside the STPs has a dual effect on firm performance," and there is a debate on how companies inside the STPs should create value (Albahari et al., 2019).

In a rigorous and exhaustive literature review, we showed several barriers to CI implementation. These barriers were ranked using an integrated fuzzy FMEA, fuzzy Shannon's entropy, fuzzy MOORA, fuzzy TOPSIS and fuzzy SAW approach based on the expert opinions. In addition, to compare the outputs of fuzzy MOORA, fuzzy TOPSIS and fuzzy SAW, we used Copeland's method to aggregate the results and produce a final ranking of the barriers to CI implementation. "Low cooperation and integration of the team in CI activities" received the highest priority and other important barriers were identified as "limited management support in CI activities," "low employee involvement in CI activities," "weak communication system in the organization" and "lack of knowledge in the organization to implement CI projects."

Barriers	ΣC	ΣR	$\Sigma C - \Sigma R$	Ranks	Barriers	ΣC	ΣR	$\Sigma R - \Sigma C$	Ranks
B1	6	10	-4	12	B10	9	9	0	9
B2	16	1	15	2	B11	4	11	-7	13
B3	10	7	3	8	B12	17	1	16	1
B4	3	14	-11	15	B13	11	6	5	7
B5	4	12	-8	14	B14	12	6	6	6
B6	1	16	-15	17	B15	0	16	-16	18
B7	15	2	13	3	B16	7	10	-3	11
B8	13	5	8	5	B17	8	9	-1	10
B9	2	14	-12	16	B18	14	3	11	4

Table 11.
The result of
Copeland's method

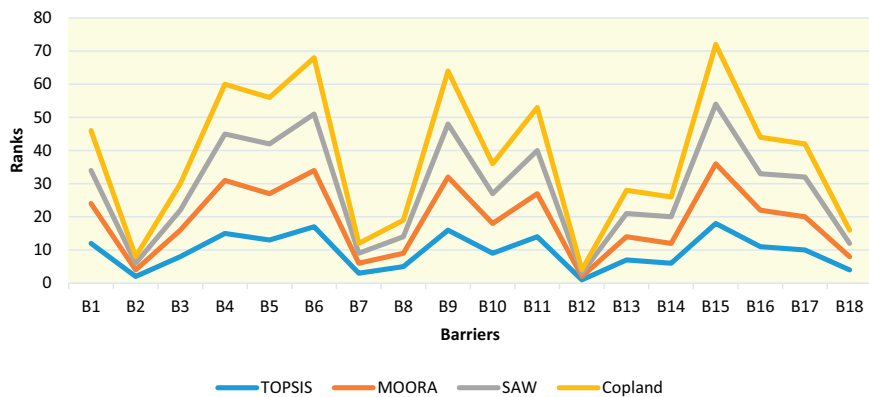


Figure 2.
Comparing the ranking
result of the barriers

Our study emphasized the importance of teamwork and cooperation among organizational members. Organizations must create necessary programs to ensure the coordination and communication between the staff and the stakeholders. We also showed the importance of top management's role in providing the necessary resources and the need for using the senior leadership capabilities incentivizing the staff. The top management must ensure the front-line managers are knowledgeable and supportive of the CI project implementation. In addition, we concluded that one of the main strategies conducive to CI success is a high level of employee involvement. Without employee involvement, CI is doomed to deadlock. Therefore, before implementing any CI programs, the organization needs to train the employees and ensure their involvement and devotion to the process.

An important barrier to CI implementation in our study is a weak communication system within the organization. For a successful CI implementation, effective communication systems need to be established to make sure that timely and adequate information flows within all levels of the organization (both bottom-up and top-down). Knowledge is a necessary ingredient for the successful implementation of the CI projects in organizations, and organizations need to conduct necessary training for both managers and employees. Knowledge-sharing leads to learning, and all stakeholders must participate in knowledge-sharing practices to circumvent challenges. There will be a disruption in the CI implementation if knowledge is not shared, and the information does not flow horizontally and vertically within the organization. A knowledge-sharing culture should be established before the CI implementation project commences.

Our ranking results also identified a lack of teamwork as an important barrier. Teamwork helps improve the employees' understanding of the opportunities and threats in CI implementation. Face-to-face communication and team collaboration among employees lead to high motivation and, in turn, results in successful CI implementation. Lack of a predefined role and responsibilities in the team is also found to be a barrier to CI implementation. Top managers need to lay down detailed responsibilities without obscurity. Employees need to be aware of the importance of their role in CI implementation. This will ignite a sense of responsibility amongst employees and resonate a feeling of being part of the company's success. In addition, organizations need to support employees' involvement in the CI implementation by using motivation and employee satisfaction practices.

Lack of management commitment to CI activities is another barrier to CI implementation. This barrier can have a direct impact on motivation, involvement and teamwork. The lack of problem-solving skills is also a detrimental barrier to CI implementation. The results also

suggest that lack of organizational culture and environment is another barrier to CI implementation. Successful and sustainable CI implementation needs a robust organizational system. As a result, the support of managers is important because they may otherwise prefer the status quo. A first and foremost matter in CI implementation is the corporate culture. The CI value needs to be injected into the organization and embraced by the employees. Garcia-sabater and Marin-garcia (2011) have shown that culture is a decisive factor in CI. While CI is likely to be adopted enthusiastically in nontraditional cultural settings (because people are less resistant to change), more effort is needed in aging organizations where employees spent several years with traditional culture. Finally, the lack of a specific CI strategy is another barrier to CI implementation, and organizations must formulate an effective CI implementation strategy consistent with organizational mission, objectives and culture.

Managerial implications

STPs are the main mechanisms for public-private partnerships and initiatives, and the promotion of research, development, innovation and technology transfer (Guadix *et al.*, 2016). It is widely recognized that STPs are effective vehicles for promoting new technology-oriented companies, facilitating the commercialization of scientific study and revitalizing regional economies (Zhang and Sonobe, 2011). STPs are generally staffed by academics and professionals with proven records of creating opportunities leading to innovation and economic growth. Through transferring R&D activities to other stakeholders such as start-ups, SMEs, large firms, universities as well as public and private R&D, STPs create opportunities for innovation, economic development and commercialization of new and emerging technologies. STPs need to appraise their goals, programs and prospects to grow continuously to achieve a competitive advantage. The findings of this study are useful for practicing managers and researchers in STPs. Findings such as the need for communicating the values in STPs, facilitating cooperation and integration in cross-functional teams, the idea that management support resonates a successful innovation strategy and plays a major role in CI activities, ensuring a sound communication system to circulate a shared value across teams facilitating CI and bolstering a culture of innovation and involvement in CI activities all foster growth and financial stability for emerging companies as well as established corporations. In summary, we believe this paper has useful and practical implications for research, practice and/or society. Our study shows the importance and impact of CI and STPs on economic and commercial growth, research and teaching and public policy.

Limitations and further research directions

This study proposes a unique integrated fuzzy approach to distill the barriers to CI implementation. One of the limitations of the study is its reliance on the literature review. Therefore, future studies could employ inductive methods for investigating the barriers to CI implementation by using observations or interviews with top managers of STPs to revealing new factors, which are overlooked in the literature review. Using inductive methods, future researchers can start with a set of observations and then move from particular experiences to general propositions (or from data to theory) about those experiences. In addition, the chances are that some barriers to CI implementation are context-specific, and further research is needed to test the proposed integrated fuzzy approach in different contexts. Future research could also conduct a gap analysis to examine the extent to which the results vary across different contexts, industries or cultures.

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