OPEN ACCESS

Saudi Journal of Business and Management Studies
Abbreviated Key Title: Saudi J Bus Manag Stud
ISSN 2415-6663 (Print) |ISSN 2415-6671 (Online)
Scholars Middle East Publishers, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Journal homepage: https://saudijournals.com

Original Research Article

Strategic Management Practices and Environmental Sustainability of Electricity Distribution Firms in South-South, Nigeria

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.36348/sjbms.2026.v11i09.001 | **Received:** 07.07.2026 | **Accepted:** 02.09.2026 | **Published:** 09.09.2026

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between strategic management practices and environmental sustainability of electricity distribution firms in South-South, Nigeria. The motivation for this study is the need for the development of organizations' practices oriented towards sustainability that can have a positive impact on the sustainable management and ecological responsibility, which are increasingly present in today's environmental issues. Strategic planning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategic control were the measures of strategic management practices. The theories of dynamic capabilities theory, stakeholder theory and resource-based view theory have been used as a basis of the study. This research used the cross-sectional research design and it was anchored on the positivism philosophy. The subjects of the study were eight hundred ninety-eight (898) respondents of PHCN and BEDC. It resulted 278 respondents based on Taro Yamane formula, stratified and simple random sampling technique. The data were collected through primary data which was in the form of structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics and Spearman rank correlation coefficient were used to analyse data at 5% level of significance. The results obtained, showed that the four dimensions of strategic planning namely strategic planning, strategic formulation, strategic implementation and strategic control were positive and statistically significant with the environmental sustainability. The study concluded that strategic management activities led to high level of improvement in environmental sustainability management. The study recommended on the need for more sustainability planning, effective implementation of strategies, more sustainability-oriented policies and environmental monitoring. The study added to the body of knowledge offering empirical data on the linkage between strategic management and environmental sustainability of the public utility organisations in Nigeria.

Keywords: Strategic Management Practices, Strategic Planning, Strategic formulation, Strategic implementation, Strategic control, Environment sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world organisations are faced with multiple problems such as environment problems, importance of sustainable organisations, and as a result, the importance of strategic management practices. There are several issues that have been affecting the environment, such as environmental pollution, gas flaring, deforestation, flood, industrial wastes and climate change that has been contributing to the growing concern of the environment especially in Nigeria. From governments, to host communities, investors and regulatory agencies, there is thus an increasing pressure on organisations to adopt sustainability goals and put them in strategic management processes. Strategic management practices are activities that an organization focuses on to attain their long-term objectives through strategic planning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategic control (George et al., 2023). Environmental sustainability, on the other hand, is a study of the actions of an organization focused on minimizing environmental degradation, conserving natural resources and encouraging environmentally responsible actions for generations to come (Zhou et al., 2025). The application of sustainability in strategic management is inevitable, due to the increase in the need of organizations to be sustainable and profitable. In

Nigeria, the call for strategic management practices that promote sustainability has become more prominent, especially in businesses that are involved in environmentally susceptible industries, like manufacturing, oil and gas, agriculture, electricity, and construction.

With strategic planning, organizations can establish environmental goals, as well as anticipate environmental risks and commit to environmental projects. Through an effective planning process, environmental policies can be developed which contribute to pollution reduction, waste management and efficient use of resources and use of renewable energy resources. The formulation of a strategy also enhances environmental sustainability as it includes creating policies and operational strategies that can resolve environmental issues (Zhou et al., 2025). Moreover, strategy implementation guarantees that sustainability goals are converted right into tangible organizational activities, as well as strategic control is about tracking ecological performance and making sure adherence to sustainability standards. The utilization of strategic management practices has been shown to be a factor that contributes to a better environmental performance and sustainability outcomes (Leonidou et al., 2025; Ortiz-Avram et al., 2024). This has resulted in the incorporation of environmental sustainability in the strategic management systems of organisations in Nigeria as well as the issues of environmental sustainability have become a matter of concern.

Statement of the Problem

In previous studies, the focus was on the economic sustainability, financial performance and competitive advantage; thus, little attention was given to environmental sustainability. Also, previous studies have explored sustainability in general, without distinguishing environmental sustainability. For instance, Liang et al., (2022); Ortiz-Avram et al., (2024) focused mainly on developed countries and not on the study of environmental degradation in the developing countries like Nigeria where the environmental degradation still remains high. Secondly, there is a dearth of research which has been devoted to the integrated effect of strategic planning, strategy formulation and strategy implementation and strategic control on the environment in Nigeria. Therefore, this study aims to bridge the above gaps and linkage between strategic management practices and environment in Nigeria is considered.

