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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between green training and corporate sustainability of food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State. The study was designed as a cross sectional survey with data generated through the administration of structured questionnaire to a sample of 102 participants from a population of 114 managers and supervisors from all (6) Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) registered food and beverage firms in Rivers State. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The study findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between interactional justice and all the measures of employee attitude of Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State. It was therefore stated in conclusion that green training approaches contributes meaningfully towards outcomes such as environmental, social and economic sustainability. The study recommended therefore, training programs should focus on engaging workers in active sustainability activities. Programs should be designed to allow for actual awareness and the development of positive attitudes towards the environment, the social development of host communities and organizational operational context as well as the adoption of business practices that embrace healthy and sustainable pursuit of economic wellbeing of the organization.

Keywords: *Green Training, Organizational Sustainability, food and beverage manufacturing firms*

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INTRODUCTION

The sphere of business has recently attracted an unprecedented level of criticism in light of its role in a number of social, environmental and economic issues present in today's society. The contribution of business to problems of climate change, social inequity and the economic recession has led to questioning the fundamental guiding forces of business and their commensurability with a more sustainable form of development (Broughton, 2009). Although this criticism has gained momentum in recent years, it is hardly new. Since the mid-1990s, scholars have advocated a shift in underlying worldview of sectors such as the manufacturing and oil and gas (Waddock & McIntosh, 2009), discussing about alternative approaches implies harmonizing the corporate sustainability factors of the economic, environmental and social endeavours of the business (Starkey & Crane, 2003).

Corporate sustainability describes those approaches or practices of corporate entities which seek to integrate into their business and profit goals, considerations for the environment and other socio-cultural factors (Dewhurst & Thomas, 2003). It is the apparent recognition of the firms' position within a network of actors, in line with its production and services, and how its behaviour impacts on various stakeholders and the environment. Corporate sustainability is considered by some as a façade, some unrealistic ideal of how firms ought to behave, given the obvious challenges experienced in balancing the goals of maximum profitability with those of eco-friendly activities and healthy social exchanges with host communities. Yet, as a concept, it has garnered considerable research and interest over the last 3 decades suggesting serious thought and considerations of its implications on the reputation and performance of the organization (Waddock & McIntosh, 2009).

Within the Nigerian manufacturing industry, corporate sustainability is considered an important

business issue that is increasingly impacting business decisions. In the industry, there appears to be a growing, compelling financial, regulatory, and market place opportunity to evolve firm's activities to mitigate environmental risks and enhance opportunity (Deloitte, 2012; Asemah, Dkpanachi & Olumuji, 2013b). Nonetheless, reports (Asemah, *et al* 2013b) indicate a poor harmonization of organizational sustainability goals with actual activities and organizational behavioural outcomes.

Sustainable business practices concerned with human resource management such as the green Human Resource Management (HRM) require that both employers and employees take a long-term view of their relationship in the mutual interest of both parties, of their customers and ultimately, of the company profitability' (Baum, 2006). The green HRM describes those practices that attune workers sustainability values with those of the organization. It describes those features which identify and improve on the green awareness behaviour and state of the employee. In other words, the green HRM the manufacturing industry is a product industry whose quality depends on committed, well-trained, well-rewarded and empowered production and operations' staff (Baum, 2006). One of such green HRM practices is green training.

Training can be defined as a "systematic process of acquiring knowledge, skills, abilities, and the right attitudes and behaviours to meet job requirements" (Gomez-Mejia, 2007). Training has been reckoned to help employees do their current jobs or help meet current performance requirements, by focusing on specific skills required for the current need. However, its benefits may extend throughout a person's career and help develop that person for future responsibilities. Current educational systems do not necessarily impart specific knowledge for specific job positions in organizations. As a result of this the labour force comprises few people with the right skills, knowledge and competencies needed for

positions in the job market. There is therefore the need for extensive external training for human resources to be able to improve and also contribute to the productivity of organizations.

