




Review on the role of Law in Corporate Sustainability and Green Practices

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| Article Information | Abstract |
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| <p>https://doi.org/10.69798/56256994</p> <p>ISSN (Online): 3066-3660 Copyright ©: 2025 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY-4.0) License, which permits the user to copy, distribute, and transmit the work provided that the original authors and source are credited.</p> <p>Published by: Koozakar LLC. Norcross GA 30071, United States. Note: The views expressed in this article are exclusively those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of their affiliated organizations, the publisher, the editors, or the reviewers. Any products discussed or claims made by their manufacturers are not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.</p> <p>Edited by: Oluseye Oludoye PhD </p> | <p>Corporate sustainability has become integral to modern business practices, reflecting a shift in how organizations understand their responsibilities to society and the environment. It allows corporations to meet current needs while ensuring future generations can do the same across environmental, social, and economic aspects. To this end, this paper explores the strategic importance of corporate sustainability, examining its connection to enhanced financial performance, operational efficiency, and stakeholder trust. It succinctly evaluates the critical role of legal frameworks in shaping sustainability practices, illustrating how regulations can drive companies to adopt sustainable behaviors while fostering accountability and transparency. Through a systematic literature review, this study investigates the implementation of sustainability regulations across various jurisdictions, the effectiveness of different legal instruments, and gaps within existing frameworks that hinder corporate sustainability efforts. The findings highlight the complexities of legal instruments that influence corporate behavior, emphasizing the need for further research into comparative analyses, the impact of emerging technologies, and longitudinal studies on CSR legislation. Based on these insights, the paper proposes recommendations for policymakers, including promoting comparative studies, integrating emerging technologies into regulations, and involving stakeholders in the policy-making process. Ultimately, this paper aims to inform future policies that strengthen sustainability initiatives in business, enhancing both legal frameworks and corporate practices.</p> <p>Keyword: Corporate sustainability, Legal frameworks, Sustainable practices, Stakeholder trust, Regulations</p> |

INTRODUCTION

Corporate sustainability has become a fundamental aspect of modern business practices, reflecting a shift in how organizations perceive their role in society and the environment. In recent times, it has received significant attention and is often regarded as the ability of corporations to operate in a manner that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. According to [Amiolemen et al. \(2024\)](#), corporate sustainability involves adopting sustainable practices that minimize negative environmental impacts while enhancing operational efficiency and competitiveness, ultimately building resilience for tomorrow's business and environmental landscape. Thus, it encompasses three critical pillars: environmental, social, and economic dimensions ([Elkington, 1997](#)). This holistic approach is essential to addressing the challenges of climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality, in alignment with the expectations of consumers, investors, and regulatory bodies ([Whelan & Fink, 2016](#); [Amiolemen et al., 2024](#)).

As businesses continue to navigate the increasing complexities of social, environmental, and technological trends, the integration of sustainability concepts into core operations is not only optional but is now necessary for long-term success ([Porter & Kramer, 2011](#); [Amiolemen et al., 2024](#)). Hence, the significance of corporate sustainability extends beyond compliance with regulations; it serves as a strategic imperative that can drive innovation, enhance brand reputation, and foster stakeholder trust. Studies indicate a strong correlation between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and financial performance, suggesting that companies that prioritize sustainability are often better positioned to mitigate risks associated with environmental degradation and social inequities ([de Oliveira et al., 2024](#)). Furthermore, sustainable practices can lead to operational efficiencies, cost savings, and new market opportunities, reinforcing the business case for sustainability ([Omoyajowo et al., 2021a](#); [Naciti et al., 2022](#)). Hence, more organizations now recognize the importance of sustainability and acknowledge the role of CSR in shaping their public image and competitive position ([Carroll & Shabana, 2010](#)).

[Amiolemen et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasize that despite the economic, environmental, and social advantages of

integrating sustainability frameworks such as Environmental Management Systems (EMS), adoption remains limited among manufacturing corporations in Southwestern Nigeria. Key barriers include low awareness, high implementation costs, and resistance to sustainability principles.

Beyond the inherent benefits of corporate sustainability, regulatory frameworks serve as critical drivers of green business practices. Through regulations, policies, and industry standards, these frameworks establish guidelines that encourage environmental responsibility and sustainable development ([Gunningham & Sinclair, 2005](#); [Amiolemen et al., 2024](#)).