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: Strategic planning does not significantly influence the environmental sustainability of electricity distribution firms in South-South, Nigera.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between strategic formulation and the environmental sustainability of electricity distribution firms in South-South, Nigera.

H_{03}: Strategic implementation does not significantly influence the environmental sustainability of electricity distribution firms in South-South, Nigera.

H_{04}: There is no significant relationship between strategic control and environmental sustainability of electricity distribution firms in South-South, Nigera.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Strategic Management Practices

Strategic management practices are activities and management processes that a firm adopts to attain long-term goals, improve the performance of a firm and sustain its competitive edge in the ever-changing business environment. Strategic management practices are crucial as they provide organisations the direction to become efficient, sustainable and to survive in extremely competitive and uncertain environments. Wheelen *et al.,* (2018) State that strategic management practices are a combination of managerial decisions and actions taken to make sure that an organisation performs well in the long term by using effective allocation of its resources and coordinating its activities.

Strategic planning is a major component of strategic management practices as it enables organisations to establish a long-term vision and identify strategies that might help them achieve the vision of their organisations. Planning consists of analysing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the organisations and making decisions on the strategy. Along with the development of policies and programs, an action plan and guideline to guide the operations of the organisation and sustainability goals are also part of the formulation of strategy. However, strategies developed are translated into activities in the operating environment through proper allocation of resources, employee commitment and organisational coordination – strategy implementation. Trust me strategic control is just one of the means which is used to track and assess the performance of the organization and achieve strategic targets in an effective way (David *et al.,* 2020).

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is about managing resources in the environment responsibly and sustainably in a way that satisfies the present needs without compromising the future generations' ability to do the same. It raises awareness of the need for the conservation of ecosystems and reduction of environmental degradation, maintenance of biodiversity and use of natural resources. As the world is becoming more concerned about climate change, pollution, deforestation, desertification and flood, industrial emission and consumption, the role of environmental sustainability is also increasing with the passage of time. Aiming for environmental sustainability is about balance and protecting the environment and this can be done by adopting environmental protection policies that can support long-term human and economic development, as well as by implementing sustainable approaches to production and consumption, as per the United Nations (2023).

Organisations have an important role in environment sustainability and sustainability of ecological systems as their activities can have a significant impact on the environment. Environmental sustainability, therefore, means to apply environmentally responsible practices – such as waste reduction, pollution control, use of renewable energy, sustainable resource management and environmentally friendly production systems and others – in organisations. Corporate environmental sustainability also means complying with environmental laws, requirements for environmental reports and environmental expectations of bodies and individuals involved. Epstein and Buhovac (2014) summarise that organisations which integrate environmental sustainability into their strategic processes will be more likely to benefit from a better reputation, operational efficiency and longevity of their organisations.

