

IMPACT OF ORGANIZATION OWNERSHIP AND STRATEGY ON ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of organization ownership and organizational strategy on organizational sustainable practices among organizations in Delta State, Nigeria. The design was cross-sectional and data were collected with self-administered questionnaires. One hundred and seventy-four respondents sampled from both public and private-owned organizations provided the data analyzed. Eighty five participants were sampled from public organizations, while 93 participants were sampled from private-owned organizations. The sample comprises 46% males and 54% females; 64% married and 36% unmarried. Data analysis revealed that public organizations and private organizations significantly differ in organizational sustainable practices, $t(df; 176) = -2.29 < 0.05$ and that organizational strategy dimensions differ in their predictive relationship with organizational sustainable practices; prospectors, $\beta(168) = 0.55, p < 0.05$; defenders, $\beta(168) = 0.26, p < 0.05$; analyzers, $\beta(168) = 0.01, p > 0.05$; and reactors, $\beta(168) = 0.03, P > 0.05$. It is recommended that policies and programs aimed at promoting organizational sustainable practices should incorporate organization ownership and organizational strategy.

Keywords: Organization Ownership, Organizational Strategy and Organizational Sustainable Practices.

INTRODUCTION

In recent time, a major awareness and desire of mankind is sustainable development. This understanding is timely as many nations are already facing catastrophes such as atmospheric warming, food shortage, desertification, war, air pollution, ozone weakening, and population explosions. These harmful conditions demand prompt and adequate response to mitigate their inherent negative consequences. Sustainable development has been globally proposed and demonstrated as a potential tool for addressing a few of the varied challenges confronting mankind and the entire ecosystem (Lah, 2015; Olsen & Fenhann, 2006). Sustainable development is conceptualized as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). It is a call to sustain nature, life support systems and community which required present development efforts to be mindful of the future. Sustainable development has three aspects that comprises environmental, economic and social, and it called for a balance among these aspects and a reconciliation of the conflict between the present and the future (National Research Council, 1999).

Sustainable development is a goal at the societal level and achieving such requires certain behavior and practices from individuals and organizations. At the organizational level, this is of

necessity as the decisions and activities of organizations contribute significantly to the economic, environmental and social conditions of the society. Dyllick & Hockerts (2002) in consonant with the conceptualization of sustainable development defined organizational sustainability as meeting the needs of a firm's direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders. Sustainable organization meets the needs of the organization and its stakeholders today while also protecting, sustaining, and enhancing the environmental, social, and economic resources needed for the future. Sustainable organization therefore operates in the interest of all current and future stakeholders in a manner that ensures certain minimum level of performance in area of economic, environmental and social systems (Landrum & Edwards, 2009). This three-in-one feature differentiates sustainable organizations from green organizations which solely focuses on reducing their environmental impact, and from corporate social responsibility which is traditionally concerned with social performance of the organization. Sustainable organizational practices imply decisions and activities at organizational level that brings about organizational sustainability, and it encompassed procedures that are economically, environmentally, and socially responsible (Nutt, 2005; Butler et al., 2011). Such practices could be expressed in the ways production, packaging, distribution and how disposal processes are accomplished.

It is widely acknowledged in the literature that the realization of sustainable development and attainment of organizational performance is dependent on organizational sustainable practices. For instance, a high degree of sustainable business practices correlated with a high level of perceived benefits, high level of strategic planning and a less degree of perceived obstacles (Raderbauer, 2011), and sustainability practices brings about an increased performance in innovativeness, which in turn, brings about performance in market and financial indices (Dahlgard-Park, 2015). As organizational sustainable practices have much desirable consequences, it becomes imperative sufficient understanding of its determinants. Consequently, this study ascertained whether organization ownership and organizational strategy predict organizational sustainable practices. Choice of the independent variables is informed by the dearth of study that examine them along with organizational sustainable practices, and the extant literature that widely implicate organization ownership and organizational strategy in organizational structure, process and behavior (Pulaj et al., 2015; Yanney, 2014). Result of this study when combined with other related results would be of value to (a) governments in their role of regulating organizations for attainment of sustainable development, and (b) for practitioners who need understanding in terms the values of organization ownership and organizational strategy in the pursuit of sustainable organizational performance.

