

Sustainable Project Management Practices For Organizational Resilience In A Global Business Environment In South East, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated Sustainable Project Management Practices for Organizational Resilience in a Global Business Environment in South East, Nigeria. Based on the objectives, three research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised 243 project managers controlling businesses in South East, Nigeria. A sample of 100 project managers was drawn using simple random sampling technique representing 41.2% of the population. This included 60 male project managers and 40 female project managers. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire titled: ‘Sustainable Project Management Practices for Organizational Resilience Questionnaire (SPMPORQ)’ designed by the researchers. The instrument had two sections, Section A & B. Section A comprised demographic information such as Business Type and Gender. Section B comprised questionnaire items designed in three (3) clusters. The instrument was validated by three specialists in University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Chronbach Alpha method on ten project managers not used in this study. The internal consistency of the instrument yielded a reliability index of 0.89. Mean and standard deviation scores were used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed among others that, the sustainable project management practices needed to overcome organizational resilience in a global business environment include: intellectual property (IP) management, lifecycle resource management, leadership technology translation, integrating environmental, social and economic (ESG) risk management practice, maintaining a dynamic stakeholder engagement, possessing digital transformation agility, developing strategic thinking for business negotiation, acquiring a continuous learning culture, being creative in the development of business ideas, building trust in risk-taking, and maintaining good communication network. Based on the findings, it was recommended that, business managers should adopt better strategies to overcome the challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment.

Keywords: Sustainability, Project management practices, Organizational resilience, Global business environment.

Introduction

Sustainable project management is a process of integrating environmental, social, and economic (ESG) practices into the project lifecycle, which drives organizational resilience by mitigating supply chain risks, reducing resource dependencies, and fostering an adaptable culture equipped to navigate global disruptions in a business environment. Sustainability however, is a strategic pathway many organizations adopt in

pursuing today's businesses in a global social environment. Incorporating sustainability into organizational project management helps organizations to strive towards gaining a sustainable competitive advantage over their competitors for improved productivity in a business environment (Nwabueze & Nwabueze, 2022). The aim of sustainable project management is to develop organizational capabilities and competencies that directly contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage by aligning project management practices with strategic business objectives (Scherer & Stankova, 2021). Integrating sustainability in project management represents a shift, and thereby acknowledging that sustainability requires change and projects, which are powerful drivers for such change.

Hence, the integration of sustainability into project management practices is increasingly seen as a critical factor for the long-term success and viability of projects, especially in the context of global challenges such as climate change and social inequality. The relevance of sustainability in project management is further highlighted by the evolving role of project managers in a global business world. Today's project managers are expected to go beyond traditional project management competencies, incorporating sustainability considerations into every phase of the project lifecycle in a global business environment (Joel, 2016). This requires a comprehensive understanding of sustainability principles and the ability to apply them in diverse project contexts for improved productivity. Moreover, the integration of sustainability into project management aligns with international frameworks and initiatives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing the role of project management in achieving global sustainability targets (Toljaga-Nikolić et al., 2020). According to Shaukat et al. (2021), one of the underlying concepts of sustainable project management is the triple bottom line, which includes economic, environmental, and social sustainability. One of the factors to be considered under business environment and economic sustainability is the business agility and the strategic value that this brings to the organization, both in the short, medium and long term initiatives in a global business environment (Silvius et al., 2012). This present the relevance of sustainable project management practices in the context of organizational resilience in a global business environment.