Conceptual framework

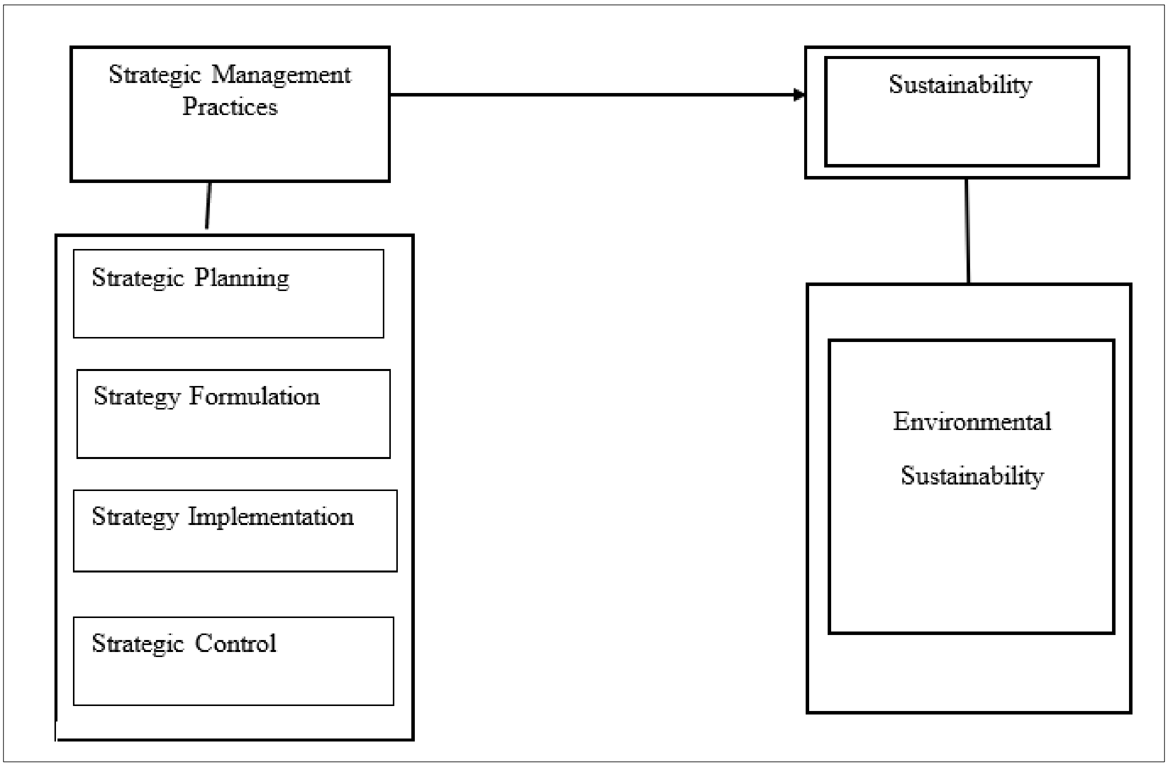

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship Between Strategic Management Practices and Environmental Sustainability

Sources: Strategic Management Practices: Strategic planning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategic control (Teece, 2018; Wheelen et al., 2018; Higgins, 2017). Sustainability: environmental sustainability (Elkington, 2018; Bansal & Song, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Resource-Based View Theory

Barney (1991) resource-based view Theory has suggested that the performance and competitive advantage of the organization depends a lot on the resources held by the firms which are useful, scarce, irreplaceable and have no substitute. A sustainable competitive advantage is gained by organisations that they can exploit strategic resources and capabilities which are difficult to imitate. These can range from organisational knowledge, managerial expertise, strategic planning systems, technologies to sustainability oriented organisational cultures.

The relevance of the resource-based view theory in this study lies on strategic management practices as they are important organizational capabilities that can enhance environmental sustainability. A strategic plan, a structure of implementation and a control mechanism are all the characteristics of an organisation, which is better equipped to meet sustainability goals and environmental responsibility. Barney *et al.,* (2021) found that a good internal capability has a higher chance of improving the sustainability of the organisation and also competitive in the long run.

For the business climate in Nigeria, the environment sustainability problems of industrial pollution, waste management and climate risks need a robust managerial and strategic skills to address. Thus, strategic management practices can be regarded as strategic organisational resources which can be potential to sustain the environment and to ensure the organisational survival. Overall, the RBV Theory can be a valuable theory to understand how organizational capabilities can impact environmental sustainability outcomes.

Empirical Review

Sajuyigbe *et al.,* (2026) examined the effect of GSCM practices as a catalyst in achieving environmental sustainability in manufacturing organizations in Nigeria. The study found that adopting green supply chain practices helped in achieving environmental sustainability via the environmentally responsible sourcing, production and distribution practices. The results are relevant as manufacturing companies are a significant source of environmental degradation.

Achmad *et al.,* (2025) performed research on the relationship between green innovation and knowledge management and its effect on enhancing the organization's performance. In firms with a high knowledge management system, it was found that: knowledge management system was more effective in sustainable product development and it can be used to improve the operational results. The results are applicable since they are crucial for making knowledge-based strategic decisions, green innovation and lifelong learning for environmental sustainability.

Rubio-Andrés *et al.,* (2025) explored the relationship between a CS approach of entrepreneurial SMEs andir sales performance. The study has revealed that corporate sustainability strategy had an impact on performance via innovation and sustainability. The results indicate that it is better to be part of the strategic decision-making process when it comes to sustainability.

Habeeb, (2024) explored how strategic planning and transformational leadership influence performance of Nigerian higher education institutions. The study was carried out with a total of 388 respondents who are the staff of 48 state universities in Nigeria to determine the positive impact of strategic planning on the performance of organization. The study showed that Strategic value of planning is a key in Nigeria organisations.