Organizations are classified variedly, but ownership and activity criteria dominate. The ownership criterion grouped organizations into public and private sectors, while the activity criterion grouped organizations into service and manufacturing sectors. Public sector organization refers to organizations owned by federal, state, local, or regional political entities; it consists of organizations within all branches of government (Anheier, 2005). Private organizations are "*non-governmental*" in that it is institutionally separate from government and not part of the state apparatus of government. These two forms of organizations are widely noted to differ in concern for profits, competition within industry, red tapeism and political influence. They also differ in structure, efficiency of operation, and quality of service (Ben-Ner & Ren, 2008), in generous non-wage benefits (Lammam et al., 2016), in wage (Emilio et al., 2012) and in organizational culture (Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2013).

Strategy is a pattern of actions and resource allocations designed to achieve goals of the organization. It is the determination of long-term goals and objectives, the adoption of courses of action and associated allocation of resources required to achieve goals (Long et al., 2012; Pushpakumari, 2008 as cited in Ajagbe et al., 2016). Miles et al. (1978) identified four types of organizational strategy (prospectors, defenders, analyzers and reactors) based on how organizations response to challenges in their environment. Miles et al. (1978) proposed that organizations that respond to challenges by having a limited range of products and focusing on efficiency and process improvement are defenders. Organizations that respond to challenges by having a broad market/product domain and leading change in the industry are prospectors. Organizations that respond to challenges by watching and copying defenders and prospectors are analyzers. Organizations that have no consistent strategy and that merely respond passively to environment pressure are reactors. Porter (1980) classified organizational strategy into cost leadership, differentiation and focus. Abell (1980) classified organizational strategy into differentiated, undifferentiated and focus. Although each of these typology has its strength and weakness, Miles's et al. (1978) typology was adopted in this study as it richly described and meets the requirements of being both comprehensive and parsimonious (Smith et al., 1986), has extensive theoretical orientation and is applicable to different types of organization and settings.

Relationship between some organizational level variables and sustainable organizational practices has received some empirical concern. D'souza et al. (1993) investigated factors that affect adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and observed that age, education, employment and ground water significantly relate with adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, while sales, government programmes and labour were not. Shriberg (2002) investigated organizational factors that influence campus environmental performance and leadership and reported that collaborative decision making structures, progressive political orientation, a collegial atmosphere, and image-seeking behavior represent strong positive conditions for success in campus sustainability. Mink (2012) examined the effects of organizational structure on sustainability report compliance and observed a relationship between an organization's sincere commitment to sustainability by their leadership and sustainability report compliance, the author reported relationship between organization's sincere leadership commitment to sustainability and sustainability report observance level; the stakeholders' sustainability expectations and the sustainability report observance level; and organization's ability to prevail over resource constraints and market incentives generated by the development of a sustainability report and the level of sustainability report compliance. Chang et al. (2013) investigated internal and external determinants of green supply chain management (GSCM) practices and observed that external factors such as pressures from regulations and customers and internal pressures such as support from the top managers and organization's learning capacity do not influence companies to adopt the GSCM practices, and that the external pressures do not have significant mediating role in the relationship between internal pressures and GSCM practices. Talias (2014) reviewed literature on sustainable development practices and concluded that in developed countries awareness of the issue of "*sustainability*" and practical involvement in the public sector are less developed than in the business sector. On the basis of the literature review, it was hypothesized that:

- 1 There will be significant difference between public organizations and private-owned organizations in organizational sustainable practices
- 2 There will be significant and positive predictive relationship between organizational strategy and organizational sustainable practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design adopted for this study was cross-sectional as data were collected at one point in time. This design enables assess to enough organizations which was appropriate for the generalized and sweeping nature of the tested hypotheses. One hundred and seventy-four respondents drawn from 11 public organizations and 22 private-owned organizations in Delta State, Nigeria provided the data analyzed. Delta State has both indigenous and foreign organizations, and there is need to understand their sustainable practices as that has much desirable implications for sustainable development which is desired in every society. The sampled organizations were all service organizations that covered secondary schools, hospitals, government ministries and commercial banks. Eighty-five participants were drawn from public organizations, while 93 participants were drawn from private-owned organizations. Data were collected and analyzed at organizational level and this was achieved through the wording of the questionnaire items. (e.g. *“in the organization where I work....”*). Collecting data at organizational level addressed the inadequacy of aggregated responses as measure of organizational properties (Lincoln & Zeitz, 1980; Rainey, 2009). Sampled organizations were grouped into prospectors, defenders, analyzers and reactors based on responses from the respondents. This was feasible as items of the scale were worded (e.g. *“in the organization where I work....”*) to reflect organization, not individual. As noted by Fey & Denison (2000) for comparative studies, the use of large number of organizations and a few respondents in each organization yields results with greater degree of external validity than otherwise. The adopted sample size has 80% power (at 0.05 significant level) when effect size is medium (Dewberry, 2004). The respondent sample comprises 46% males and 54% females; 64% married and 36% unmarried; 42% management staff and 58% non-management staff. Their age mean was 35.63 (SD., 7.70, range, 38). Nine percent hold certificate lower than first degree, 71% hold first degree or its equivalents, and 19 % hold post graduate degrees. The high level of literacy among the respondents implies that the items that constituted the research instruments were sufficiently comprehended and *“rightly”* responded to. The sampled include small, medium and large size organizations and this is to achieve wide application of findings.

Measure used for organizational strategy was adapted from the work of Andrews et al. (2009) and Oyedijo (2012). The two measures were developed on Miles's et al. (1978) typology of organizational strategy that covers prospectors, analyzers, defenders and reactors. Andrews et al. (2007) scale was developed on the first three types of organizational strategy. Oyedijo's (2012) one-item measure on analyzer strategy was adopted to complement Andrews's et al. (2009) measure. Organizational sustainable practices were measured with items adapted from Harmon et al. (2009) organizational sustainable practices scale and Cella-De-Oliveira's (2013) organizational sustainability indicators. Adapting items from the two sources is to maximize the strength and minimize the weakness of each measure. For instance, Harmon's et al. (2009) scale lack item on economic aspect of organizational sustainable practices and some of the items were too inclusive (e.g., use sustainability-related criteria in promotion and career advancement). Cella-De-Oliveira's (2013) indicators were presented under the three dimensions of organizational sustainable practices. This guided the present researcher in grouping the research items under environmental, economic and social dimensions. Six-point Likert method of summated rating scale (6-strongly agree, 5-moderately agree, 4- agree, 3-disagree, 2-moderately disagree, 1-strongly disagree) was adopted as it generates enough variability in response. Generating sufficient variance among respondents through scaling gives validity to statistical outputs (Stone, 1978). Wide scale points also controls the effects of central tendency, i.e. the

tendency of respondents to avoid extreme end of scales. All these increase the validity of the scale. For all the scales, scores were computed by averaging each participant responses to the items. The following Cronbach's alpha coefficients were observed on the sets of data: entire questionnaire $\alpha=0.71$, organizational strategy $\alpha=0.64$, prospectors $\alpha=0.87$, defenders $\alpha=0.76$, analyzers $\alpha=0.58$, reactors $\alpha=0.78$, organizational sustainable practices, $\alpha = 0.71$, environmental, $\alpha=0.78$, economic, $\alpha=0.87$ and social $\alpha=0.74$. These statistics, except for that on organizational strategy and analyzers indicate that the scales are of good reliability, as an alpha of .70 or above are considered satisfactory (Howitt & Cramer, 2011).