Training is necessary to ensure an adequate supply of staff that is technically and socially competent and capable of career development geared towards helping organizations realize their vision. In the contemporary dynamic corporate world, employees are increasingly required to keep up to the upcoming changes. Training is important for employees' development as it enables them achieve self-fulfilling skills and abilities, reduce operational costs, limits organizational liabilities (Donald, 2009). Properly trained employees are highly motivated and have more sense of responsibility hence requiring less supervision which in-turn increases the organization's

ability in attaining its mission. The study will principally focus on the relationship between green training and corporate sustainability of food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State. Furthermore, this study will also be guided by the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between green training impacts on environmental sustainability in food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State?
- What is the relationship between green training impacts on social sustainability in food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State?
- Green training impacts on economic sustainability in food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State?



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the relationship green training and corporate sustainability

Source: Author's Desk Research, 2019

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

The stakeholder's theory suggests that is impossible to separate a firm's economic problems from wider social problems. According to Harrison and Freeman (1999), for example, economic effects are also social effects, and social effects are certainly also economic, with both having environmental implications. In the light of this, one of the original ideas behind the stakeholder management approach is to try to

identify a path that makes it possible to incorporate both economic and social aspects. Bussy and Ewing (1997), argue that organisations depend on a wide range of audiences or groups of stakeholders in order to realise their objectives and that these specific groups vary from organisation to organisation and from situation to situation; they typically include clients, end users, investors, employees, suppliers, governments, pressure groups, local communities

and the media, and each one plays a decisive role in a company's future.

Mazo del Castillo (1994) describes the stakeholders as audiences. The distinction between stakeholders and shareholders is adopted from business literature, where the latter are defined as audiences that have vested interests in the company's ownership mechanisms, such as directly involved financial institutions, majority or minority shareholders, top-level directors, etc. However, Baskin and Aronoff (1992) suggest that analysing stakeholders as a method for distinguishing between the different groups provides a realistic model that enables an organisation to visualise its surroundings. According to the suggestion made by Mitchell (1997), stakeholders are players (whether internal or external) that affect or are affected by an organisation's objectives or results to a varying extent, which depends on the level to which they have one of three basic attributes: power, legitimacy and urgency. Players that do not possess at least one of these attributes are non-stakeholders.

In the light of the points addressed previously, stakeholder theory makes it possible to take the view that a company is conceived on the basis of the range of actors involved in it and by those that are affected by it, and that these actors or constituents shape and define the overall behaviour of the organization. Furthermore, in view of this theory the existence of social responsibility in companies can be easily discerned (Gonzalez, 2007). This theory also means that a company can be viewed as a series of relationships understood not only from the perspective of a legal or social contract but also in terms of a moral contract (García Marza, 2004). It therefore, demonstrates that stakeholder interests are not only economic interests, but that they may have other types of interest.

In this regard, for a company to become more competitive in the market and to be able to develop

management strategies that are in line with this point, it must base itself on its dialogue with all its stakeholders and try to determine which interests and values are shared by them all, as well as which interests and values are unique to each group. Gonzalez (2002) states that a corporation which wishes to manage its responsibility must take into account that this responsibility is defined on the basis of its dialogue with all of its stakeholders, especially internal constituents such as its employees.

This will help a company to be consistent in its pursuit of its short, medium and long-term objectives and strategies (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). The implications of this theory for this study is that a) it identifies the employees as significant players and actors in the organization's strategies and actions; b) it ties the organization's success in its sustainability goals to the behaviour and actions of its employees, and c) it recognizes the need for harmonizing employees' values (e.g. through green HRM) with those of the organization as means of enhancing its corporate sustainability.

Green Training

This describes the development and design of programs, geared towards enhancing the workers skills and knowledge on green practices and the overall implications of the organization's operations on the environment. Green training is often unique and uniquely designed to reflect the green operational gaps or alternatives of the organization. Thus, it is means of providing green training to organizational members (non-managerial employees and managers) as a means of developing required skills and knowledge. This will be helpful to implement corporate environmental management programs of the company (Cook & Seith, 1992).

Such green training is geared towards encouraging green practices such as recycling and waste management, supporting flexible schedules and telecommuting, and reducing long-distance business

travel (Jackson et al, 2011). These are very useful in reducing the negative environmental impacts of the organisations. Creating environmental awareness among the workforce by conducting seminars and workshops at organizational level is also important to achieve good environmental performance. Providing environmental education that will result in a change of attitude and behaviour among managers and non-managerial employees (North, 1997).

