

Investigating the Determinants of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Sustainability Practices in Kogi State, Nigeria from the Triple Bottom Line Perspective

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Abstract

Small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) are crucial for national economic growth, despite challenges of balancing their financial obligations with their social and environmental commitments. Understanding the factors influencing these businesses' adoption of sustainable practices would enable the companies to enhance their long-term survival and capacity to assist the states to realise their developmental objectives. Given the above background, this study examined, within a Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, the factors influencing sustainability initiatives concerning Small and Medium-scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Kogi state, Nigeria. Primary data were adopted to achieve the aim of this paper. The multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents, where four LGAs were chosen across three state senatorial districts. From the selected LGAs, the study surveyed 383 SMEs in the state, using the questionnaire data collection method. Results show that, despite employee training and benefits being stressed among SMEs, there is a lag in employees' overall well-being. While environmental impact assessments still demand more attention, waste reduction and energy conservation are given considerable importance. Financial restraints and lack of awareness ranked highest among the main challenges. Cultural traits, especially employee resistance to change, greatly affect the degree of sustainability shown by SMEs. The study therefore recommends that SMEs should give workers' well-being top priority; improve their waste management techniques; and the government should give incentives through subsidies to help close knowledge gaps and financial challenges. In addition, there is a need to encourage business within Kogi state and Nigeria at large to give sustainability priority in their dealings, instead of profitability.

Keywords: Development, Kogi State, SMEs, Sustainability, Profitability.

1. Introduction

Small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) are also crucial in Nigeria's economy since they have led to job creation, rising incomes, and poverty reduction (Kowo et al., 2019). As much as SMEs play a vital role in the Nigerian economy, their sustainability is not quite easy. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model often summarises them, integrating social, environmental and economic elements and sustainability policies of such organisations are now a must in their long-term survival. There is, however,

scant information on the nature of selectivity and implementation of sustainable strategies by Nigerian SMEs and more so in Kogi state.

Sustainability has found its way to the business spotlight, especially amongst SMEs, due to environmental issues, demands of social equality and economic resilience. Due to the imperative of companies to balance the environment, societal well-being, and economy, Elkington (1997) developed the TBL framework, thus giving a complete portrayal of sustainability. It might be

difficult to adopt TBL strategies in small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) in developing countries such as Nigeria. This happens because SMEs of such countries are not as supported in terms of institutions, skills, and resources as big businesses often are (Ajibola, 2020). Specifically, the above factors, among others, impact the sustainability practices of SMEs in the Nigerian context; they are cultural attitude to sustainability, availability of finance, market demands and laws (Abdullahi et al., 2016). The political unpredictability, the volatility of the economy, and the lack of infrastructure in Nigeria leave SMEs with significant difficulty surviving long-term (Aluko et al., 2024). Despite such challenges, the need for sustainable practices in SMEs to enhance competitiveness, ensure regulatory codes are upheld, and help achieve broader goals of the general society is increasingly being recognised.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian SMEs have to make sustainable practices which integrate social responsibility, environmental stewardship, with financial performance into their business to continue playing a key role in the national economy of the country. Nevertheless, Nigerian SMEs face some serious problems integrating sustainability in their everyday practices, whereas it is quite important to the economy and labour market (Abisuga-Oyekunle et al., 2020). The fact that it is complicated to use a TBL framework due to numerous barriers is even more problematic as it addresses the environment, social and economic factors simultaneously, hence exacerbating the scenario.

First of all, many Nigerian SMEs have a very hard time due to the extensive lack of knowledge regarding sustainable practices. The state of affairs undermines their ability to introduce successful TBL initiatives (Ajibola, 2020). Nigeria is currently experiencing economic turmoil

and an infrastructure quagmire that can make the challenges of sustainability too difficult to prioritise and sacrifice on the part of small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) (Oyelola et al., 2013). These elements encourage individuals to prioritise short-term benefits most of the time over a sustainable economy (Agri et al., 2017). Lack of institutional and regulatory support for environmental sustainability is another problem that faces SMEs. The situation is worsened by the lack of incentives to encourage sustainable practices and the regulations. SMEs find it difficult to integrate social and environmental issues into corporate models because they lack legal support for their actions and funds (Famiola & Wulansari, 2020). Lastly, society and culture determine the extent to which sustainable methods are normalised. Priya and Singh (2024) discovered that other cultural values that are opposite to the TBL logic can affect the ability of SMEs to execute projects in the areas of social and environmental responsibility.

