



SUSTAINABLE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN MULTI-CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE POST-COVID-19

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Abstract

Sustainable development is essential globally, necessitating a balance between economic growth and environmental protection. This has led public institutions, governments, and corporations to implement strategies that balance profitability, efficiency, social equity, and ecological responsibility. However, research on sustainable diversity management in institutions within post-pandemic African emerging markets, particularly in Nigeria, remains underexplored. Therefore, this research examines Sustainable Diversity Management in multicultural institutions in post-COVID-19 Nigeria, utilizing a survey of 367 responses analysed via regression models. The findings show that HRM, innovation, gender diversity, CSR, and organisational culture are positively associated with firm performance. This research connects theory with practice in sustainable development, providing recommendations for corporate leaders, institutional heads, and policymakers to integrate sustainability into organisational cultures and governance.

Keywords: Sustainable Diversity, Human Resources Management, Innovation, CSR, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the pursuit of sustainable development has emerged as a central global agenda, influencing governments, corporations, and international institutions alike. The seminal report *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own



needs.” This definition, from the Brundtland Commission, is central to global sustainability discussions, promoting a balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental conservation.

The contemporary corporate landscape is marked by heightened awareness of environmental degradation, social inequality, and ethical governance. As a result, organisations are increasingly compelled to integrate sustainability principles into their strategic and operational frameworks. Firms are now expected not only to achieve profitability but also to demonstrate responsible stewardship of resources and ethical management practices (Comin et al., 2020). Consequently, corporate sustainability has evolved into a multidimensional concept encompassing economic viability, social inclusiveness, and environmental responsibility.

The publication of the Brundtland Report catalysed an era of sustainability-oriented innovation (Klewitz & Hansen, 2014). Organisations are increasingly adopting eco-innovative approaches like cleaner production, green design, and socially responsible business models to deliver long-term value to stakeholders. Beyond environmental and economic dimensions, the *social aspect* of sustainability has gained increasing prominence in recent years, particularly with growing global calls for diversity, equity, and inclusion (Stengel, 2002). Events like the COVID-19 pandemic and social justice movements, particularly Black Lives Matter, have heightened focus on fairness, representation, and corporate accountability (Fairlie, 2020).

Scholars argue that integrating sustainability into business models not only improves environmental and social outcomes but also enhances competitive advantage and organisational resilience (Bocken et al., 2014). Sustainable organisations typically demonstrate lower operational costs, improved brand reputation, and enhanced stakeholder trust (Norman & Ramirez, 1993; Hörisch et al., 2014). Furthermore, embracing sustainable human resource management (HRM), innovation, diversity, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) fosters long-term performance and contributes to societal well-being (Dangelico & Pujari, 2010).

Despite growing attention to sustainability, many public institutions, particularly in developing economies, still struggle to embed sustainability into their governance and operational frameworks. For instance, Nigeria’s Central Bank (CBN) plays a pivotal role in promoting transparency, accountability, and financial inclusion, yet limited empirical research explores how diversity management, leadership practices, and organisational culture interact to drive sustainability and firm performance in such contexts. Understanding these relationships is crucial in building inclusive, innovative, and sustainable public sector institutions.

Although the sustainability discourse has expanded globally, a critical research gap remains in understanding how firms’ sustainable HRM, innovation, gender diversity, CSR, and organisational culture impact firm performance. Extant literature has demonstrated that gender

diversity and inclusive management practices can enhance decision-making, innovation, and stakeholder relationships (Solano, 2022; Ahmed et al., 2022). However, much of this evidence derives from private sector studies conducted in developed economies, with limited attention given to multicultural public sector institutions in developing countries such as Nigeria. Therefore, this research addresses these gaps by examining how sustainable HRM, innovation, gender diversity, CSR, and organisational culture jointly influence firm performance in the context of the Central Bank of Nigeria. By focusing on a multicultural public institution, the study seeks to uncover how sustainability-driven leadership and inclusive governance can enhance long-term institutional effectiveness and social impact by considering the following research objectives: (1) *to analyse the impact of sustainable HRM on firm performance.* (2) *Examine the relationship between innovation and firm performance.* (3) *Investigate the impact of gender diversity on firm performance.* (4) *explore the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on firm performance, and* (5) *examine how organisational culture impacts firm performance.*

By addressing the above objectives, we collected data from 367 responses from employees of Nigeria's Central Bank and analysed them with regression models. The findings provide a significant contribution to the literature in three ways: First, the study advances theoretical understanding by integrating *Social Exchange Theory* (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and *Critical Mass Theory* (Kanter, 1977; Joecks et al., 2013) to explain how reciprocity and representation foster inclusivity and sustainable performance in multicultural organisational settings. Second, the study offers evidence-based recommendations for sustainable HRM, diversity, and CSR practices aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and employee engagement. It presents actionable strategies like inclusive recruitment, ongoing training, and reciprocity-based reward systems to foster sustainable, high-performing organisational cultures. Finally, this study fills key gaps in existing literature by examining how SHRM, innovation, gender diversity, and CSR collectively influence firm performance within a multicultural public institution in Nigeria, addressing the limited and inconclusive evidence from developing economies.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

This study integrates Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Critical Mass Theory (CMT) to explain the mechanisms linking sustainable HRM, innovation, and gender diversity to firm performance. While no single theory can comprehensively capture these dynamics, the combined use of SET and CMT provides a well-rounded foundation for understanding both behavioural and structural determinants of organisational performance.

Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) emphasises that workplace relationships are built on reciprocity and mutual benefit. Applied to this study, SET suggests that when organisations invest in fair, supportive, and sustainable HR practices, employees reciprocate through enhanced commitment, creativity, and productivity, thereby improving firm performance. The same principle extends to innovation—organizations that reward and recognise innovative behaviour foster trust and engagement, which in turn stimulate performance gains. Thus, SET explains the behavioural processes through which sustainable HRM and innovation translate into superior outcomes.