Green training enables employees to learn about environmental issues and linking organizational practices to green practices. It makes them enable to use their work-related skills according to green standards (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). These skills include mitigation of wastage (North, 1997), and expertise in environmental protection and environmental literacy (Cook & Seith, 1992). Front line employees are dealing with data management, and these trainings give them managerial skills of waste management in their routine activities

There exist direct and significant relationship between training and development and organizational performance, due to the fact that these trainings and development develop skills and knowledge of employee, which can be translated to achieve organizational goals and to achieve its sustainable performance. The skill development along exploratory learning leads to innovations in an organization (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). North (1997) recommended some suggestions trainings for the development of employees and making them green. These training programs include green analysis of workplace, job rotations for potential green managers within the organization, environmental management trainings and programs, trainings on recycling, waste management, energy efficiency and safety, and training of frictionally unemployed people.

Corporate Sustainability

Based on the Brundtland definition, Landrum and Edwards (2009) define corporate sustainability as the capacity of firms to operate in the interest of all current and future stakeholders in a manner that ensures the long-term health and survival of the business and its associated economic, social, and environmental systems. The difference between green HRM and corporate sustainability is that green HRM practices provide the basis and identify the actions, processes and practices which can be argued to culminate in corporate sustainability. In this regard, sustainability can be described as an outcome of behaviour which is driven by the adoption of practices and actions that reflect green HRM (Roberts & Tribe, 2008).

Furthermore, whereas corporate sustainability can be considered as an organizational outcome or consequence, green HRM identifies the role of the individual workers, their actions and functions in addressing the environmental challenges of the organization; thus, positioning it as a possible antecedent to corporate sustainability. Kernel (2005) in his description of corporate sustainability noted that it was an outcome justified on the basis of organizational policies and functions that placed regard and value on relationships, development and the environment (Roberts & Tribe, 2008).

Businesses solely focusing on reducing their environmental impact are referred to as 'green businesses' whereas a sustainable business would focus on all three dimensions of sustainability, which have often been referred to as 'triple bottom line'. The realms are intimately intertwined and their interdependencies need to be understood (Hitchcock & Willard, 2009; Elkington, 2004). The limitation to the environmental dimension has been criticized by several authors about the attempt of the private industry, in particular the manufacturing industry, to become 'sustainable' (Swarbrooke, 1999; Font & Harris, 2004; Roberts & Tribe, 2008).

However, taking environmental initiatives can be the first step towards sustainability according to the four-step model for sustainable development in firms by Kernel (2005). The first steps are mainly concerned with developing environmentally cleaner processes and environmental management practices. The consequent and final steps challenge organisations to go further and include social and ethical aspects as well as integration in the community (Kernel, 2005). Similarly, Dunphy, Griffiths and Benn's (2007) sustainability phase model defines distinct steps organisations can take to reach sustainability.

The final phase is called 'the sustaining corporation' where the ideology of sustainability is internalized with a fundamental commitment to facilitate ecological viability of the planet and contribute to equitable social practices and human fulfilment. According to Dunphy et al. (2007) this stage has not been reached by any organization for the time being. Many businesses appear to be in the initial phase and need to continue their efforts to combine the ecologic, environmental and socio-cultural dimension of sustainability.

An attitude-based study particularly looking at managers of chain hotels in Europe was conducted by Bohdanowicz and Martinac (2003). Their results show very positive attitudes towards environmental protection and acknowledgement of the importance of the environment for further development of organizations. They highlight the significant impact of the hotel industry and the potential of large hotels and hotel chains for promoting and supporting corporate sustainability.

An interesting finding of their study was that 'the level of environmental awareness among the hoteliers and staff was commensurate to the efforts made by the chain management towards developing and enforcing environmental policies and programs' (Bohdanowicz & Martinac, 2003). On the contrary small hotels are mainly managed by the owners

whose attitudes towards sustainability are not influenced by hotel chain policies but mainly by their personal values and beliefs, perception of environmental imperatives, motivations and goals and the understanding and awareness of the type of action required (Dewhurst & Thomas, 2003).