This study adopts a TBL approach by trying to know how or why some small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in Kogi State, Nigeria, practice sustainability and what prevents the implementation of sustainability practices, and to recommend some practices that can aid sustainable development in this vital industry. This research paper brings out, according to the Triple Bottom Line perspective, what the determinants of sustainability in practice among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kogi State, Nigeria, are. The paper has given useful guidance towards enhancing the sustainability of SMEs by lending credence to the factors that may influence the acceptability of sustainable practices besides informing the stakeholders like lawmakers and business owners on how they can promote sustainable development and develop better regulatory systems and create a more ethical corporate world that can

support social, environmental and economic health of Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study include the following:

- ❖ To identify the key determinants influencing the adoption of sustainability practices among SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria;
- ❖ To examine the challenges faced by Nigerian SMEs in implementing sustainability practices in Kogi State, Nigeria, and
- ❖ To assess the role of cultural factors in shaping SMEs' commitment to sustainability practices in Kogi State, Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Concept of Sustainability

Since the TBL emphasises that each company must strike a balance between profit, people and the planet, companies must determine success not only through their ability to make a profit but also through their impact on society and the environment (Elkington, 1997). The economic factor of sustainability is entirely about allowing firms to attain long-term profitability, subject to an appreciation of the impact on society. It implies the rational exploitation of resources, a fair attitude towards the staff members, and ensures that future generations will have financial reserves (Camilleri, 2017). Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are more concerned about their financial sustainability over time since they have limited funds as their operating capital, and the market forces are highly competitive. Long-term sustainability vs short-term profitability is one of the competitors (Bakos et al., 2020). The social aspect of the TBL system focuses on the welfare of the community, employees, and consumers. It includes the aspect of social equality (Lindell et al.,

2022), fair remuneration, social equality, and the role of society and social equality. In developing countries such as Nigeria, social sustainability is a priority for SMEs given their close relations with their communities. According to Chowdhury and Shumon (2020), small and medium-scale firms (SMEs) experience financial constraints and lack institutional support; hence, they are not able to positively engage in social sustainability. The environmental aspect of sustainability is the more favorable the economic activities are to the environment (Olah et al., 2018). This includes trash minimisation, energy economy, and sustainable leisure activities. To begin with, SMEs are expensive and need access to green technology, which makes it quite difficult to adopt environmentally sustainable operations, particularly those in resource-scarce areas (Abid et al., Hojmoose, & Marchant, 2024). An increasing number of individuals, however, come to learn that implementing environmental sustainability would help contribute to rising resiliency and long-term competitiveness (Negri et al., 2021).

Concept of SMEs

Any mention of SMEs when they are concerned with creating employment, finance and creative stimulation would normally be accompanied by the term, unsung heroes of the economy. It is so in the case of developing countries at least. The most commonly used criterion in the case of SMEs is size; common tests usually incorporate yearly income, value of assets, and the number of people. Even when certain industry and regional definitions dictate what qualifies as a small or medium-sized firm (SME), the problem of what exactly is a small firm or a medium firm remains controversial (Dar et al., 2016). This is mostly the case with underdeveloped nations like Nigeria, where SMEs contribute immensely towards the growth of the economy. Surya et al. (2021) argue that such industries are

creative stimulants, meant to diversify the economy and create more jobs. SMEs are especially important in the fight against unemployment and poverty (Matthew et al., 2020). Out of all the Nigerian businesses, over ninety % of them comprise SMEs. Above all, the economy-wise, SMEs face numerous issues to stay open and expand (Ab Abdullahi et al., 2016). On the one hand, some authors have illustrated the role of SMEs in economic development (e.g., Myslimi & Kaçani, 2016; Zafar & Mustafa, 2017); on the other hand, some researchers have emphasised the limited and difficult nature of small businesses to operate (e.g., Esther et al., 2018; Maow, 2021). According to Mead and Liedholm (1998), a significant number of SMEs are too small and fail to grow since resources and competition in the market are a challenge; most SMEs in poor countries are operated informally, as a result, it is somewhat hard to gain appropriate financial systems and government funding to support them (Distinguin et al., 2016).