For instance, environmental regulations often mandate compliance with specific standards related to emissions, waste management, and resource conservation, thus compelling companies to adopt more sustainable practices ([Liao, 2022](#)). The legal framework is evolving, with many jurisdictions implementing laws that incentivize sustainable practices through tax breaks, grants, and other financial mechanisms ([Fallah Shayan et al., 2022](#)). Legal and compliance frameworks not only incentivize businesses to adopt sustainable practices but also cultivate a culture of accountability and transparency by mandating the disclosure of sustainability efforts and outcomes ([Kolk & van Tulder, 2010](#); [Omoyajowo et al., 2021a, b](#)).

The synergy between regulatory mandates and corporate sustainability is crucial in driving meaningful organizational change while contributing to broader societal advancement.

For example, a study on the *Drivers of Telecommuting Policy in Nigerian Organizations* found that the absence of robust legal frameworks and compliance support—particularly in addressing concerns such as data security—hinders policy implementation ([Omoyajowo et al., 2021a, b](#)). These challenges, coupled with inadequate technological infrastructure, undermine the potential benefits of telecommuting, which include cost reduction for organizations and improved employee well-being.

Legal frameworks can create a level playing field that ensures that all businesses adhere to the same environmental standards, prevent "greenwashing" and promote genuine sustainability efforts ([Lyon & Montgomery, 2015](#)). As companies face increasing

scrutiny from consumers and investors for their environmental impact, compliance with legal standards has become a critical component of corporate strategy (Hoffman, 2001). The integration of sustainability into corporate governance is further reinforced by the growing trend of stakeholder capitalism. With this, businesses are held accountable not only to shareholders but also to stakeholders like their employees, customers, and the communities in which they operate (Freeman, 1984).

Against this backdrop, the importance of corporate sustainability and the legal frameworks shaping green practices is clearly significant. Hence, this paper explores the role of law in promoting corporate sustainability with the following objectives:

1. To assess how different jurisdictions and cooperations implement sustainability regulations.
2. To determine the most effective legal instruments in promoting corporate sustainability.
3. To define the gaps that exist in the current legal frameworks that hinder corporate sustainability efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection of law and corporate sustainability has become an increasingly important area of study as businesses seek to navigate the complexities of environmental and social responsibilities. A series of significant research studies have explored this intersection, providing valuable insights into the legal frameworks that shape corporate behavior.

Bansal and Roth (2000) explore how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a foundational framework for enhancing corporate social responsibility (CSR). The review's evaluation focuses on the effectiveness of the SDGs in guiding corporate behavior towards sustainability and underscores the role of legal frameworks in fostering CSR practices. It also argues that the SDGs provide a universal framework that companies can align with to improve their sustainability efforts.

Key legal instruments discussed in this paper include international agreements related to the SDGs and national regulations promoting CSR. These legal instruments help create an environment

where corporations are encouraged to adopt sustainable practices. However, the review advocates further research to explore how different jurisdictions implement the SDGs and the resulting effects on corporate sustainability practices.

The study is however limited on how sustainability can be integrated across all business functions, including marketing, operations, and supply chain management. The review does not sufficiently address the unique challenges and opportunities that different sectors face in implementing sustainability practices. Although the study mentions innovations in sustainability practices, it does not delve deeply into the role of technology in facilitating these innovations.

Delmas and Toffel (2004) addresses the implications of corporate law for sustainability practices and discusses how the next generation of legal professionals can influence corporate behavior. The study argues for the necessity of legal education that emphasizes sustainability and corporate responsibility, suggesting that future lawyers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to advocate for sustainable practices within corporate frameworks.

Key legal instruments highlighted in the study are corporate governance codes and environmental regulations. These instruments are vital for establishing standards that corporations must adhere to in their operations. The study calls for further research into how legal professionals can effectively advocate sustainable practices, suggesting that enhancing legal education could lead to more robust corporate sustainability initiatives.

The study, however, lacks concrete proposals on how to integrate sustainability into existing law curricula. It also does not provide insights into specific strategies that legal professionals can employ to advocate for sustainable practices within corporate frameworks. This gap limits the preparation of future lawyers to engage effectively with sustainability issues.

Eccles *et al.* (2014) provides a systematic literature review that offers an overview of the current state of research on corporate sustainability. The study analyzes trends, methodologies, and findings in the literature, emphasizing the role of legal frameworks in shaping corporate sustainability practices.