Economic Sustainability: Economic sustainability refers to a business's ability to make profit in order to survive and benefit the economic systems at the local and national level (Roberts & Tribe, 2008). Sustainable businesses consider their economic impact on the community, such as job creation, local wages, and their contribution to local economic growth. This includes suppliers and an engagement across the supply chain to ensure similar values and practices are issues of economic sustainability. At the same time businesses need to maintain corporate profitability and internal financial stability (Landrum & Edwards, 2009) so as to survive and satisfy the needs of its various shareholders.

In response to the environmental destruction and overuse of natural resources the concept and theory of environmental economy emerged in developed countries in the 1970s to constructively change the ways of life by combining theories of the economy and ecology (Dewhurst & Thomas, 2003). However, it took a further decade for this notion to spread through the developing world. Sustainable development has been significantly influenced by the notion of economy because of the "application and extension of the notion of 'capital' beyond the spheres of economics, business and finance (Blewitt, 2008). Economic aspect plays a crucial role in facilitating sustainable development by identifying options and alternatives for more effective natural resource management (Font & Harris, 2004).

There are various and ongoing debates of the main concept and the definition of sustainable economy. Kernel (2005) claimed that poverty reduction from world's poor is the main concern of sustainable

economic development. He believed that it is possible through the provision of safe, secure, and perennial livelihood; On the other hand, the main aim of economy in sustainable development, according to Rutland Report is to evaluate or estimate environmental and ecological destruction, while designing a proper solution for minimizing such degradations in the developing world (Font & Harris, 2004). Providing a commonly agreed definition for the notion of sustainable economy is considered difficult, as this notion cannot be defined autonomously from the two other pillars of sustainability

Social sustainability: The definition of social sustainability is difficult as it includes definitions of society, culture and community. In short, social sustainability is concerned with the social interaction, relations, behavioural patterns and values between people (Roberts & Tribe, 2008). A respectful interaction between host communities and firms, involvement of the local people and recognition of the contribution of traditions and culture to the experience and activities of organizations are key issues for sustainable businesses (Roberts & Tribe, 2008).

The sustainability problem is one of finding a balance between personal and societal “needs” and nature’s capacity to support human life and activity, as well as ecosystems. This social dimension of sustainability has become more apparent, shown by increased public distrust toward business practices, exemplified in scandals, such as those surrounding Enron and Exxon Oil, as well as more public expectations of companies to do more for social wellbeing (Roberts & Tribe, 2008).

While this dimension reveals tension between the interests of business and society, there is also a meeting of interests when firms respond to sustainability. That is, from a micro view, when firms respond to sustainability, they are also responding to

a macro-level societal concern for habitat and quality of life. In 1999, a worldwide study found that two-thirds of consumers surveyed wanted companies to contribute to broader social goals (Bohdanowicz & Martinac, 2003). In response, considerable efforts have been made to study the social dimension of sustainability in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) context.

Environmental Sustainability

The environmental dimension of sustainability is the most widely documented one. In the manufacturing industry a wide range of information exists about environmental issues such as energy saving, recycling, waste management, water savings, etc. A study in the London manufacturing sector showed that almost all respondents indicated to be taking action on environmental matters (Knowles et al., 1999). Many other researchers point out that the most firms (especially product-based such as manufacturing) are aware of their negative impacts on the environment.

In particular resource depletion such as energy, water and non-renewable resource usage are areas of environmental action (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998; Hobson & Essex, 2001). Other initiatives towards more environmentally friendly operations management adopted by manufacturing firms could be: recycling systems; use of unbleached and undyed fabrics, use of recycled supplies, etc. (Swarbrooke, 1999; Hobson & Essex, 2001).

The physical environment is powerfully affected by and is made up of evolving systems-ecological systems, societies and economies. These evolving systems will create changes in some aspects of the physical environment and will prevent or resist changes in other aspects. So, an environmental sustainability program could never aim to sustain or maintain absolutely every component and attribute of the entire physical environment (Hobson & Essex, 2001).

Any environmental sustainability program must start out by being clear about what it is hoped will be maintained in the physical environment and what can be allowed to change or what will be made to change. Precisely what people set out to sustain within the physical environment will depend on their value judgements, needs, skills and technology and available resources to support the action program and the current state and the dynamics of the physical environment (Hobson & Essex, 2001).