Factors Influencing the Adoption of Sustainability Practices

Adoption of sustainable practices by SMEs relies on internal and external factors to the extent they adopt the practice. These factors may either be motives or obstacles suiting the environment; although some authors have emphasised the former, others have emphasised the latter.

Integration of the sustainability initiatives is often pegged on internal factors, principally internal factors such as business culture and commitment of leadership. Allegedly, these two factors are substantially increased by the active leadership and the high level of environmental attitude within the company, thereby making sustainable policies by far more likely (Huang et al., 2021). Similarly, Cerchione et al. (2018) highlight the importance of a sustainability-based society in making

SMEs pursue social and environmental aspects in their operations. Scarcity of resources, particularly financial and human capital, which offsets the impact of leadership on the sustainability acceptability, jeopardises the ability of SMEs to achieve sustainable objectives (Aboelmaged and Hashem, 2019). Stakeholder impact, market requirements, as well as legal limitations, are also rather significant based on external sources. Yadav et al. (2018) say that legal constraints increase the chances of SMEs that are located in jurisdictions where environmental regulations are more intense to practice sustainable practices. The researchers (Dai et al., 2021) claim that market pressure and consumer expectations drive a greater impact, particularly in those industries where products that enhance the nature and society are particularly popular. On this ground, Kot (2018) speaks of the necessity of supply chain pressures and states that due to the necessity, SMEs operating global supply networks are often forced to take sustainable steps to adapt them to the requirements of bigger businesses.

The limitation of finances also plays a significant role because different studies show that SMEs cannot access the amount of money they will need when developing environmental projects. To date, Megersa (2020) observes that the lack of adequate capital and the expensive nature of adopting modern technology are putting off SMEs located in developing countries from adopting sustainable technology and practices. According to Gherghina et al. (2020), SMEs do not usually appreciate the upfront costs of sustainability projects, but they know their benefits in the long run. This is contrary to the case with the larger firms, which can practice sustainability.

In their turn, research shows that SMEs engage in sustainable practices not only to act in response to external restrictions but

as a strategic measure aimed at enhancing innovation and competitiveness. According to Rua et al. (2018), based on sustainability, SMEs may differentiate themselves from their competitors. This line of thinking is justified by the fact that this article (Ouyang et al., 2020) argues that environmental regulations might contribute to competitiveness and innovation. As to the benefits of sustainable practice, however, the researchers hold different thoughts. The declining profitability and the queries raised on the ways of appropriating resources have generated doubts about the SME-dedicated option to provide it with the priority of sustainability in its application. Although small and medium-sized enterprises may have to sacrifice significantly, a hypothesis by Kautonen et al. (2020) suggests that sustainability can be more prominent in the lives of bigger corporations, able to take extra responsibility.

Challenges in Implementing Sustainability Practices

SMEs struggle to follow sustainable practices well. These problems are addressed to four broad categories; financial, operational, legal and cultural. The two problems make SMEs struggle to pursue sustainable growth since they tend to collide.

Most people claim that financing the environmental projects is the main factor, which is a tremendous challenge. According to Meijer et al. (2019), the financial capabilities of small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) tend to be rather inadequate and thus normally represent an obstacle to sustainable technology or practice support. This issue becomes more severe in developing countries where there are not many resources to spare and sustainable technology remains out of reach (Brammer et al., 2012). The financial constraints research, however, on SMEs, has indicated that they could provide

rather affordable and environmentally sound solutions (De et al., 2020). In addition, there are significant challenges that have been caused by operational problems. Most of the time, deprived of the human force necessary or expertise, SMEs have a hard time implementing sustainable practices (Langwell & Heaton, 2016). This lack of knowledge could imply that the targets of sustainability would not be met at the implementation stage (Cordano et al., 2010). In addition, corporate practices may have to be substantially changed to accommodate sustainability in the operations. Moreover, these changes may be disruptive and costly (Brenner, 2018).