Oduro *et al.,* (2024) studied the idea of eco-innovation and sustainable performance of SMEs. Study results showed that eco-innovation is a factor that creates sustainable performance, through improving the capacity of environmental integration of a firm's product, process and operational. The study confirmed the idea that the sustainability transition from the operational to a strategic management question leads to making them more sustainable.

Liang *et al.,* (2022) investigated the moderation role of dynamic capabilities between environmental, social and governance strategy on sustainable management performance. Dynamic capabilities theory was used and results indicated that organizations that had high dynamic capabilities in sensing, seizing, learning and reconfiguration had better efficiency in their sustainability decisions in the business model. The study confirmed that managerial skills not only environmental actions are important in obtaining sustainable results.

The dynamic capabilities and connection between ESG management has already been studied by Yang *et al.,* (2022). The study revealed that those companies with adaptive strategic capabilities were more likely to embark on sustainability objectives and enhance ESG performance. Empirical evidence indicated that organizations with a holistic approach on sustainability – that is integrated in the management processes – are sustainable. The results validated the position that coordinated planning and monitoring can be achieved and that this can be done through strategic management practices that can help to improve the environmental sustainability.

Obamen *et al.,* (2021) have studied the environmental management practices and sustainability in manufacturing companies in Nigeria. The results of the study, which was organized on the basis of the survey data of the employees of manufacturing firms, indicated that the environmental management tools are indeed significant on sustainability outcomes. The unique value of this study is that it offers evidence for Nigeria on 'formality of environmental practices' and its effects on sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

The study research design adopted was cross-sectional. For this design, data are collected from the respondents at a single point in time across more than one sections to ascertain the relationship between strategic management and environment sustainability. The cross-sectional design was suitable as it would enable us to collect the quantitative data from the employees of selected organizations efficiently as well as economically. Saunders *et al.,* (2019) pointed out that cross sectional surveys are appropriate for the studies that aim to examine the relationships between variables in a given population. Positivism was adopted in conducting the study. The objective measurement of variables, and quantitative analysis of data, led to the use of positivism. The philosophy was statistically based, used empirical verification of relationships between variables, and relied on facts.

The staffs of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) and Bayelsa Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) formed the study population. The study population of 898 employees comprised of the managerial, administrative, operational and technical staff of the organizations. Based on the population (finite and known), the Taro Yamane formula was used for the criterion in determining sample size. Yamane's formula

(1967) has been used to arrive at the sample size of respondents in this study which is 277 out of the total population of 898 employees in this particular factory, at 5 per cent level of significance. The number of observations (n) is 277. However, more 10 of the structured questionnaires, in total 287 questionnaires were added, to make up for the invalidated questionnaires. Random sampling technique was used (stratified and simple random sampling). Using stratified sampling method, the employees were classified into relevant departments and simple random sampling method was used to give each employee the same chance of being selected in the study. This sampling procedure improved representative and decreased sampling bias (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

Primary data were used in the study, which was collected from the respondents using structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Strategic management practices as the independent variable, was operationalized into strategic planning, strategic formulation, strategic implementation and strategic control. The environmental sustainability was evaluated by using multiple metrics such as environmental protection practices, waste management efficiency, pollution reduction initiatives, and resource conservation practices. To guarantee the appropriateness and relevance of the content and items in the questionnaire, the items were modified according to previous questionnaires that have a solid empirical research foundation in the area of strategic management and sustainability (David et al., 2020).

A test of reliability and validity of the instrument used in research was carried out well before the questionnaires were given. Experts, who are specialists in strategic management and research methodology, evaluated the appropriateness, clarity and relevance of the items in the questionnaire to confirm face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was determined with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. All the variables had reliability coefficients above 0.70 which is recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. Data obtained were analysed with descriptive statistics and Spearman rank correlation coefficient.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Results

Table 4.1: Demographic Results

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	120	43.2	43.2	43.2
	Male	158	56.8	56.8	100.0
	Total	**278**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Age	20-35	36	12.9	12.9	12.9
	36-50	109	39.3	39.3	52.2
	51 and above	133	47.8	47.8	100.0
	Total	278	100.0	100.0	
Marital Status	Single	61	21.9	21.9	21.9
	Married	182	65.5	65.5	87.6
	Separated	35	12.6	12.6	100.0
	Total	**278**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Educational Attainment	WAEC/OND	34	12.2	12.2	12.2
	HND/Bachelor	143	51.4	51.4	63.6
	Master and above	101	36.4	36.4	100.0
	Total	**278**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: SPSS 28.0 Output