Critical Mass Theory (Kanter, 1977) complements this by addressing the structural dimension of gender diversity. The theory posits that the influence of women on boards becomes meaningful only when their representation reaches a “critical mass,” typically around 30% or more. At this threshold, women’s participation can alter group dynamics, enhance decision quality, and strengthen governance and performance outcomes. This explains why token representation little effect may have, while achieving a critical mass promotes inclusivity, balanced perspectives, and improved firm results.

In combination, SET and CMT provide a comprehensive framework: SET explains how reciprocal social exchanges enhance performance through sustainable HRM and innovation, while CMT elucidates how adequate female representation structurally reinforces inclusive and effective governance. Together, they offer a multidimensional lens for understanding how people-centred practices and diversity collectively drive firm performance.

Sustainable Human Resource Management and Firm Performance

Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM) refers to the strategic alignment of HR policies and practices that simultaneously promote economic, social, and environmental objectives (Ehnert, 2009; Thevanes & Arulrajah, 2017). It seeks to develop and retain talent, ensure fair treatment, and foster long-term employee well-being without compromising future generations’ needs. Studies have demonstrated that sustainable HRM enhances job satisfaction, retention, and productivity (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Croitoru et al., 2005). According to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), employees reciprocate organisational support with positive behaviours and stronger performance outcomes. Gould-Williams and Davies (2005) similarly note that when management practices are perceived as fair and supportive, employees respond with higher commitment and effort. Based on the above discussions, we hypothesise that,

H1. There is a positive relationship between Sustainable Human Resource Management and Firm Performance.

Innovation and Firm Performance

Innovation is widely recognised as a crucial driver of superior firm performance, competitiveness, and adaptability (Birkner & Mahr, 2016; Leitner et al., 2016). Empirical research consistently finds a positive relationship between innovation and firm outcomes such as profitability, productivity, and market share (Artz et al., 2010; Rosenbusch et al., 2011). Innovation enables firms to respond to market dynamics, enhance operational efficiency, and create unique value propositions. Choi and Williams (2013) found that innovation depth and diversity across sectors significantly enhance performance, while Hua and Wemmerlov (2006) observed that frequent product introductions positively affect financial outcomes. In line with this, innovative firms tend to outperform less innovative ones in both developed and emerging economies. Based on the above discussions, we hypothesise that,

H2. There is a positive relationship between Innovation and Firm Performance.

Gender Diversity and Firm Performance

Gender diversity has gained prominence since the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, particularly regarding board composition and inclusivity. Diverse boards benefit from broader perspectives, improved decision-making, and enhanced governance (Mazur & Bialostocka, 2010; Byron & Post, 2016). Critical Mass Theory (Kanter, 1977) posits that female representation becomes impactful only when a threshold—typically 30% or more—is reached, allowing women to contribute meaningfully to board deliberations and strategic outcomes. While some studies report mixed or insignificant results (Rose, 2007; Carter et al., 2010), others (Erhardt et al., 2003; Joecks et al., 2013) find that higher female representation improves firm performance, innovation, and board effectiveness.

H3. There is a positive relationship between Gender Diversity and Firm Performance.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Firm Performance

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become integral to organisational strategy, reflecting firms' commitment to ethical, social, and environmental concerns (Selcuk & Kiyamaz, 2017). While the CSR–CSR–CSR–performance relationship remains debated, emerging evidence suggests that CSR initiatives can build reputational capital, attract investment, and foster employee loyalty (Dobers & Halme, 2009; Surroca et al., 2010). According to Social Exchange Theory, firms that demonstrate social responsibility generate reciprocal employee and stakeholder trust, which enhances performance (Memon et al., 2020). However, some studies find that CSR disclosure may have neutral or even negative short-term financial effects

(Selcuk & Kiyamaz, 2017). Despite this ambiguity, the long-term strategic value of CSR remains widely supported, leading to the H4 of the study that

H4. There is a positive relationship between CSR and Firm Performance.

Organisational Culture and Firm Performance

Organisational culture represents the shared values, beliefs, and norms that shape employee behaviour and organisational identity (Schein, 1990; Pettigrew, 1979). A strong culture fosters internal cohesion, adaptability, and consistent performance outcomes (Bamgbade et al., 2019; Denison & Mishra, 1995). Empirical studies demonstrate that culture enhances employee motivation, innovation, and long-term competitive advantage (Joseph & Kibera, 2019). Conversely, weak or misaligned cultures can hinder performance (Yesil & Kaya, 2013). Organisational culture and performance are thus mutually reinforcing-positive cultures drive superior outcomes, and sustained performance further strengthens cultural alignment. Based on the above discussions, we hypothesise that,

H5. There is a positive relationship between organisational culture and firm performance.

Based on the above hypothesis, we used Figure 1 to present the hypotheses as shown below.