Sustainability plans are already difficult to carry out; regulatory hurdles aggravate the matter. Legislation might motivate SMEs to embrace sustainable practices, claims Afolabi et al. (2023). They also warn, though, that unequal implementation and vague policies can lead to misunderstanding, hence increasing compliance costs. Strict rules could discourage SMEs from implementing environmental projects if their supposed expenses exceed their advantages (Rizos et al., 2016). Still, another obstacle to lasting solutions is ignorance and cultural resistance to change. Many SMEs—especially those in more conventional industries—may not see the long-term advantages of sustainability or be ready to change their long-standing business processes (Wiesner et al., 2018). In markets lacking demand for environmentally friendly products, the absence of outside pressure might heighten this resistance.

Theoretical Review

This piece of work starts with the theory of TBL. John Elkington later came up with a TBL hypothesis in 1994, which extended the old financial bottom line to include social and environmental items. Known as people, planet, and profit (Elkington, 1997), the TBL paradigm

supposes that companies are supposed to place social equality and environmental sustainability on the same emphasis as financial prosperity. The concept has been widely accepted and considered to be the main pillar behind the ecologically friendly corporate policies. The theory is based on some assumptions. Primarily, it highlights the fact that businesses are supposed to contribute to the community and the environment as opposed to seeking to expand their profit margin (Norman & MacDonald, 2004). Moreover, a triple-bottom-line strategy is expected to allow one to monitor and document environmental, social as well and financial impacts (Slaper & Hall, 2011). Finally, the theory also postulates that with the help of the combination of these three pillars, the companies will be able to find success in the long run as they will be aligning with more general norms and expectations of society (Savitz, 2013). The sustainable strategies of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria, can be learnt by identifying how they balance between social and environmental responsibilities and business goals using the TBL theory to study it. There are two community obligations of the SMEs: SMEs are supposed to see profits, which is their natural responsibility, and in addition to this, they are supposed to consider how their company will impact employment and fair labour standards (Roxas & Coetzer, 2012). The TBL theory is especially relevant in Kogi State in Nigeria, where socioeconomic issues such as poverty and inequality require a business approach which incorporates both social and environmental aspects that are tied to profits. It helps the SMEs to reduce their environmental impact through sustainable operations such as energy use and waste reduction, and purchasing (Revell et al., 2010).

Study Area

The geographic region of the Kogi State is at latitudes between 7°30'N and 7°52'N

'N and longitudes between 6°38'E and 6°42'E. Other minor groups in the state, besides the three big ethnic groups, and languages spoken in Kogi State, which include: the Igala, the Ebira, and the Okun (which are the Yoruba people), are Bassa-Komo, Lokoja and Bassa Nge, Gwari, Kakanda, Oworo people, Magongo and Eggyn community. Kogi State has twenty-one (21) LGAs. Kogi State is a gateway between the north and the south of Nigeria. Lokoja is the state capital, which is an administrative and commercial centre (Olorunfemi, 2021). Agriculture, fishing, trade, as well as small businesses, are the main drivers of the state, and the increase in the economic base of the region is becoming the subject of an even greater concentration. Some of the other mineral resources within the state include: limestone, coal, marble, and iron ore (Ovajimoh, 2021). Despite the potential that can be seen in Kogi state, small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) employ various sustainable strategies, which also rely on limitations in terms of infrastructure and limited financial resources. To judge whether there are factors that make local SMEs survive in the long run, one had better be familiar with such procedures.

3. Methodology

The goal of this study is to find out what will make SMEs adapt to sustainable practices in Kogi State, Nigeria, based on a quantitative questionnaire-based approach. The study design aims at creating a sound statistical knowledge of the factors which influence sustainable behaviours. Multi-stage sampling procedures were applied in selecting the respondents. The first step was choosing the location where the research would be done, and Kogi State was chosen because it reflects the work of SMEs in the state (Olorunfemi, 2021). Sampled in phase two using concentration in SME were four LGAs; these consisted of Ijumu (Western

senatorial), Lokoja (Western senatorial), Okene (Central Sen), and Idah (Eastern Sen) (Olorunfemi, 2021). The third step involved sampling by selecting 200 SMEs with the operating experience of at least five years under these LGAs. The respondents were selected out of all SMEs and formed 400 individuals, where the owners or senior employees and a representative comprised two individuals. During the analysis of the data, the researchers employed descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Added descriptive data in the form of tables and graphs assisted the study in demonstrating the characteristics of the SMEs concerning operation and demography.