Organizational resilience is linked to corporate sustainability, which in turn influences the organization's purpose in a global business environment. The integration of sustainability into business processes and decisions serves to reduce crisis factors and the related risks in business. Organizational resilience could be an effective approach and framework that addresses business problems to overcome the complex dynamics in a business environment (Burnard & Bhamra, 2011). Resilience is an inherent trait that enables individuals, collectives, organizations, and entire systems to cope effectively with significant and disruptive challenges, failures, or change (Witmer, 2019). These circumstances could threaten the system, its functions and development in global business environment. Resilience involves the ability to adapt, recover, and even grow in the face of adversity. It is important to not only survive difficulties, but also about actively overcoming them, to learn and benefit from the experience, and becoming more capable and resilient than before (Masten et al., 2021). Organizational resilience is the ability of a group, entity, or an organization to learn, transform, and recover from disturbances, both internal and external, while preserving the organizations integrity. It involves dynamic processes and adaptations that involve restructuring and expanding by turning obstacles into opportunities for learning, growth, and innovation (Witmer, 2019).

Building on the presented information on sustainable project management, resilience is the ability of organizations and individuals to face unpredictable risks and situations as well as withstand these by organizing responsive actions to continue operation either in the same way or with a new approach. This has also been addressed by Miceli et al. (2021), which suggest that resilience is often interpreted as absorption (the ability to bounce-back) or as adaptation (the capacity to modify, learn and evolve with change) in a global business environment. The essential components of sustainable project management practices could be to comprehend not only the resilience capacity of the organization and the degree of self-organization, but also the nature of change in a global business environment.

Sustainable project management is based on the principles of adaptability and responsiveness, which are central to emergent change processes in a global business environment. By integrating sustainability into project management practice, organizations can respond more effectively to unexpected

challenges and opportunities in a business environment (Silvius et al., 2012). Sustainable project management has emerged as a critical discipline within the broader field of project management, driven by the growing recognition of the need for environmentally responsible, socially inclusive, and economically viable practices in a global business environment (Orieno, Ndubuisi, Eyo-Udo, Ilojianya, & Biu, 2021).

The challenges hindering sustainable project management practices include: triple constraint trade-off, high initial capital investments, resistance to change, unclear key performance indicators (KPIs) and measurement standards, as well as knowledge and technical gaps. According to Nwabueze and Nwabueze (2021), implementing sustainable project management practices is hindered by five core challenges: balancing sustainability with traditional cost and schedule constraints, high initial capital requirements, entrenched organizational resistance to change, lack of standardized Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and technical knowledge gaps among project teams. Also, challenges faced in implementing sustainable project management practices may include: high initial costs, complex supply chain management, lack of standardization, technological Barriers, regulatory challenges, and consumer expectations.

Statement of the Problem

Sustainable project management and organizational resilience are critical factors that contribute to the long-term resilience and viability of an organization in a global business environment. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the interconnection between these concepts and how they can mutually reinforce each other in a global business environment. Hence, there seem to be limited knowledge regarding sustainable project management practices and their contribution to organizational resilience in a global business environment. In global business environments, there seem to be rapid changes and complexities particularly in the context of sustainability and challenges in project management of organizational resilience. Consequently, there is a pressing need to explore alternative approaches to sustainable project management, which can enhance organizational resilience in a global business environment.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate sustainable project management practices for organizational resilience in a global business environment in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. find out the sustainable project management practices needed for building long-term organizational resilience in a global business environment;
2. ascertain how sustainable project management practices support organizational improvement in a global business environment; and
3. examine the common challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the sustainable project management practices needed to overcome organizational resilience in a global business environment?
2. How can sustainable project management practices support organizational improvement in a global business environment?
3. What are the common challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment?

Material and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to collect data from respondents on their perceptions and practices regarding sustainable project management without manipulating any of the study variables. The study was conducted among business organizations located in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. The population of the study comprised 243 project managers