Data were collected through convenience sampling technique as organizations and respondents that met the criteria for participation such as being a permanent member of staff and had worked for five and above years in the organization were used on the basis of availability. Non-random sample is a common feature in organization studies; particularly in this research location as sampling frames are often not available or extremely difficult to access. It was assumed that permanent staffers who have worked in an organization for at least five years would have sufficient understanding about the prevailing situation in their organizations. In all, 210 questionnaires were distributed, within an interval 6 weeks 186 filled questionnaires were received. However, after sorting out inappropriately filled questionnaires, 178 (that is, 84.76%) respondents were used for data analyses.

Hypothesis 1 was tested with t-test, while hypothesis 2 was tested with regression analysis. The statistical tests were appropriate as hypothesis 1 tested for difference in mean, while hypothesis 2 tested for predictive relationship. The two statistical tests are parametric so a few assumptions for their usage were observed. For instance, the requirement of interval level of measurement was met with the adoption of 6-point Likert scaling format. Data from individual respondent were independent of each other. This means that the score of a participant did not affect the score of another participant in the data set. No outlier was observed in the data. Durbin-Watson test statistics were within acceptable level with reference to autocorrelation, while variance inflation factors (VIFs) were all below 10 which indicate absence of collinearity in the data (Field, 2013). Data were analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics version 23. Howitt & Cramer's (2011) approach to interpretation of confidence interval and Lenhard & Lenhard's (2016) online calculator for Cohen's d were adopted.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics from data collected on a six-point Likert summated rating scale revealed mean scores of $\bar{x}=3.66$ (SD=0.71) and $\bar{x}=4.01$ (SD=0.95) for organizational strategy and organizational sustainable practices respectively. The observed mean scores for the four dimensions of organizational strategy were: prospectors, $\bar{x}=4.07$ (SD=1.16), analyzers, $\bar{x} = 3.82$ (SD=1.41), defenders $\bar{x}=4.48$ SD=1.17) and reactors $\bar{x}=2.87$ (SD=1.17). The observed mean scores for the three dimensions of organizational sustainable practices were: environmental, $\bar{x}=3.86$ (SD=1.11) economic $\bar{x}=4.02$ (SD=1.11), and social $\bar{x}=4.13$ (SD=1.10). Pearson correlation coefficients revealed significant positive relationship between the three dimensions of organizational sustainable practices.

Statistics at the bottom of Table 1 showed *t*-test result on difference between public organizations and private organizations in organizational sustainable practices. The statistics are from composite analysis and it indicate that public organizations and private organizations differ significantly in organizational sustainable practices, t (df 176) = -2.29, $p < 0.05$, two tailed. As the point estimate showed significant result, so was the confidence interval estimate. The difference

between public organizations ($\bar{x}=3.84$, $SD=1.09$) and private organizations ($\bar{x}=4.16$, $SD=0.79$) in organizational sustainable practices was -0.32 . The 95 percent confidence interval for this difference was -0.60 to -0.04 , and since this interval does not include 0.00 , the difference is statistically significant at 0.05 levels. Therefore, from point and interval estimates, the hypothesis (composite) that public and private organizations significantly differ in organizational sustainable practices was supported. The obtained Cohen's d of 0.31 (95% CI: 0.02 to 0.6), indicates medium effect size.

Table 1 showed t - test result on difference between public organizations and private-owned organizations on the three dimensions of organizational sustainable practices. The statistics revealed that public and private organizations differ significant only in social dimension, t (df , 169) $=-3.83$, $p<0.05$, two tailed. Effect size statistics (Cohen's d) for environmental dimension $.26$ (95% CI: 0 -0.03 to 0.52), for economic dimension 0.7 (CI: 0 $.39$ to 1.00), and for social dimension -0.09 (CI: 0 $.39$ to 0.20). The obtained Cohen's d statistics indicate small, large and small effect sizes respectively for the dimensions.