The inferential analysis, which involved the use of a correlational analysis, was used to assess the relationships between variables and explore how many aspects were affecting sustainable practices. Every participant was required to obtain informed consent before the collection and publication of any data; the research ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants as well. The participants were advised that participation is strictly voluntary and they can withdraw at any time without incurring unfavourable consequences.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	%age
Gender		
Male	255	66.6
Female	128	33.4
Age		
18-24	50	13.1
25-34	78	20.4
35-44	75	19.6
45-54	128	33.4
55 and above	52	13.6
Highest Educational Qualification		
No formal education	128	33.4
Secondary education	101	26.4
Tertiary education	129	33.7
Postgraduate education	25	6.5
Position within the Company		
Owner	282	73.6
Senior Employee	101	26.4
Annual Revenue		
Less than ₦1 million	101	26.4
₦1-5 million	130	33.9

₦6-10 million	102	26.6
More than ₦10 million	50	13.1
Total	383	100.0

Table 1 indicates some demographic details of the respondents. Of the responses, 33.4% were female and 66.6 were male. The age of respondents was quite representative of all age categories; the least represented (13.1%) is between the ages of 20 and 24 years, and that between 45 and 54 years is the highest (33.4%). As to the level of education, 26.4 % of the respondents expressed that they did not have any official education at all; 33.7 % said that they had a bachelor's degree or higher; 33.4 % stated that they had merely completed secondary

education. Only 6.5 % of the respondents had undertaken postgraduate degrees. To reflect on the question of whether the respondents worked their way up in their companies or are owners of their companies, 73.6 % were said to be owners, hence they are individuals who have a significant influence on the manner their companies undertake their operation. The statistics only indicate that a small proportion of businesses recorded inferiors that were higher than 10 million naira (13.1%), with the majority recording annual sales of 1-5 million naira (33.9%).

Table 2: Determinants influencing the adoption of sustainability practices (the triple Bottom Line)

Element	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
People			
employee well-being importance	2.21	1.11	7 th
Employee benefits	1.93	0.25	1 st
Employee Training/Development	1.20	0.40	2 nd
Planet			
Extent of implementation of waste reduction practices	1.73	0.77	6 th
How to use energy-efficient equipment	1.60	0.49	5 th
Frequency of engagement in environmental impact assessments	2.27	1.29	8 th
Profit			
Criticality of profitability in decision-making	3.60	1.37	9 th
Investment in sustainable practices	1.60	0.49	4 th
SME review financial performance	1.33	0.47	3 rd

Table 2 uses the Triple Bottom Line approach to map out considerations influencing the process of SMEs accepting the practice of sustainability. The highest score, with a mean value of 1.93, is the employee benefits under the category of People, indicating that a lot of focus will be put on giving employees true incentives. This high mean score of employee training and development, mean = 1.20, highlights the importance of

equipping the members of staff with up-to-date skills. However, the employee well-being (mean = 2.21) is positioned last as compared to all the categories, indicating minimal consideration for the overall welfare of employees. In the category of planet, the emphasis on sustainable activity (mean = 1.60) and the use of equipment that is energy efficient (mean = 1.60) demonstrate a commitment to the sustainability of the planet and its

long-term survival. The frequency of environmental impact assessment and the extent to which waste reduction techniques are found to be in place are lower (mean = 2.27 and mean = 1.73, respectively), and thus, the suggestion is made that the areas could be improved.

On profit, the investment in sustainability and the review of financial performance were prioritised above the profitability (mean = 3.60), hence indicating that it is not of great significance to the decision-making process.