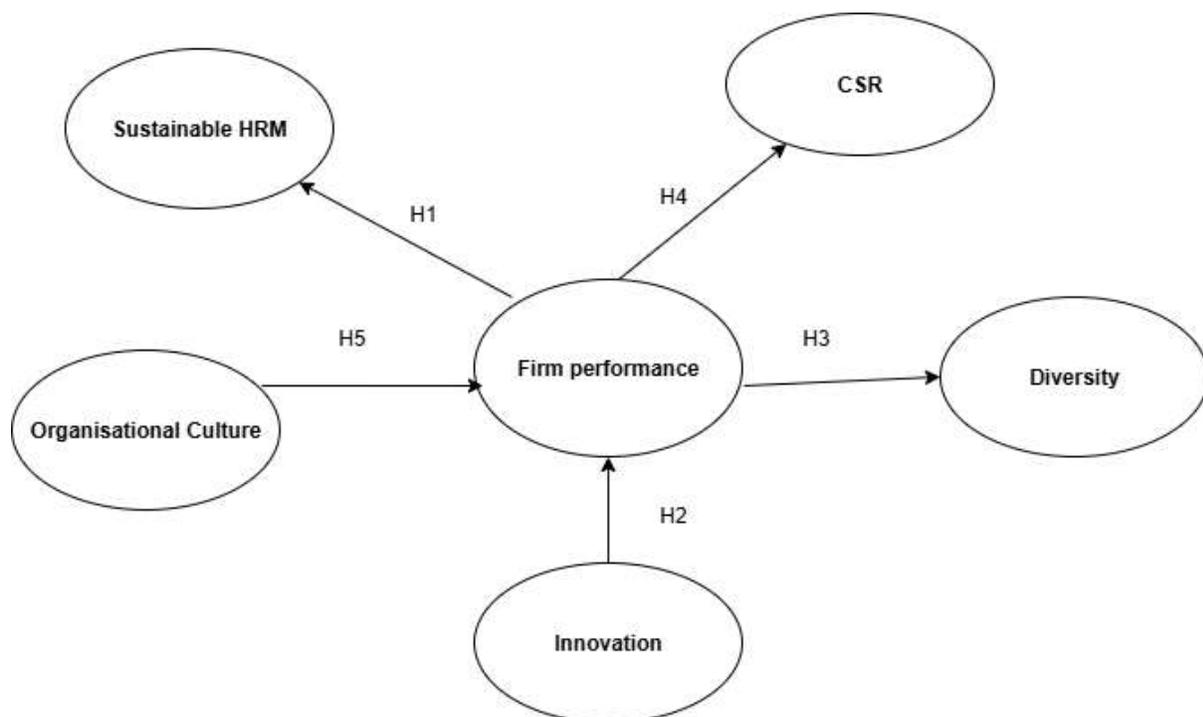


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We designed a survey instrument to measure the variables of the study. The questionnaire was written in English and included information about the respondent's demographic and firm profile. The research team utilised a 5-point Likert-type scale for all constructs. Notably, we adopted an online survey administered and collected anonymously between February 2024 to June 2024.

A pre-test was conducted to evaluate a questionnaire's content validity by reviewing it with the supervisory team and five experts in Banking and Innovation, who provided feedback for improvements on confusing or ambiguous questions and wording. The feedback provides key recommendations to enhance the design and evaluate its potential success. The pre-test validated the survey's feasibility and suitability for quantitative data collection.

Before the data administration and collection, we conducted a pilot test to ensure that respondents were familiar with the developed and designed questionnaires. According to Bonsu et al (2024), pilot testing offers essential insights from participant feedback, aiding in questionnaire development and helping researchers anticipate study outcome success. In this study, 15 participants completed an online survey, yielding high reliability results with Cronbach's Alpha values between 0.72 and 0.89. The pilot testing confirmed the survey's feasibility for participant recruitment following minor adjustments to the questions.

Following the pilot testing, the questionnaire was distributed online, accompanied by a general invitation and several follow-up reminders after the first 4 weeks. The study distributed 552 questionnaires to targeted respondents via online platforms, including emails, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, from March to June 2024, spanning four months.

The survey form consisted of three sections. The first section collected demographic data, including gender, age, ethnic background, education level, and years of professional experience from respondents. The remaining sections detailed the data on constructs, each operationalised through various items designed to measure specific attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions relevant to the research objectives. These items were measured based on a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, as detailed in table 1.

Sampling and Population

This study designed a survey questionnaire to gather data for the empirical investigation of the conceptualised model. The data was gathered from the Central Bank of Nigeria, the largest market in Africa. Notably, the study informed respondents of its purpose, ensuring data usage was strictly for academic purposes and confidentiality was upheld.

The target population consisted of permanent employees of the Central Bank of Nigeria. The study aimed to collect data from three staff grades: executive, senior, and junior, targeting a sufficient respondent pool of 500 individuals. Due to the large sample size, random sampling was used to achieve demographic representation and access to willing participants. After several reminders and phone calls, a total of 364 completed responses were received over a period of 4 months. Table 1 shows the findings of the respondents.

The majority of respondents (44.5%) were aged between 45 and 54 years, followed by those aged 35–44 years (30.8%), suggesting a workforce dominated by mid-to-late career professionals. Males constituted 52.7% of the sample, while females represented 44.2%, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. In terms of educational attainment, most respondents (55.2%) held a master's degree, followed by 26.1% with a bachelor's degree, indicating a highly educated workforce. Only 2.7% possessed SSCE as their highest qualification. Regarding job positions, senior staff accounted for the majority (54.4%), while executives and junior staff represented 33.8% and 11.8%, respectively. Work experience distribution revealed that 43.4% of respondents had 11–20 years of professional experience, followed by 25.8% with less than 10 years. Overall, the demographic composition indicates that respondents were predominantly mid-career professionals with advanced educational qualifications, balanced gender representation, and considerable work experience.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=364)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Per cent (%)
Age Group	18–24 years	17	4.7
	25–34 years	43	11.8
	35–44 years	112	30.8
	45–54 years	162	44.5
	55–60 years	30	8.3
Gender	Male	192	52.7
	Female	161	44.2
	.Prefer not to say	11	3
Educational Qualification	SSCE	10	2.7
	Diploma	17	4.7
	Bachelor's	95	26.1
	Master's	201	55.2
	Doctorate	41	11.3
Position	Junior	43	11.8
	Senior	198	54.4
	Executive	123	33.8
Work Experience	0–10 years	94	25.8
	11–20 years	158	43.4
	21–30 years	91	25
	31–35 years	21	5.8

Variable Measurement

The variables were adopted from existing and established literature. Firm performance refers to an organisation's ability to generate profit, particularly in contrast to others that may be downsizing or failing (Georgopoulos & Tannenbaum, 1957). Consequently, we adopted eight items from Mikalef et al (2019).