The demographic characteristics of the respondents used for the study were presented in table 4.1. This meant that there 158 of them male (56.8 per cent) and 120 of them female (43.2 per cent). This indicated that the selected organizations had more male as compared to the number of female respondents that were employed. The relatively even gender distribution implied that the opinions gathered from the respondents reflected the opinions of both the male and female employees, thus adding on the credibility of the study findings. The age distribution also revealed that 36 respondents (12.9 percent), 109 respondents (39.3 percent) and 133 (47.8 percent) were in the age group of 20-35, 36-50 and 51 years and above respectively. The findings indicated that the majority of the participants were experienced and mature staff with adequate organizational knowledge and hands on experience on the strategic management practices and environmental sustainability issues of the organizations.

When looked at distribution according to marital status, 182 (65.5%) were married, 61 (21.9%) were single and 35 (12.6%) were separated. The fact that many of the respondents were married, indicated that a large number of employees had significant family and social responsibilities which could affect their participation in organisational sustainability practices and long-term organisational objectives. In addition, the result for the education status revealed that 34 respondents (12.2%) had WAEC/OND, 143 respondents (51.4%) had HND/Bachelor's degree while 101 respondents (36.4%) had Masters degree and above. The results showed that most of the respondents were highly educated, which means that they have a good understanding of the concepts of strategic management, as well as issues related to sustainability. Respondents' level of education was high and this added to the validity of information provided during the study.

Table 4.2: Spearman Correlation Coefficient Results

Correlations							
			Environmental Sustainability	**Strategic Planning**	**Strategy Formulation**	**Strategy Implementation**	**Strategic Control**
Spearman's rho	Environmental Sustainability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.541**	.476**	.558**	.491**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Strategic Planning	Correlation Coefficient	.541**	1.000	.624**	.550**	.493**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Strategy Formulation	Correlation Coefficient	.476**	.624**	1.000	.625**	.546**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Strategy Implementation	Correlation Coefficient	.558**	.550**	.625**	1.000	.622**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Strategic Control	Correlation Coefficient	.491**	.493**	.546**	.622**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	278	278	278	278	278

Source: SPSS 28.0 Output

Strategic management practices showed substantial and positive relationships with environmental sustainability by using the Spearman Rank correlation analysis. The results showed that strategic planning had a positive and substantial relationship with the environmental sustainability ($r = 0.541$, $p < 0.01$). This revealed that strategic planning had a positive impact in terms of environmental sustainability in the organizations. The implication was that those organizations that planned ahead, were able to predict future environmental conditions and set goals based on sustainability were more likely to improve their environmental sustainability practices. Similarly, a positive and substantial correlation also exists between strategy formulation and environmental sustainability ($r = 0.476$, $p<0.01$). This suggested that organisations with sustainability focused strategies and policies had a better likelihood of having enhanced environmental protection and ecological responsibility.

Further, strategy implementation positively correlated with environmental sustainability with the highest correlation coefficient ($r = 0.558$ and $p < 0.01$). This indicated that, where the strategies were successfully followed, there was great influence on the environmental sustainability outcomes of the organisations. The result made it clear the need to translate sustainability plans into action and activities in the organisations. Strategic control was also positively and substantially related with environmental sustainability ($r = 0.491$, $p < 0.01$). It translates to the fact that monitoring, evaluation and corrective are all crucial to the achievement of environmental sustainability targets.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study results showed that the strategic planning and environmental sustainability had a positive and substantial relationship. This translated into a substantial improvement in the environmental sustainability of PHCN and BEDC with the implementation of strategic planning. Results indicated that organizations who forecasted the environment in the long term, set goals around sustainability and planned proactively for the environment were more likely to achieve improvements in environmental sustainability outcomes. Strategic planning enabled organisations to plan for environmental risks, maximise available resources and to develop policies that could reduce environmental degradation. The finding aligned with dynamic capabilities theory that postulates that a firm or organization with adaptive and proactive strategic capabilities would have greater capability to achieve the sustainability objectives (Teece *et al.,* 1997). This finding was also in line with Liang *et al.,* (2022) who revealed that strategic planning impacted the sustainability through good organizational adaptation and environmental orientation. This is the same with the findings of Habeeb, (2024) which showed that strategic planning played substantial roles towards improving the effectiveness of the Nigerian institutions in the pursuit of sustainability.