Key legal instruments identified by the study include sustainability reporting mandates and environmental laws. These instruments are critical in guiding corporations towards more sustainable practices. The study suggests further exploration into the integration of sustainability into corporate governance structures and legal compliance practices, which could lead to a more robust understanding of how legal frameworks can effectively promote sustainability.

While the study mentions sustainability reporting mandates, it lacks a detailed examination of stakeholder engagement mechanisms. It also primarily focuses on existing legal instruments but does not compare the effectiveness of different legal frameworks across various jurisdictions. The study could also benefit from a deeper exploration of how corporate culture influences the implementation of sustainability practices.

[Gunningham and Sinclair \(2015\)](#) examines the intricate relationship between legal frameworks and corporate responsibility, particularly in relation to human rights and sustainability. The study argues that current legal instruments often fall short in addressing the complexities of business operations concerning human rights. It emphasizes the necessity for stronger regulatory frameworks that can effectively hold corporations accountable for their impact on human rights and sustainability. The study highlights the pressing need for laws that not only set standards but also provide mechanisms for enforcement and compliance.

Key legal instruments identified in the study include human rights legislation and corporate accountability laws. These instruments are crucial in establishing the legal obligations of corporations towards respecting human rights within their operations.

The study emphasizes the inadequacies in enforcing human rights laws related to corporate practices but does not delve deeply into specific enforcement mechanisms that could enhance compliance. Hence, it lacks the necessary analysis on how companies can effectively integrate human rights considerations into their governance structures and operational strategies.

[Hahn et al. \(2015\)](#) assess the influence of corporate governance on sustainability practices. They synthesize various studies, highlighting the critical role of governance structures in promoting

sustainable corporate behavior. The authors identify best practices and point out limitations within existing governance frameworks that may hinder sustainability efforts.

Key legal instruments discussed include corporate governance codes and sustainability reporting requirements. These instruments play a crucial role in ensuring that corporations are accountable for their sustainability practices. However, the review identifies a gap in empirical evidence linking specific governance practices to sustainability outcomes. The authors suggest a need for longitudinal studies that assess how changes in governance impact sustainability over time, which could provide valuable insights for both policymakers and corporate leaders.

The study could benefit from exploring the role of organizational behavior and internal dynamics in shaping governance practices. Another gap is the lack of exploration into sector-specific governance models because different industries face unique sustainability challenges and opportunities.

[Kauffman and Kauffman \(2020\)](#) explore how legal frameworks can adapt to the rapid changes brought about by emerging technologies of sustainability. The study argues for the development of dynamic legal instruments that can respond to innovation while ensuring responsible corporate practices.

The key legal instruments discussed in the study include technology regulations and intellectual property laws. These instruments are essential for regulating the use of new technologies to support sustainability. The study stresses the importance of legal scholars engaging more with technological advancements to create relevant and effective regulatory frameworks that promote responsible innovation. However, the authors do not specify what these frameworks should look like or how they can be structured.

The intersection of law and corporate sustainability is a dynamic and evolving field of research. While significant progress has been made in identifying key legal instruments that influence corporate behavior, there remain critical gaps in the literature that need to be addressed. A study by [Omoyajowo et al. \(2024a\)](#) suggests that a broader range of factors—beyond regulatory compliance—interact with human effort toward corporate sustainability. These include faith traditions, natural or human-induced environmental disruptions, awareness,

education, personal values, lifestyles, and mentorship. Understanding how these diverse elements shape organizational behavior and sustainability compliance can provide deeper insights into fostering more resilient and adaptive corporate sustainability strategies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology for selecting and analyzing the literature in this study was systematic and deemed effective. The process began with the definition of research questions based on the study's objectives. These questions focus on understanding how different jurisdictions and corporations implement sustainability regulations, identifying the most effective legal instruments for promoting corporate sustainability, and recognizing gaps in the current legal frameworks that may hinder such efforts. To ensure a thorough search of relevant literature, academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect were utilized. Keywords including "corporate sustainability," "environmental law," "CSR legislation," and "sustainability governance" were employed to identify pertinent peer-reviewed articles, books, and reports. Only studies published within the last 25 years were considered, ensuring the relevance and timeliness of the data. Non-peer-reviewed sources were excluded to maintain academic rigor.