Figure 1: Challenges faced by Nigerian SMEs in implementing sustainability practices

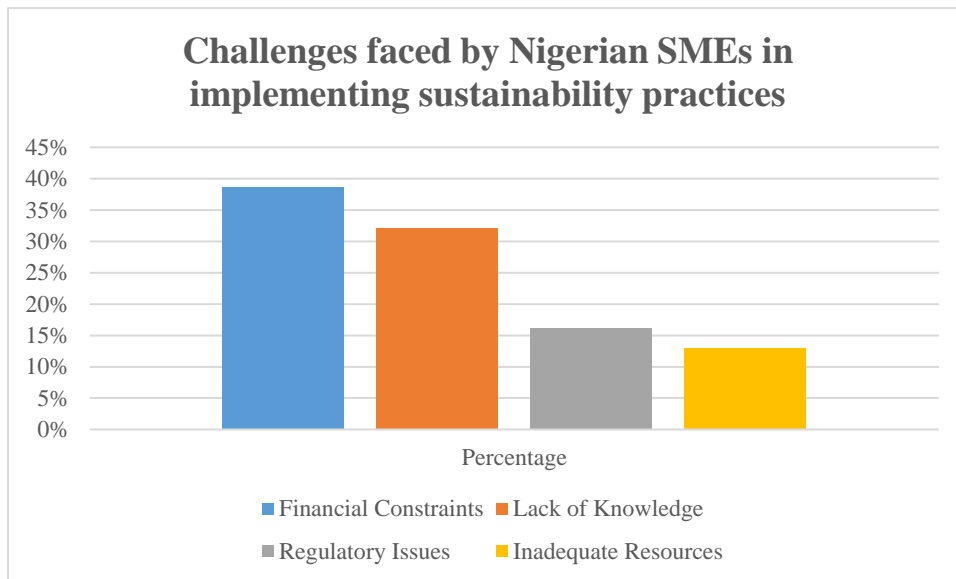


Figure 1 depicts the tough nature of sustainable practices used by the Nigerian SMEs. This is because 38.7% of SMEs in Kogi State in Nigeria are bound by financial constraints, and this clearly shows that a lack of money is a significant obstacle on the way of utilising sustainable practices. Next, 32.2% of the respondents stated that they did not have sufficient knowledge, which would mean that not many people would understand sustainable practices, thus, not accepting them. The fact that 16.1% of SMEs have revealed their regulatory concerns leads to the attention being focused on potential challenges regarding adherence and understanding policies. The shortage of resources, which may stem from the

absence of real or technological resources, is the least frequent predicament that assails, only 13.0% of SMEs struggling with this issue. These data demonstrate that concerns about expertise and money constitute the greatest obstacles to sustainability; concerns about laws and resources follow.

Test of Hypothesis

H₀: Cultural factors do not significantly influence the commitment of Nigerian SMEs to sustainability practices.

Table 3: Correlations

			Importance of employee well-being	Employee Resistance to Change
Importance of employee well-being	Pearson Correlation		1	-.104*
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.042
	N		383	383
Employee Resistance to Change	Pearson Correlation		-.104*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.042	
	N		383	383

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

By hypothesis, Table 3 indicates the results of the correlation analysis regarding the specific hypothesis, which is as follows: the commitment of the Nigerian SMEs to sustainable practices is not significantly determined by cultural aspects. Employee well-being (-0.104 Pearson correlation, $p = 0.042$) is correlated to their resistance to change. This connection is statistically significant, which means that these variables are connected at the 0.05 significance level. In particular, the negative correlation in two variables implies that, in most cases, workers resist change less when their well-being is not of utmost importance, and vice versa. The statistical data and statistical significance of the relationship demonstrate that, indeed, cultural factors play a major role in the commitment of the SMEs in Kogi state in Nigeria to sustainable practices.

Discussion of Findings

The findings provide insight into the potential and negative characteristics of the sustainability practices of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria, and the causes influencing the given characteristics. First, the study identified the demographics as indicating that a large number of SMEs in the state of Kogi, Nigeria, are also owners of businesses; the population that was sampled has predominantly men, and the age of the respondents differs greatly. To implement understanding of the various factors promoting sustainable acceptance,

it is necessary to incorporate the opinion of different business revenue groups and the level of education (Muller et al., 2018). This representation of the demography guarantees a broad perspective on sustainable projects.