SHRM is defined as the proficient, effective, and innovative application of human resources and its associated practices (Thevanes & Arulrajah, 2017). This study adopted nine items from Singh (2003). CSR is a firm's commitment to operating in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner while balancing the interests of various stakeholders, including the employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and shareholders (Giao & Goncalves, 2022). Hence, this study adopted 16 statements from Wu et al (2015).

Innovation is the introduction of a new or significantly improved product, process or method or practice within a business (Eurostat and OECD, 2005). For this research, 6 items were developed from Li et al (2021). Diversity in a multicultural environment goes beyond the traditional focus on gender and encompasses a broad range of differences, including but not limited to age, race, religion, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background and cultural values (Cox, 2001; Shore et al., 2011). This study adopted 12 items from Bamgbade et al. (2019) to measure diversity. Finally, organisational culture refers to the lifestyle of individuals, including aspects such as clothing, language, cuisine, and living environments (Bourdieu, 1972). Hence, this study adopted 12 items from Joseph & Kibera (2019).

We controlled respondents' age, gender, level of education, position and work experience as the control variables, as these variables influence organisational behaviour and outcomes. Table 2 provides variable descriptions.

Table 2. Description of Variables

Variables	Code	Items	References
Sustainable HRM.	SHMR-1	The company administered an employment test before selection	Singh (2003)
	SHRM-2	All employees are covered under a formal performance appraisal system	
	SHRM-3	All employees' compensation is based on performance appraisal.	
	SHRM-4	All employees' jobs have been formally defined.	
	SHRM-5	A percentage of non-entry-level jobs have been filled from within in the past three years	
	SHRM-6	All employees are covered under a formal information system	

	SHRM-7	All employees are administered attitude surveys regularly.	
	SHRM-8	All employees participate in quality of work-life programmes, quality circles or labour-management participation teams	
	SHRM-9	All employees received an average number of days of training in the last 12 months.	
CSR	CSR-1	Our company always pays its taxes on a regular and continuing basis	Wu et al (2015)
	CSR-2	Our company complies with legal regulations completely and promptly.	
	CSR-3	Our company participates in the activities which aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment.	
	CSR-4	Our company implements special programs to minimise its negative impact on the natural environment.	
	CSR-5	Our company makes investments to create a better life for future generations.	
	CSR-6	Our company targets sustainable growth, which considers future generations.	
	CSR-7	Our company supports non-governmental organisations working in problematic areas.	
	CSR-8	Our company contributes to the campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of society.	
	CSR-9	Our company protects consumer rights beyond legal requirements.	
	CSR-10	Customer satisfaction is highly important for our company.	
	CSR-11	Our company encourages its employees to participate in voluntary activities.	
	CSR-12	Our company policies encourage employees to develop their skills and careers.	
	CSR-13	The management of our company is primarily concerned with employees' needs and wants	
	CSR-14	Our company implements flexible policies to provide a good work-life balance for its employees.	
	CSR-15	The managerial decisions related to the employees are usually fair.	
	CSR-16	Our company supports employees who want to acquire additional education.	
INNOVATION	INN-1	I am always looking for new techniques and methods.	Li et al. (2021)
	INN-2	I often come up with creative ideas to improve my workflow.	
	INN-3	I often communicate with others and recommend my new ideas.	
	INN-4	I always try to get the resources I need to implement my new ideas.	
	INN-5	I will make proper long-term plans to implement my new ideas.	
	INN-6	On the whole, I am a sustainably innovative person.	

DIVERSITY	DV-1	The Organisation allows employees to celebrate holidays appropriately	Bamgbade et al (2019)
	DV-2	Organisation employs a diverse range of people.	
	DV-3	Organisation has a diversity or equal opportunities policy in place	
	DV-4	Organisation makes employees aware of the equal opportunities policy and provisions	
	DV-5	Organisation employs a diverse range of people.	
	DV-6	Organisation has a procedure in place for reporting discrimination.	
	DV-7	I am given equal opportunity to speak with the nearest manager about what consequences the diversity will have for me.	
	DV-8	I am comfortable being myself at work	
	DV-9	I feel emotionally and socially supported at work	
	DV-10	I feel that I belong to this organisation	
	DV-11	I face unique challenges that make it difficult to get to work or work the hours expected at the times expected.	
	DV-12	I face obstacles in career progression or the ability to participate fully in work processes that are not experienced by other colleagues.	
Firm Performance	FP-1	We perform much better in terms of Profitability	Mikalef et al (2019)
	FP-2	We perform much better in terms of decreasing the product or service delivery cycle time.	
	FP-3	We perform much better in terms of reducing operating costs.	
	FP-4	We perform much better in terms of profit growth rates.	
	FP-5	We perform much better in terms of Rapid response to market demand.	
	FP-6	We perform much better in terms of the Rapid confirmation of customer orders.	
	FP-7	We perform much better in terms of increasing customer satisfaction.	
	FP-8	We perform much better in terms of providing better product and service quality.	
Organisational Culture	OC-1	Emphasis is on customers and competitors by the CEO across departments.	Joseph & Kibera (2019)
	OC-2	Departmental heads strive to deliver superior customer value.	
	OC-3	Customer satisfaction is basis of employee rewards.	
	OC-4	Structural adjustments are carried out to adapt to changes in the market.	
	OC-5	Existence of established effective systems, policies, and guidelines	
	OC-6	Risks are avoided in business practices.	
	OC-7	Employees embrace teamwork	
	OC-8	Management creates bonding sessions at least once a year.	
	OC-9	Inputs of every employee are considered in management decisions.	
	OC-10	Investment in research and innovation	
	OC-11	Focus on the external environment takes priority over internal orientation.	
	OC-12	Strategies are reviewed from time to time to effectively respond to environmental changes.	