The selected literature was systematically organized and analyzed. Key findings from each study were categorized thematically, focusing on topics such as regulatory frameworks, corporate governance, and CSR practices. Data were synthesized into summary tables to highlight the legal instruments discussed, their effectiveness, and any gaps identified in the literature. A thematic analysis approach was used to identify patterns and trends across the studies. Codes were assigned to various segments of the literature, and the data were analyzed to uncover overarching themes. The study also evaluated the methodologies used in the reviewed studies, identifying gaps in the literature, such as under-researched areas and conflicting findings. Finally, the synthesized results were presented through coherent narratives, with visual representations in the form of tables to enhance understanding of the key findings and themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature on corporate sustainability highlights four prominent themes: regulatory frameworks, corporate governance, corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, and the integration of sustainability across business functions. The findings from these areas provide insights into the mechanisms, effectiveness, and gaps in promoting sustainable practices within organizations.

Regulatory Frameworks

Stringent regulatory frameworks, such as emissions regulations and waste management laws, have been shown to significantly enhance corporate sustainability outcomes (Wu and Tham, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these frameworks is heavily influenced by the robustness of enforcement mechanisms and the willingness of organizations to comply. Clear penalties for non-compliance serve as a strong deterrent and motivate companies to adopt sustainable practices. For instance, a manufacturing company operating in a region with strict emissions regulations and waste management laws, such as a chemical plant, must comply with government-imposed fines for exceeding pollutant emission limits or improper waste disposal. To meet these regulations, the company is required to install advanced filtration systems and establish proper waste disposal procedures. Furthermore, the adaptability of regulations to emerging technologies is a critical factor in achieving long-term sustainability goals.

Policymakers are advised to focus on developing and maintaining robust enforcement mechanisms while ensuring that regulatory frameworks can adapt to technological advancements. Comparative analyses of regulatory effectiveness across jurisdictions could provide valuable insights into global best practices, enabling policymakers to refine strategies tailored to local and international contexts.

Future research should delve into the influence of emerging technologies on regulatory compliance and explore cross-jurisdictional case studies to identify effective strategies for fostering sustainability. Such studies could provide critical guidance for designing regulations that are both adaptive and enforceable across diverse contexts.

Corporate Governance

Corporate governance plays a pivotal role in embedding sustainability within organizational strategies (Nandi *et al.*, 2023). Governance structures emphasizing transparency, stakeholder engagement, and board diversity are strongly associated with better sustainability outcomes. However, the lack of empirical evidence directly linking specific governance practices to measurable sustainability performance limits a comprehensive understanding of their full impact. The study by Nandi *et al.* (2023) examines the relationship between corporate governance characteristics and CSR performance, focusing on factors such as board size, audit committee composition, and the implementation of environmental and social policies. It finds that larger boards and stronger implementation of environmental and social policies positively influence CSR performance, while audit committee size and independence have a negative effect. However, board independence and gender diversity did not significantly impact CSR performance.

For example, a large board in a company might lead to more diverse perspectives and better decision-making, helping the company implement effective sustainability policies that improve its CSR performance. Conversely, if the company's audit committee is too large or lacks independence, it may hinder the company's ability to ensure that its sustainability efforts are properly overseen and implemented.

In general, to foster a culture of sustainability, governance frameworks must prioritize inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. Policymakers and corporate leaders should align governance reforms with sustainability objectives to ensure that these practices yield tangible outcomes. For example, governance reforms could include initiatives to increase board diversity and strengthen stakeholder engagement mechanisms.

Further research is essential to establish causal relationships between governance practices and sustainability outcomes. Additionally, exploring how international governance standards influence national practices could provide deeper insights into creating effective governance models that drive sustainability globally. Such research would help bridge existing knowledge gaps and support evidence-based policy and corporate governance improvements.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Practices

CSR legislation and voluntary initiatives are vital for enhancing corporate accountability and improving public perception. Companies engaging in CSR often experience better brand reputation and customer loyalty. However, the effectiveness of CSR practices varies widely. For instance, Nandi *et al.* (2023) highlights that companies with larger boards and strong environmental and social policies tend to perform better in terms of CSR, which directly influences their public image. These companies are more likely to garner positive brand reputation and customer loyalty, as their commitment to social responsibility is clearly reflected in their governance structures. However, the study also reveals that not all CSR practices are equally effective, as factors like audit committee size and independence can negatively impact CSR performance, illustrating the variability in the success of CSR initiatives across different companies. Some organizations exhibit genuine commitment to sustainability, while others engage in superficial compliance, often influenced by the strength of enforcement mechanisms and corporate priorities.