	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	Cohen's d	p	95% CI	
								LB	UB
ENVIRONMENTAL									
Public organizations	83	3.68	1.25						
				172	-1.68	0.26	0.09	-0.62	0.04
Private organizations	91	3.97	0.97						
ECONOMIC									
Public organizations	83	3.77	1.46						
				170	-0.53	0.70	0.59	-0.54	0.31
Private organizations	88	3.67	1.40						
SOCIAL									
Public organizations	83	4.30	1.11						
				169	-3.83	-0.09	0.001	-0.96	-0.30
Private organizations	92	4.20	1.05						

Note: t (df ; 176) $=-12.29 > 0.05$, Cohen's d 0.31 (95% CI: -0.60 to -0.04)

Statistics at the bottom of Table 2 showed simple regression analysis predicting organizational sustainable practices from organizational strategy. The r value (0.56) indicates that the relationship between organizational strategy and organizational sustainable practices was positive and significant, r (178) $=0.56$, $p<0.05$. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was accepted. The r^2 indicates that organizational strategy explained 31 percent variance in organizational sustainable practices. The obtained effect size statistic (r^2) was $.31$ (95% CI: 0.02 to 0.6). On the basis of Cohen's (1988) criterion, r^2 of 0.31 indicates large effect size. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, F (1 , 178) $=81.60$, $p<0.05$, also indicated that the regression was statistically significant. Multiple regression analysis (Table 2) revealed that the various types of organizational strategy differ in their predictive relationship with organizational sustainable practices. Prospectors (e.g. a university introducing more academic and professional programs in response to challenging business condition facing it) and defenders (e.g. a bank closing branches or reducing range of products or services in response to poor market condition) strategies significantly predict organizational sustainable practices. Analyzers (e.g. a secondary school that waits and watches how other secondary schools respond to economic challenges they all face

before responding) and reactors (e.g. an organization that act submissively to challenges facing it) strategies did not significantly predict organizational sustainable practices. Specifically, prospectors, β (168) =0.55, $p < 0.05$, defenders, β (168) =0.26, $p < 0.05$, analyzers, β (168) =0.01, $p > 0.05$, and reactors, β (168) =0.03, $p > 0.05$). The result shows that the largest influence on organizational sustainable practices was from prospectors, followed by defenders, reactors and analyzers. Part correlation revealed that prospectors explained 13%, analyzers less than 1%, defenders 3% and reactors less than 1% variance in organizational sustainable practices.

	β	t	Part Correlations	p	95 % CI	
					LB	UB
Prospectors	0.55	7.39	0.37	0.001	0.33	0.58
Analyzers	0.01	0.32	0.01	0.74	- 0.06	0.08
Defenders	0.26	3.58	0.18	0.01	0.09	- 0.33
Reactors	0.03	0.72	0.03	0.46	- 0.05	0.11

Note: $r = 0.56$, $r^2 = 0.31$, $F = 81.60$, $p = 0.001$, (95% CI = 0.66 to 1.88).

DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of organization ownership and organizational strategy on organizational sustainable practices. Descriptive statistics revealed moderate degree of a mixture of the dimensions of organizational strategy and organizational sustainable practices among the sampled organizations. Statistics also revealed moderate mean scores for prospectors, defenders and analyzers, and less than average mean scores for reactors types of organizational strategy. Moderate mean scores were observed for all the dimensions of organizational sustainable practices. Overall, effect of organization ownership on organizational sustainable practices was small. The effect of organization ownership on economic dimension of organizational sustainable practices was large, the effects of organization ownership on environment and social dimensions of organizational sustainable practices were small. The small effect size implies that the difference in organizational sustainable practices of public organizations and private-owned organization is trivial, In other words, the impact of organization ownership on organizational sustainable practices is inconsequential. The effect of strategy on organizational sustainable practices is high, and it implies that the influence of organizational strategy on organizational sustainable practices is of importance