Quantitative Data Analysis

We utilise the regression analysis to estimate the hypothesis. In recent years, the model has become prominent in management research. The use of regression modelling in this study is justified by its key advantages related to our research objectives and data characteristics. First, regression analysis is a statistical technique for assessing the relationships between independent and dependent variables, particularly regarding factors such as diversity, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and organisational culture, and their effects on firm performance. Second, the model provides quantitative metrics (coefficients, p-values, R^2) to measure the strength and significance of these predictors, enabling the identification of meaningful contributions to performance while controlling for confounding variables. Finally, regression modelling is effective for analysing cross-sectional quantitative data, enabling comparisons and pattern identification. By applying this rigorous approach, we ensured that our findings regarding the direct effect are statistically sound and theoretically meaningful.

FINDINGS

This research presents the findings leading to the research hypothesis. Notably, the analysis utilised the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), a recognised software tool for statistical analysis known for its capability to manage complex data sets (Bala, 2016; Pallant, 2020; Kellstedt, Whitten & Tuch, 2022).

Common Method Bias

This variance pertains to the measurement method instead of the constructs, according to Richardson et al. (2009). Podsakoff et al. (2003) further explain that single-source data may lead to deceptive correlations influenced by elements like the survey instrument, respondent traits, or the context of data collection. This study addresses this bias through the following: (1) the study ensured anonymity and confidentiality for respondents, explained the survey's purpose, clarified key concepts of the variables, and emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers. (2) Harman's Single Method Test and Marker Variable Technique were employed to identify Common Method Bias in survey data, assessing if a significant portion of variance can be attributed to a single factor. This test yielded 34%, below the 50% benchmark, indicating no common method bias in the data (Bonsu et al, 2024; McKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). With the marker variable, we utilised the marker variable with gender as the marker variable to test for common method bias against Organisational Culture, concluding that no common method bias was present in the data.

Validity and Reliability Tests

The study examined the reliability and validity of constructs through four key tests: *Cronbach's Alpha (CA)*, *Composite Reliability (CR)*, *Factor Loadings*, and *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)*. Before conducting these checks, we assessed sample adequacy through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Index, a statistic valuable for factor analysis in multivariate statistics, determining the suitability of data for uncovering underlying factors or latent variables. As shown in Table 3, the KMO value was 0.957, indicating high sample adequacy as it exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.6 (Hair et al, 2010). This indicates that the sample was highly meritorious and suitable for factor analysis.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.957
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	16221.567
	Df	1770
	Sig.	<.001

From Table 4, all factor loadings of variables exceeded the 0.6 threshold. Hair et al (2010) indicate that factor loadings ranging from 0.6 to 0.7 are considered good or acceptable. For instance, FL for SHRM were between 0.833 and 0.923; CSR was between 0.790 and 0.905. Innovation had a factor loading between 0.818 and 0.836, and Diversity was between 0.781 and 0.863. For internal reliability, we utilised Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency or reliability of a set of scale or test items, which indicates their relatedness. This measure, commonly used in psychological testing and educational assessments, ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values signifying better reliability. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha for each of the data constructs were well above the accepted threshold of 0.70.

Composite Reliability measures the internal consistency of latent constructs in a structural equation model, assessing how consistently a set of observed variables represents the same underlying latent construct. Variables exceeded 0.70, confirming convergent validity and internal consistency of the research variables. Finally, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for various constructs surpassed the 0.50 threshold, with SHRM at 0.564, CSR at 0.530, Innovation at 0.692, Diversity at 0.584, Firm Performance at 0.536, and Organisational Culture at 0.556. Therefore, this is a strong indicator of convergent validity.

Table 4. Validity and Reliability checks

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings (FL)
Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM)		
	The company administered an employment test before selection	0.845
	All employees are covered under a formal performance appraisal system	0.764
	All employees' compensation is based on performance appraisal	0.859
	All employees' jobs have been formally defined	0.833
	A percentage of non-entry-level jobs have been filled from within in the past three years	0.923
	All employees are covered under a formal information system	0.830
	All employees are administered attitude surveys regularly	0.839
	All employees participate in quality of work-life programs, quality circles or labour-management participation teams	0.838
	All employees received an average number of days of training in the last 12 months	0.885
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)		
	Our company always pays its taxes on a regular and continuing basis	0.860
	Our company complies with legal regulations completely and promptly	0.839
	Our company participates in the activities which aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment	0.838
	Our company implements special programs to minimise its negative impact on the natural environment	0.837
	Our company makes investments to create a better life for future generations	0.822
	Our company targets sustainable growth, which considers the future generations.	0.814
	Our company supports non-governmental organisations working in problematic areas.	0.905
	Our company contributes to the campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of society	0.790
	Our company protects consumer rights beyond legal requirements	0.873
	Customer satisfaction is highly important for our company	0.835
	Our company encourages its employees to participate in the voluntary activities	0.814
	Our company policies encourage employees to develop their skills and careers	0.880
	The management of our company is primarily concerned with employees' needs and wants	0.827
	Our company implements flexible policies to provide a good work-life balance for its employees.	0.824
	The managerial decisions related to the employees are usually fair.	0.835
Innovation (INN)		
	I am always looking for new techniques and methods.	0.818
	I often come up with creative ideas to improve my workflow	0.829
	I often communicate with others and recommend my new ideas.	0.820
	I always try to get the resources I need to implement my new ideas.	0.829
	I will make proper long-term plans to implement my new ideas.	0.836
Diversity (DV)		
	The Organisation allows employees to celebrate holidays appropriately	0.811
	The organisation employs a diverse range of people	0.812
	The organisation has a diversity and equal opportunities policy in place	0.847
	The organisation makes employees aware of the equal opportunities policy and provisions	0.846