The study also showed that there is positive and substantial relationship between strategy formulation and environmental sustainability. This meant the more successful the plans were in being sustainable, the more increased environmental sustainability was found in the organisations studied. The outcome indicated that firms with a clear environmental policy, sustainability project and ecological action plan, were more likely to reduce pollution and achieve a more environmentally responsible result. This finding substantiated Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory which posited that the business organizations should have strategies which can satisfy their stakeholder's environmental responsibility and sustainability expectations. The result also confirmed the results obtained by Rubio-Andrés *et al.,* (2025), which showed that sustainability oriented strategic decisions had a substantial positive impact on sustainability and innovation results. Likewise, Khan *et al.,* (2025) contended that firms with ecologically and environmentally conscious strategies had better ecological and sustainability. The suggestion of the finding was that environmental sustainability could be enhanced when organisations intentionally developed policies and programmes that are focused on sustainability. Thus, an effective strategy formulation process was still needed to enhance the environmental sustainability both in PHCN and BEDC.

The research finding indicated that the environmental sustainability had the highest positive and substantial correlation with the strategy implementation with correlation value $r = 0.558$, $p < 0.01$. From this observation, it was suggested that indeed with the implementation of sustainability strategies, the organizations' performance in environmental sustainability increased. The strategy was effectively implemented with environmental policies and sustainability goals being reflected in concrete operational activities and behaviour of the organisation. The results indicated that environmental strategies involving employees, allocating resources, monitoring the environment and coordinating operations were effective in an organization's ability to accomplish environmental sustainability goals. The finding was in line with the resource-based view theory put forth by Barney (1991) that organizations were able to make good use of strategic resources and capabilities exhibited better performance and sustainability. The result was also in line with the study of Sajuyigbe *et al.,* (2026) that the adoption of green operational practices contributed immensely to environmental sustainability of the manufacturing sector firms in Nigeria. Similarly, Igomu (2024) discovered that green management practices had a positive impact on an organization's environmental sustainability. This finding implied that environmental sustainability is not only obviated by developing a strategy, but also by implementing sustainability projects successfully. As a result, implementation institutions that will help environmental sustainability need to be reinforced.

The results also revealed that strategic control and environmental sustainability have a positive relationship which is substantial. This pointed towards the fact that having effective monitoring, evaluation and corrective mechanisms played a substantial role in environmental sustainability of PHCN and BEDC. Strategic control provided organizations with the opportunity to evaluate the environment performance, detect deviations in operations and take corrective actions to attain sustainability goals. The outcome indicated that sustainability monitoring is a tool that can be implemented to mitigate environmental risks and promote ecological responsibility in organizations that monitor their performance continually. The result validated the dynamic capabilities theory that has emphasized the process of constant learning, adaptation and strategic assessment of the organizations for attaining sustainability (Teece, 2018). The finding also validated the findings of Oduro *et al.,* (2024) that the effective implementation of sustainability monitoring systems led to improved environmental performance and eco-innovation outcomes of the organizations. In the same vein, Yang *et al.,* (2022) contended that enterprises that carried out continuous sustainability initiatives had better ESG and environmental sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between strategic management practices and environmental sustainability of electricity distribution firms in South-South, Nigeria. This study discovered that strategic planning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategic control were all positively and substantially related to environmental sustainability. The study concluded that strategic management practices had a substantial impact on the environmental sustainability in electricity distribution firms. It further explained that organizations who had put in proactive planning, sustainability-oriented strategies, good implementation mechanisms and ongoing monitoring system were more likely to achieve better environmental sustainability results.

Recommendations

i. Management of electricity distribution firms need to ensure sustainability oriented strategic planning systems. This will enhance the inclusion of environmental sustainability goals, objectives and targets in their organizational long-term planning, operational policies and resource allocation plans.

ii. Management of electricity distribution firms should have a well formulated and detailed policy for environmental sustainability to include various aspects of pollution control, waste management, energy efficiency and environmental protection practices. Sustainability factors should be considered in the organizational vision, mission and strategic objectives to increase ecological responsibility and improve stakeholder confidence.

iii. Management of electricity distribution firms should strengthen their mechanism by providing adequate amounts of financial resources, training the staff to effectively implement environmental sustainability projects, technological support, and programs for awareness of environmental sustainability. This would enhance the environment protection and sustainability of the functioning of the organisation.

iv. A robust strategic control system and environmental monitoring system should be in place, which can continually evaluate the sustainability. Regular environmental audits and sustainability assessment should be carried out as well as corrective measures to ensure compliance with sustainability requirements and environmental legislation.

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