The study further looks into determining the factors that influence sustainable behaviours by using the People, Planet, and Profit (Triple Bottom Line) paradigm. Such investments as staff benevolences and up-skilling demonstrate that staff consideration and ability to contribute to personal development of two highly important components of forming a sustainable work environment are valued (Keating et al., 2015). Nevertheless, Martinez Falco et al. (2024) provide evidence that a general level of sustainability commitment can decrease in reaction to the lack of concern about the well-being of workers. The environmental sector is characterised by investments in energy-efficient technology, although the relatively lower interest in the reduction of waste and environmental impact assessment should be improved. The proper waste management system and regular environmental assessments are the main requirements of environmental sustainability (Wu et al., 2019). The lesser weight of profitability in the decision-making is an indicator that SMEs are committed to sustainability, although it is not driven by finance as the driving force, as more and more corporations are

incorporating sustainability in their basic business plans rather than associating it as a cost (Elkington, 1997).

In addition, ignorance and financial constraints are the major problems that the SMEs in Nigeria face, most importantly. This makes it easier to trust what the previous researchers have revealed: the challenges to successful deployment are the lack of resources and the lack of awareness of sustainable actions (Lee, 2015). Less serious, but still an issue, are regulatory issues, which trigger the need for more open criteria to motivate sustainable options to be welcomed. Even though this is the least of the problems, the inadequacy of available resources may make implementing projects that are geared towards sustainability a difficult task among SMEs. This highlights the importance of organising resources and establishing support systems.

The hypothesis test results show that such cultural factors, like the emphasis placed on employee well-being, have a significant influence on the commitment to sustainability programs. Cultural aspects play a crucial role in the functioning of corporations and, therefore, the proposed research underlines the importance of considering cultural factors during the creation of environmental programs. Closely connected to the idea of employee well-being and its relation to resistance to change (also described and attributed among other factors to employee well-being by Pan et al., 2022), this illustrates how high the degree of influence cultural attitudes towards employee well-being have on the efficiency of the sustainability project. This correlates with previous research carried out by Isensee et al. (2020) that focused on the necessity to maintain a sustainability-driven business culture.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper establishes the factors that influence sustainable practices that SMEs

adopt in the state of Kogi in Nigeria, mixed with the problems encountered and the role played by cultural attitudes. In bold, there are people, planet, and profit (Triple Bottom Line strategy). There is a better holistic approach required regarding employee welfare because the findings are that the attention paid to employee well-being is very minimal, and a lot of emphasis is on training and benefits. The SMEs in Kogi state in Nigeria are committed to the preservation of energy; they are not so much concerned about reducing waste. Ignorance and shortage of funds are the main threats facing sustainable projects in the state, as compared to legal attacks. In Nigeria, or more precisely in Kogi state, SME will be more likely to be committed to sustainability when issues such as cultural aspects (paying much attention to the well-being of the personnel) are taken into account. This gives even stronger evidence of the idea that, to make sustainability initiatives less change-resistant, adding cultural elements to them might be the best solution.

These results have led to the following recommendations:

SMEs' emphasis should be given to the health and well-being of employees in general, which should be the first step towards sustainability. Considering this will enable us to develop sustainable activities more easily implemented and at the same time make employees more satisfied and less unwilling to change. Second, the SMEs in Kogi state of Nigeria need to always assess the impact they have on the environment and attempt to minimise the waste they produce. These actions are needed to fully sustain the environment, and therefore, they should be incorporated into the routine business activities. Additionally, what the Kogi State government must do is go further to remove the financial restrictions and disseminate awareness about the ecologically friendly policies. Investing in

Kogi State, Nigeria SMEs is more about providing money and knowledge to them so that they can overcome the hurdles and employ sustainable techniques. The simplification of sustainable practices by the policymakers and the regulatory authorities in Kogi State, Nigeria, should take into consideration measures that allow SMEs to expand in their sustainability initiatives.

Lastly, the SMEs in Kogi, Nigeria, can attempt to foster a culture that facilitates the concept of sustainability because cultural characteristics can affect the level of devotion to sustainability. This would be done by ensuring that sustainability

cuts through everything the firm does and that it gets involved in the daily routine. The use of more sustainable practices in SMEs located in Kogi State Nigeria will be a great way to contribute towards a better world in the future.

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