The organisation employs a diverse range of people	0.781
The organisation has procedures in place for reporting discrimination	0.843
I am given equal opportunity to speak with the nearest manager about what consequences the diversity will have for me	0.812
I am comfortable being myself at work	0.826
I feels emotionally and socially supported at work	0.851
I feel that I belong to this organisation	0.863
I face unique challenges that make it difficult to get to work or work the hours expected at the times expected	0.859
Firm Performance (FP)	
We perform much better in terms of Profitability	0.858
We perform much better in terms of decreasing the product or service delivery cycle time	0.923
We perform much better in terms of reducing operating costs	0.847
We perform much better in terms of profit growth rates	0.863
We perform much better in terms of Rapid response to market demand	0.819
We perform much better in terms of the Rapid confirmation of customer orders	0.796
We perform much better in terms of increasing customer satisfaction	0.839
We perform much better in terms of providing better products and quality service.	0.828
Organisational Culture (OC)	
Emphasis is on customers and competitors by the CEO across departments	0.838
Departmental heads strive to deliver superior customer value	0.797
Customer satisfaction is the basis of employee rewards	0.860
Structural adjustments are carried out to adapt to changes in the market	0.824
Existence of established effective systems, policies, and guidelines	0.765
Risks are avoided in business practices	0.876
Employees embrace teamwork	0.784
Management creates bonding sessions at least once a year	0.823
Inputs of every employee are considered in management decisions	0.810
Investment in research and innovation	0.761
Focus on external environment takes priority over internal orientation	0.955
Strategies reviewed from time to time to effectively respond to environmental changes	0.819

Note: If FL is ≥ 0.7 = excellent, $0.6 - 0.7$ = good, $0.5 - 0.6$ = moderate, <0.5 = poor

Discriminant Validity

We checked discriminant validity, confirming the uniqueness of a latent construct by ensuring it measures distinct phenomena and maintains minimal correlation with variables from other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Notably, we are using the square root of average variance estimates (Fornell-Larcker standard) for discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 5 displays the inter-construct correlation values and the diagonal square root of AVEs. Results show the square root of AVE values is higher than the corresponding correlation values, meeting the Fornell-Larcker criterion standards (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 5. Discriminant Validity

Variables	Mean	STD							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. SHRM	44.967	9.1032	1						
2. CSR	80.341	16.007	.708**	1					
3. Innovation	27.920	5.567	.490**	.642**	1				
4. Diversity	56.604	10.622	.641**	.802**	.647**	1			
5. Firm Performance	39.233	8.825	.572**	.613**	.539**	.605**	1		
6. Organisational Culture	60.093	12.780	.610**	.698**	.554**	.679**	.772**	1	

Note: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

Table 6. Multicollinearity Test

Variables	VIF	Tolerance (1/VIF)
Sustainable Human Resource Management	2.145	0.48
Corporate Social Responsibility	1.883	0.53
Innovation	3.283	0.30
Diversity	3.805	0.26
Organisational Culture	2.229	0.45

Note: If $1 < VIF < 5$ = low to moderate, $VIF \geq 10$ = high

Table 7. Reliability and Validity Test

Variables	(CA)	CR	(AVE)	SQRT of AVE
Sustainable Human Resources Management	0.817	0.819	0.564	0.751
Corporate Social Responsibility	0.943	0.944	0.530	0.728
Innovation	0.918	0.926	0.584	0.764
Diversity	0.839	0.918	0.692	0.832
Firm Performance	0.897	0.899	0.536	0.732
Organisational Culture	0.905	0.907	0.556	0.746

Note: if CA is 7 - 8 = acceptable, 0.8 - 0.9 = good, ≥ 9 = excellent;

if AVE ≥ 0.5 = adequate, < 0.5 = low,

Hypotheses Testing and Discussions

The empirical validity was estimated using regression analysis. This method helps to analyse the complex relationships between variables as it allows the researcher to examine the direct associations between the variables. Specifically, the study tested the direct effects of all the variables on Firm Performance using the multiple regression modelling as shown below.

$$FP = \beta_0 + SHRM_1 + INN_2 + DV_3 + CSR_4 + OC_5 + \varepsilon_t$$

Where, Firm Performance (FP) is the dependent variable, while Sustainable Human Resources Management (SHRM), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Diversity (DV), Innovation (INN) and Organisation Culture (OC) act as independent variables and ε_t is the error term.

First, the researcher tested R^2 model for FP, which explained an appropriate variability in the construct (R^2 of all independent variables is 0.624), consistent with Chin's (1998) criteria. Therefore, the model's empirical validity was determined to be adequate.

As indicated in Table 8, SHRM has a direct positive and significant effect of 5% on firm performance ($\beta=0.117$, p -value=0.012). This implies that government institutions' practices of sustainable human resource management enhance firm performance by 11.7%, validating H1. The result aligns with prior studies that found comparable outcomes (Clarke, 2011; Jabbour & Santos, 2008a; Kramar, 2014; Senthilnathan & Arulrajah, 2014; App & Buttgen, 2016; Freitas et al., 2011). However, these findings were conducted in a relatively advanced region, which contrasts with the developed context of the current study. The findings support the Social Exchange Theory (SET), which highlights the reciprocal relationship between employers and employees. When organisations invest in employee development and provide fair rewards in a supportive environment, employees respond with increased productivity, improved performance, and greater commitment and loyalty. Thus, we suggest that employees demonstrate increased productivity and commitment when they view HR practices as fair and ethical, based on qualitative data regarding sustainable HR practices.