overseeing organizational projects in selected business organizations across the South East, Nigeria. These consisted of 139 male and 104 female project managers drawn from banks, manufacturing firms, construction companies, telecommunication firms, and other large-scale business organizations. The study focused on project managers because they possess the requisite knowledge and experience concerning sustainable project management practices and organizational resilience. A sample of 100 project managers, representing 41.2% of the population, was selected using the simple random sampling technique to ensure that every member of the population had an equal opportunity of being included in the study. The sample comprised 60 male and 40 female project managers from the selected organizations. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers titled Sustainable Project Management Practices for Organizational Resilience Questionnaire (SPMPORQ). The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A elicited respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, years of work experience, educational qualification, and business type. Section B contained items developed based on the objectives of the study and organized into three clusters: Cluster A measured sustainable project management planning practices, Cluster B measured project execution and monitoring practices, while Cluster C measured organizational resilience outcomes. All questionnaire items were rated on a five-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Moderately Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The validators comprised two experts in Business Education with specialization in Management and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation. Their observations and recommendations regarding the clarity, relevance, adequacy, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items were incorporated before the final version of the instrument was produced. The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot test involving ten project managers from business organizations in South-South Nigeria who were not part of the study population. Data obtained from the pilot study were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The analysis yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.89, indicating that the instrument possessed high internal consistency and was therefore reliable for the study. The researchers administered the questionnaire personally with the assistance of two trained research assistants. This approach facilitated direct interaction with the respondents, enhanced the response rate, and ensured proper completion of the instrument. Of the 100 copies of the questionnaire administered, all were successfully retrieved, representing a 100% return rate and were found suitable for analysis. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean and standard deviation were employed to answer the research questions. A criterion mean of 3.00 was adopted as the decision benchmark, whereby mean scores of 3.00 and above were interpreted as agreed, while mean scores below 3.00 were interpreted as disagreed.

Results

Research Question One: What are the sustainable project management practices needed to overcome organizational resilience in a global business environment?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of male and female project managers on the sustainable project management practices needed to overcome organizational resilience in a global business environment

S/ N	Sustainable project management practices needed to overcome organizational resilience include:	Female (40)		Male (60)		Decision
		Mean	St.D	Mean	St.D	
1	Intellectual property (IP) management	3.13	0.72	3.21	0.46	Agreed
2	Lifecycle resource management	3.38	0.66	3.30	0.46	Agreed
3	Leadership technology translation	3.13	0.72	3.33	0.46	Agreed

4	Integrating environmental, social and economic (ESG) risk management practice	3.06	0.74	3.33	0.46	Agreed
5	Maintaining a dynamic stakeholder engagement	3.19	0.70	3.38	0.45	Agreed
6	Possessing digital transformation agility	3.44	0.64	3.35	0.45	Agreed
7	Developing strategic thinking for business negotiation	3.25	0.69	3.37	0.45	Agreed
8	Acquiring a continuous learning culture	3.19	0.70	3.35	0.46	Agreed
9	Being creative in the development of business ideas	3.44	0.64	3.41	0.45	Agreed
10	Building trust in risk-taking	3.06	0.74	3.21	0.46	Agreed
11	Maintaining good communication network	3.38	0.66	3.26	0.46	Agreed
Aggregate Mean scores		3.24	0.69	3.32	0.46	Agreed

Decision Rule: Mean score of 2.50 and above = Agree; Below 2.50 = Disagree

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of male and female project managers on the sustainable project management practices needed to overcome organizational resilience in a global business environment. The respondents agreed on all the items presented in the table with high mean scores above the mean criterion of 2.50. The aggregate mean scores of 3.24 and 3.32 for female and male project managers indicated that, they agreed on the items in the Table. Therefore, the sustainable project management practices needed to overcome organizational resilience in a global business environment include: intellectual property (IP) management, lifecycle resource management, leadership technology translation, integrating environmental, social and economic (ESG) risk management practice, maintaining a dynamic stakeholder engagement, possessing digital transformation agility, developing strategic thinking for business negotiation, acquiring a continuous learning culture, being creative in the development of business ideas, building trust in risk-taking, and maintaining good communication network.