Inferential statistics at composite level of analysis showed significant difference between public organizations and private-owned organizations in organizational sustainable practices. Although there is lack of empirical study that compared the two types of organizations on organizational sustainable practices, however this result is expected as the types of organizations have been widely reported to differ in some aspects of organizational behavior (Ben-Ner & Ren, 2008; Boyne, 2002; Lammam et al., 2016; Ovidiu-Iliuta, 2013). The difference was in favor of private-owned organizations. Private-owned organizations performed significantly more organizational sustainable practices such as practices that ensure reduction in waste materials and those that ensure efficient use of energy than public organizations possibly because organizational sustainable practices contributes to organizational performance. That is, as private organizations survive solely on their performance they are likely than public organizations to be more committed to practices (e.g. ensuring long term profit, health and safety employees) related

to organizational performance. Dimensional analysis revealed that public organizations and private organizations differ significantly only in social dimension of organizational sustainable practices such as supporting employees in balancing work and life activities and ensuring no discrimination of gender in promotions of employees. However, while the influence of organization ownership on environmental and social dimensions was trivial, the influence of organization ownership on economic dimension was of importance.

Organizational strategy positively and significantly predicts organizational sustainable practices. This result is expected and consistent with related literature (Chang et al., 2013; D'souza et al., 1993; Mink, 2012). Additional analysis revealed that of the four dimensions of organizational strategy examined only two have significant positive predictive relationship with organizational sustainable practices. A plausible explanation for the greatest contribution of prospector's strategy to organizational sustainable practices among the dimensions is that prospectors are change agents, they lead change. Defenders ranked next to prospectors in contribution to organizational sustainable practices as they also have change characteristics. This is important as organizational sustainable practices are non-traditional and non-routine organizational behavior. Leading change is not a feature of analyzers and reactors. A few conclusions could be drawn from the findings. First, the various forms of organization differ in the degree of influence on organizational sustainable practices. Private organizations (e.g. private secondary schools and commercial banks) perform significantly more organizational sustainable practices such as ensuring salary equality between genders within the limits of each post and ensuring efficient use of energy than public organization. Second, organization ownership has moderate influence on organizational sustainable practices. And organizational strategy predicts and accounts for a large percentage of variance in organizational sustainable practices. Prospectors have the largest influence, while analyzers have the least.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An organizational sustainable practice is of necessity for achieving sustainable development and organizational performance. Results indicate that the mean scores for organizational sustainable practices among the sampled organizations were moderate. It is therefore recommended that since it is more of the responsibility of the state to ensure sustainable development various levels of government should provide guidelines on the level of organizational sustainable practices expected from organizations, reward compliance and sanctioned defaulters. More so, because organizations also benefit from sustainable development practices, governments should also sensitize organizations on the positive link between organizational sustainable practices, sustainable development and organizational performance. It is argued that when organizations are aware that their organizational sustainable practices would be beneficial to them and the society at large the practice would be accepted and promoted. The result also revealed that private organizations exhibit greater organizational sustainable practices than public organizations. On that ground it is recommended that the policies and programs for organizational sustainable practices should be more intensively directed at public organizations than privately-owned organizations. The various types of organization strategy differ in how much they account for organizational sustainable practices; therefore, efforts on promoting organizational sustainable practices should be directed most on analyzers type of organizations.

Implication for Practice

The results of this study revealed that private organizations exhibit more organizational sustainable practices than public organizations, that organizational strategy positively predicts organizational sustainable practices, and that the various dimensions of organizational strategy impact differently on organizational sustainable practices. This finding has two main practical implications for organizations in the present research location. First, it offers a call to public organizations to enhance their organizational sustainable practices as such practices have desirable implication for organizational effectiveness. And second, the government should seriously consider ownership, organizational strategy and its types as important in policies and program aimed at promoting organizational sustainable practices in the present research location.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has some limitations which point to directions for future research. Self-report questionnaire was the sole tool for data collection. There could be issue of social desirability bias and common method variance in data collection (Bryman, 1989). Future studies should adopt triangulation approach in data collection. The present study was cross-sectional, which does not identify cause-effect influence or relationship. Future studies should explore quasi-experiment and longitudinal design to enable causal interpretation (Howitt & Cramer, 2017). Organizational strategy has attracted some models. Future study should examine how much the models are related as such studies would guide results accumulation and discussion.

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