H2 was validated, showing that innovation positively influences firm performance, with a coefficient of $\beta=0.192$ and a p -value of 0.007, aligning with critical mass theory. The findings suggest that gender diversity may contribute to performance, but its impact is not significant. From the findings, we argue that when representation exceeds 30%, benefits related to diversity, such as effective collaboration, innovation, and reduced group thinking, are evident in daily operations (Konrad et al. 2008). Richard et al (2013) posit that diverse teams in inclusive cultures leverage a multitude of cultural perspectives, enhancing strategic decision-making and creative problem-solving, while also fostering creativity and innovation through the appreciation of diverse voices.

Diversity has a direct positive relationship with firm performance ($\beta=0.038$, $p=0.449$), but this effect is not statistically significant, indicating that diversity does not consistently impact firm performance. Although diverse teams may offer broader perspectives and innovation, these advantages did not lead to measurable performance outcomes in the sample examined. This lack of significance may stem from factors including the need for effective management and inclusion practices, the delayed benefits of diversity, and elements related to organisational culture. Overall, increasing diversity is insufficient for performance improvement; a truly inclusive environment that leverages diverse talents and perspectives is essential.

H4 indicates that CSR negatively impacts the performance of institutions, with a coefficient ($\beta=0.006$, p -value=0.865). H4 is unsupported by data, indicating that the organization's CSR activities do not impact overall performance. This finding indicates that,

despite CSR being viewed as a catalyst for enhanced reputation, stakeholder trust, and long-term value, these benefits have not resulted in measurable performance outcomes in the institutions studied. The absence of statistical significance may arise from various contextual or managerial factors, indicating that CSR initiatives often serve more symbolic purposes for compliance or image enhancement instead of delivering tangible economic or operational advantages. Additionally, CSR's impact is often gradual, especially in industries focusing on immediate financial profits over sustainable goals. A company's performance improves more significantly when CSR is embedded in core business strategies rather than treated as an ancillary issue. The findings indicate that CSR alone does not ensure improved performance. Organisations must integrate responsible practices within their strategic frameworks, align them with stakeholder expectations, and create initiatives that deliver both social value and economic returns to achieve performance benefits from CSR.

H5 suggests that organisational culture significantly positively influences firm performance ($\beta=0.420$, p -value <0.001). This suggests that the organisational culture of government institutions significantly enhances their performance, with a coefficient of 0.42, thereby supporting hypothesis H5. This finding aligns with earlier studies indicating a positive relationship between organisational culture and firm performance (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Denison & Mishra, 1995; and Duke II & Edet, 2012). The Theory of Social Exchange highlights the importance of reciprocity and trust within the workplace, suggesting that enhanced firm performance is driven by commitment, trust, and meaningful engagement between employees and management (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing

Code	Hypotheses	Coeff	t-stats	Sig.	Effects	Results
H1	SHRM→FP	0.117	2.536	0.012 *	Direct	Accepted
H2	INN→FP	0.192	2.723	0.007 **	Direct	Accepted
H3	DV→FP	0.038	0.758	0.449 n. s	Direct	Rejected
H4	CSR→FP	-0.006	0.170	0.865 n. s	Direct	Rejected
H5	OC→FP	0.420	12.581	0.001	Direct	Accepted

Note: *** $p<.001$, ** $p<.01$, * $p<5$, $p<10$ n.s.= indicates non-significant

Table 9: Control variables results

Variables	FP	CSR	SHRM	INN
Log_Age	0.026 (0.392) ns	0.143 (2.185) *	0.075 (1.121) ns	0.068 (1.042) ns
Log_Gender	-0.016 (-0.303) ns	-0.195 (-3.79) ***	-0.132 (-2.518) **	-0.168 (-3.241) ***
Log_Education	-0.022 (-0.376) ns	0.108 (1.909) *	0.070 (1.221) ns	0.156 (2.742) ***
Log_Position	-0.042 (0.711) ns	-0.097 (-1.699) ns	-0.139 (-2.373) ns	-0.018 (0.306) ns
Log_Experience	-0.045 (-0.725) ns	-0.130 (-2.196) *	-0.034 (-0.561) ns	-0.084 (-1.398) ns
Adj R ²	0.01	0.06	0.023	0.05

Note: *** $p<.001$, ** $p<.01$, * $p<5$ + $p<10$, ns = not significant

For control variables, the effect of age on firm performance is positive but not significant ($\beta = 0.026$, $t = 0.392$). Age also has a positive and significant effect on CSR ($\beta = 0.143$, $t = 2.185$). This indicates that with increasing employee age, there is a corresponding rise in CSR involvement within the institution, leading to employee pride in participating in positive public impact activities. Like Firm Performance, SHRM and INN have a positive but insignificant relationship with age, as shown respectively ($\beta=0.075$, $t=1.121$) and ($\beta=0.068$, $t=1.042$).