Research Question Two: How can sustainable project management practices support organizational improvement in a global business environment?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of male project managers and female project managers on the ways sustainable project management practices can support organizational improvement in a global business environment

S/ N	Ways sustainable project management practices can support organizational improvement in a global business environment include:	Female (40)		Male (60)		Decision
		Mean	St. D	Mean	St. D	
1	Helps to identify potential problems early to reduce project costs	3.00	0.75	3.44	0.45	Agreed
2	Improves project results	3.06	0.74	3.44	0.45	Agreed
3	Increases client satisfaction	3.44	0.64	3.42	0.45	Agreed
4	Helps to succeed in today's competitive business environment	3.63	0.59	3.33	0.46	Agreed
5	Involves the integration of environmental considerations responsibility principles into project lifecycle	3.50	0.63	3.42	0.45	Agreed
6	Delivers outcomes that are beneficial to people	3.50	0.63	3.40	0.45	Agreed

7	Enables the conservation of resources in the future	3.38	0.64	3.54	0.44	Agreed
8	Supports the green project management principles	3.69	0.58	3.45	0.45	Agreed
9	Improves decision making status in strengthening long term performance	3.56	0.61	3.47	0.45	Agreed
Aggregate Mean scores		3.42	0.65	3.43	0.45	Agreed

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of male project managers and female project managers on the ways sustainable project management practices can support organizational improvement in a global business environment. The respondents agreed on all the items presented in the table with high mean scores above the mean criterion of 2.50. The aggregate mean scores of 3.42 and 3.43 for female and male project managers indicated that, they agreed on the items in the Table. Therefore, the ways sustainable project management practices can support organizational improvement in a global business environment include: helping to identify potential problems early to reduce project costs, improving project results, increasing client satisfaction, helping to succeed in today's competitive business environment, involving the integration of environmental considerations responsibility principles into project lifecycle, delivering the outcomes that are beneficial to people, enabling the conservation of resources in the future, supporting the green project management principles, and improving the decision making status in strengthening long term performance.

Research Question Three: What are the challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of male and female project managers on the challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment

S/ N	Challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment include:	Female (40)		Male (60)		Decision
		Mea n	St.D	Mea n	St.D	
1	Poor decision making	3.38	0.66	3.47	0.45	Agreed
2	Poor communication network	3.19	0.70	3.46	0.45	Agreed
3	Setting unclear goals and objectives	3.31	0.67	3.44	0.45	Agreed
4	Budget restrictions	3.50	0.63	3.33	0.46	Agreed
5	Team conflict	3.50	0.63	3.42	0.45	Agreed
6	Mismatched team skills	3.38	0.66	3.54	0.44	Agreed
7	Absence of accountability	3.44	0.64	3.43	0.45	Agreed
8	Unrealistic deadlines	3.69	0.58	3.45	0.45	Agreed
9	Poor risk management	2.75	0.84	2.53	0.51	Agreed
Aggregate Mean scores		3.20	0.74	3.24	0.47	Agreed

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of male project managers and female project managers on the common challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment. The respondents agreed on all the items presented in the table with high mean scores above the mean criterion of 2.50. The aggregate mean scores of 3.20 and 3.24 for female and male project managers indicated that, they agreed on the items in the Table. Therefore, the common challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment include: poor decision making, poor communication network, setting unclear

goals and objectives, budget restrictions, team conflict, mismatched team skills, absence of accountability, unrealistic deadlines, and poor risk management.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that, the sustainable project management practices needed to overcome organizational resilience in a global business environment include: intellectual property (IP) management, lifecycle resource management, leadership technology translation, integrating environmental, social and economic (ESG) risk management practice, maintaining a dynamic stakeholder engagement, possessing digital transformation agility, developing strategic thinking for business negotiation, acquiring a continuous learning culture, being creative in the development of business ideas, building trust in risk-taking, and maintaining good communication network. Assessing the entire value chain for sustainability vulnerabilities enables firms to preempt systemic shocks and stay compliant with evolving global regulations. Transparent communication builds trust, creating a network of allies that can support crisis response and ensure project alignment during turbulent times. Sustainable project management enables rapid decision-making and continuous adaptation to changing global market conditions. Sustainable project management builds organizational resilience. Organizational resilience is the ability of organizations and individuals to face unpredictable risks and situations as well as withstand these by organizing responsive actions to continue operation either in the same way or with a new approach. In line with the findings, Miceli et al. (2021) suggest that resilience is often interpreted as absorption (the ability to bounce-back) or as adaptation (the capacity to modify, learn and evolve with change) in a global business environment.