To ensure that CSR initiatives lead to meaningful and lasting outcomes, policymakers must strengthen enforcement mechanisms and encourage transparency in sustainability reporting. Understanding the interplay between voluntary CSR efforts and mandatory regulations is also crucial for developing a comprehensive approach that maximizes the impact of these initiatives.

Despite these advancements, critical gaps persist. There is a notable absence of longitudinal studies that assess the sustained impact of CSR legislation on corporate behavior. Additionally, limited exploration of how voluntary and mandatory CSR initiatives interact underscores the need for deeper analysis. Addressing these gaps could help optimize CSR strategies, ensuring their alignment with broader sustainability goals.

Integration of Sustainability across Business Functions

Integrating sustainability into key business functions such as marketing, operations, and supply chain management is crucial for achieving overall sustainability objectives. However, despite frequent discussions of sustainable innovations,

there is a lack of comprehensive frameworks to fully embed sustainability across organizational processes. To address this, businesses must adopt holistic approaches that align sustainability goals with operational strategies. This requires fostering innovation and creating interdisciplinary frameworks to integrate sustainability at every level of decision-making. Such approaches not only improve efficiency but also ensure that sustainability principles are deeply embedded within the organization's culture.

Okeke (2024) emphasizes that while some oil and gas companies have begun integrating sustainability into their supply chain management (SCM) practices, these efforts remain inconsistent and fragmented. The study reveals that the lack of comprehensive frameworks to connect environmental, social, and economic sustainability within supply chains presents a significant gap. This finding underscores the broader need for industries to establish well-structured frameworks that embed sustainability across all business functions, allowing organizations to achieve their sustainability goals and adapt to emerging challenges more effectively.

The findings from the literature highlight both the progress and persistent challenges in advancing corporate sustainability. Regulatory frameworks, corporate governance, and CSR practices are all crucial components for driving sustainability, yet their effectiveness is often limited by enforcement challenges, knowledge gaps, and inconsistent implementation. A key theme across these areas is the need for businesses and policymakers to approach sustainability as an interconnected system, rather than isolated efforts. Integrating sustainability across all business functions, including marketing, operations, and supply chain management, is essential to achieving comprehensive sustainability objectives. To enhance the impact of corporate sustainability, future research and policy development should focus on addressing gaps such as the role of technology in compliance, the relationship between voluntary and mandatory CSR initiatives, and the creation of detailed frameworks for sustainability integration. By closing these gaps, organizations can foster more resilient and adaptive business models, ultimately contributing to long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing research reveals several complexities characterized by various legal instruments that influence corporate behavior. While significant progress has been made in understanding the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks, corporate governance, and CSR practices, notable gaps remain in literature. Thus, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Promote Comparative Analyses Across Jurisdictions and corporations

Policymakers should encourage and facilitate comparative studies that analyze the effectiveness of various legal frameworks across different jurisdictions. This can help identify best practices and successful strategies that can be adapted or adopted in other regions. It will also create more effective regulations tailored to their specific contexts.

2. Incorporate Emerging Technologies into Regulatory Frameworks

As emerging technologies play a crucial role in shaping corporate practices, it is essential for policymakers to develop dynamic legal instruments that can adapt to technological advancements. This includes creating regulations that not only promote innovation but also ensure responsible corporate behavior.

3. Support Longitudinal Studies on CSR Legislation

To better understand the long-term effects of CSR legislation, policymakers should fund and support longitudinal studies that track the impact of such laws over time. This research will provide valuable insights into how CSR initiatives evolve and their effectiveness in promoting sustainable practices within corporations and inform future legislative efforts.

4. Balance Voluntary and Mandatory Regulations

It is important for policymakers to explore the interplay between voluntary and mandatory regulations in promoting corporate sustainability. Developing a balanced approach that encourages voluntary compliance while establishing mandatory standards can create a more robust framework for corporate accountability.

5. Engage Stakeholders in Policy Development

Finally, policymakers should actively engage stakeholders, including businesses, civil society, and academia, in the policy development process.

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