Gender negatively impacted CSR ($\beta = -0.195$, $t = -3.79$), SHRM ($\beta = -0.132$, $t = 2.518$), and INN ($\beta = -0.168$, $t = -3.241$), while having a negative but insignificant effect on Firm Performance ($\beta = 0.016$, $t = 0.303$). This finding indicates that gender influences the implementation of strategic HR practices, particularly those related to gender issues, and suggests that CSR projects may also be more beneficial to gender-related matters. Education negatively affects Firm Performance, positively influences CSR, and shows positive but insignificant impacts on SHRM and Innovation: FP ($\beta = -0.022$, $t = -0.376$); CSR ($\beta = 0.108$, $t = 1.909$); SHRM ($\beta = 0.070$, $t = 1.221$); INN ($\beta = 0.156$, $t = 2.742$). From the foregoing, the findings suggest that although all staff members possess some educational background, this did not affect the overall data. Nonetheless, Higher education levels among staff enhance the execution of CSR projects and lead to positive societal impacts, while also fostering better innovations that improve firm performance over time.

This analysis looks at the interaction between the position of the members of staff on the variables. We discovered that position has a negative but significant effect on Firm performance ($\beta = -0.042$, $t = 0.711$). However, Position, SHRM, and Innovation negatively impacted CSR and staff performance, but these effects were deemed insignificant ($\beta = -0.097$, $t = -1.699$ for CSR; $\beta = -0.139$, $t = -2.373$ for SHRM; $\beta = -0.018$, $t = 0.306$ for grades). These results suggest that organisational position is a relevant factor, but not the only one affecting firm performance. Additionally, SHRM and Innovation do not significantly influence performance, indicating a need for further qualitative investigation. The analysis indicates no significant correlation between staff work experience and firm performance, CSR, SHRM, and Innovation, suggesting that staff experience is unrelated to human resource management or organisational performance.

CONCLUSION

The study examines the relationship between *sustainable* HRM, gender diversity, innovation, corporate social responsibility (CSR), organisational culture and firm performance. The proposed links were empirically verified using data from 367 participants from Nigerian Bureau Banks. The empirical findings show that (1) *sustainable* HRM positively supports firm performance, (2) gender diversity positively supports firm performance, (3) Innovation positively supports firm

performance, (4) CSR positively supports firm performance, and (5) organisational culture positively supports firm performance. The study highlights the necessity of combining human-centric and strategic practices to enhance firm performance, advocating for management approaches that integrate sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation with business objectives.

Theoretical Implications

Our research significantly contributes to the existing literature. First, we extend Social exchange theory and critical mass theory within a multicultural and sustainability-driven public sector context, marking the first research to integrate both theories and address the existing gaps in the Nigerian public service sector. The SET contends that fostering a supportive environment for employee growth leads to reciprocation through enhanced engagement, loyalty, and productivity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005). Meanwhile, critical mass theory suggests that positive organisational outcomes are achievable when at least 30% of diverse individuals are in decision-making roles within an organisation. Therefore, we expand on existing theories and provide empirical insights into sustainability within multicultural institutions, indicating that organisational culture influences the exchange process, making reciprocity dependent on context.

Second, while literature on HRM has gained popularity in recent years, with numerous scholars contributing to its understanding (Ehnert & Harry, 2012; Kramar, 2014; Ehnert et al., 2014; Ehnert et al., 2016), existing research in SHRM on firm performance remains limited, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Therefore, this study fills that gap by examining the effects of SHRM on FP at the Central Bank of Nigeria using both methods.

Third, while extant literature has extensively examined innovation and firm performance (Birkner & Mahr, 2016; Eisingerich et al., 2009; Naidoo & Hoque, 2018), limited studies exist on the effects of banks' innovation on firm performance, especially in the Nigerian markets. In addition, research has provided inconclusive findings on female directors bringing more value to the leadership of an organisation (Tleubayev et al., 2019; Erhardt et al., 2003; Byron & Post, 2016; Ilaboya & Asafoke, 2017). Notably, limited research shows a direct significant relationship between gender and firm performance, particularly from the perspective of developing nations, even when considering organisational culture.

Finally, CSR relationship with firm performance showed inconclusive findings (Du et al., 2010; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001; Selchuk & Kiyamaz, 2017; Bonsu et al., 2024). Importantly, the effects of CSR engagements on the firm performance of Banks in Nigeria remain limited in literature. Consequently, we close these gaps by examining the relationship between CSR and firm performance at the Central Bank of Nigeria, confirming that CSR positively affects firm performance.

Practical / Managerial Implications

We highlight practical implications for HR professionals, managers and organisational leaders in multicultural and sustainability-oriented organisations. Firstly, the result revealed that SHRM improves firm performance, especially when aligned with a supportive and ethical culture, enhancing job satisfaction, employee well-being, and retention in line with workforce expectations. Consequently, managers should implement sustainable human resource management practices, including fair compensation, equitable promotions, and employee development, to foster long-term human capital, benefiting both employees and improving firm performance. In addition, HR professionals should align SHRM with environmental, social, and governance objectives to enhance ethical talent development and improve performance.

Second, the study uncovered the fact that organisational culture has the most substantial direct impact on firm performance. Consequently, a strong and ethical innovation-oriented culture is essential for the success of sustainable human resources, innovation, CSR, and diversity initiatives. Leaders should focus on fostering such a culture that supports and enhances good practices.

Third, we revealed that organisational culture is associated with firm performance. Therefore, Firms must integrate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into their core values and operations by promoting sustainability training, appointing ESG champions in departments, and aligning decision-making with long-term environmental and social objectives.

Finally, we revealed that innovation significantly improved performance. Thus, we recommend that managers foster environments that provide appropriate rewards for innovative ideas, knowledge sharing, and experimentation, facilitating the conversion of innovative ideas into business value.

Limitations of the Study

This study, like any other, was not without its limitations. First, we utilise cross-sectional data, allowing for the potential expansion of the investigation to include a larger sample using the analytical model. Second, we used SET and CMT to support our hypotheses and conceptual model. Further studies can expand our research to create more complex models for estimating the relationships. Finally, future studies should consider including factors like leadership and governance to mediate or moderate the direct relationships identified in this study model.

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