The findings of the study also revealed that, the ways sustainable project management practices can support organizational improvement in a global business environment include: helping to identify potential problems early to reduce project costs, improving project results, increasing client satisfaction, helping to succeed in today's competitive business environment, involving the integration of environmental considerations responsibility principles into project lifecycle, delivering the outcomes that are beneficial to people, enabling the conservation of resources in the future, supporting the green project management principles, and improving the decision making status in strengthening long term performance. This means implementing environmentally positive practices like reducing waste, managing resources, lowering greenhouse gas emissions and designing and executing projects that will strengthen these core concepts. In line with the findings, Huemann and Silvius (2017) looked at Sustainable Project Management (SPM) as a paradigm that transcends the deliverables and entails the effective management of projects in a sustainable manner to promote global business environment. Sustainable business management practices are promoted through: sustainability business case, sustainability project dimensions, sustainable development objectives, sustainability stakeholders register, sustainability risks register, sustainability impacts assessment planning, sustainability requirements, green procurement, sustainable delivering approaches, sustainability stakeholders management plan, sustainable suppliers, sustainability competencies, green project operations, green technologies, design for sustainability, sustainable deliverables development, sustainability performance indicators, and sustainability reporting (Gemünden, 2016).

The findings of the study finally revealed that, the challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment include: poor decision making, poor communication network, setting unclear goals and objectives, budget restrictions, team conflict, mismatched team skills, absence of accountability, unrealistic deadlines, and poor risk management. A global manager faces challenges such as extending product life cycles by entering new markets, maintaining a competitive environment through quality offerings, ensuring high ethical standards, leveraging technological advancements, and managing a diverse workforce to enhance productivity and market reach. The Challenges of Sustainability in Business are vast and multifaceted ranging from high costs and complex supply chains to stringent regulations and fluctuating consumer demands. These challenges are not just roadblocks but can significantly affect a company's operations and profitability. In line with the findings, Nwabueze and Nwabueze (2021) stated that implementing sustainable project management practices is hindered by five core challenges: balancing sustainability with traditional cost and schedule constraints, high initial capital requirements, entrenched organizational resistance to change, lack of standardized Key

Performance Indicators (KPIs), and technical knowledge gaps among project teams. The challenges hindering sustainable project management practices include: triple constraint trade-off, high initial capital investments, resistance to change, unclear key performance indicators (KPIs) and measurement standards, as well as knowledge and technical gaps. Employing the knowledge of project management competently improves organizations' skills to battle with how to come up with strategic shift in their projects, specifically when dealing with the future built environment to evaluate the capacity of urban project development (Khan, Peters, Sahinel, Pozo-Pardo & Dang, 2018). The growth of the project management body of knowledge and the advancement of project managers' capabilities in dealing with resources are crucial to the successful delivery of projects in a global business environment (Atkinson, Crawford & Ward, 2006).

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that sustainable project management helps to integrate environmental, social, and economic (ESG) practices into the project lifecycle, which drives organizational resilience by mitigating supply chain risks, reducing resource dependencies, and fostering an adaptable culture equipped to navigate global disruptions in a business environment. However, incorporating sustainability into organizational project management helps organizations to strive towards gaining a sustainable competitive advantage over their competitors for improved productivity in a business environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. Business managers should adopt better strategies to overcome the challenges inhibiting the sustainability of project management for organizational building of a global business environment.
2. Business managers should possess good decision making, communication network and set clear goals and objectives to sustain project management practices and overcome organizational resilience in a global business environment.
3. Business managers should possess good team spirit to resolve conflicts, better team skills to grow business, show transparent accountability, and follow adequate risk management practice to sustain project management practices and overcome organizational resilience in a global business environment.

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