Green Training and Corporate Sustainability

Renwick et al, (2008) suggest certain green training and development practices such as training staff to produce green analysis of workspace, application of job rotation to train green managers of the future, provision of specific training on environmental management aspects of safety, energy efficiency, waste management, and recycling, development of green personal skills, and re-training of staff losing jobs in relevant polluter industries. Environmental related education, training and development are key areas of green HRM in an organisation. Without proper education, training and development, materializing targeted environmental performance of a firm is very difficult to achieve. Therefore, it seems that certain companies have actually realized the importance of green education, training and development in their organizational setting. Nonetheless, empirical evidence of this relationship especially within developing nationalities such as Nigeria is lacking.

From the foregoing point of view, we hereby hypothesized thus:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between green training and environmental sustainability in food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between green training and social sustainability in food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between green training and economic sustainability in food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed as a cross sectional survey with data generated through the administration of structured questionnaire to a sample of 102 participants from a population of 114 managers and supervisors from all (6) Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) registered food and beverage firms in Rivers State. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

The Spearman Rank Order Correlation coefficient is calculated using the SPSS 21.0 version to establish the relationship among the empirical referents of the predictor variable and the measures of the criterion variable. Correlation coefficient can range from -1.00 to +1.00. The value of -1.00 represents a perfect negative correlation while the value of +1.00 represents a perfect positive correlation. A value of 0.00 represents a lack of correlation. In testing hypotheses one to nine, the following rules were upheld in accepting or rejecting our alternate hypotheses: all the coefficient values that indicate levels of significance (* or **) as calculated using SPSS were accepted and therefore our alternate hypotheses rejected; when no significance is indicated in the coefficient *r* value, we reject our alternate hypotheses. Our confidence interval was set at the 0.05 (two tailed) level of significance to test the statistical significance of the data in this study.

Table 1: Relationship between green training and corporate sustainability

		Train	Environ	Social	Econ	
Spearman's rho	Train	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.592**	.359**	.210*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.034
		N	102	102	102	102
	Environ	Correlation Coefficient	.592**	1.000	.698**	.382**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	102	102	102	102
	Social	Correlation Coefficient	.359**	.698**	1.000	.307**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.002
		N	102	102	102	102
	Econ	Correlation Coefficient	.210*	.382**	.307**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	.000	.002	.
		N	102	102	102	102

Source: Research data, 2019

The evidence on the test for the relationship between green training and the measures of corporate sustainability suggests significant and positive relationships where green training is observed to significantly correlate with environmental sustainability (where $\rho = 0.592$ and $P = 0.000$); green training and social sustainability (where $\rho = 0.359$ and $P = 0.000$) and green training and economic sustainability (where $\rho = 0.210$ and $P = 0.034$). The result indicates that green training significantly and positively influences the corporate sustainability of the food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State; hence all related hypothetical statements are rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Green training significantly and positively influences corporate sustainability of food and beverage manufacturing firms in Rivers State. The training of workers towards green actions and behaviour is observed to have a significant impact on corporate sustainability and as such contributes towards outcomes such as environmental, social and economic sustainability. The findings indicate that the development and structuring of programs that enlighten and enhance workers knowledge on the requirements, standards and expectations of

responsibilities that can be described as green, has a significant effect on their attitudes and support for the sustainability features and outcomes of their organization.

In this vein, the study agrees with the position of scholars such as Haden et al (2009) who noted that the drive for training is premised on its capacity for harmonizing views, opinions and values between parties, in this case – between the organization and its employees. Green training is useful and imperative as it develops within the workers a sense of responsibility towards their environment and host communities and also creates the awareness of the implications of actions that are not sustainable on not just the environment but on the image and reputation of the organization (Lopez-Gamero & Tari, 2009). It is therefore fundamental to the wellbeing of the organization and its relationship with its stakeholders in line with promoting sustainable practices and behaviour within the organization.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relationship between green human resources management and corporate sustainability is observed to be positive and significant. This goes to indicate that green human resources management offers organizations a more significant approach and avenue

through which they can successfully drive and achieve their goals of environmental, social and economic sustainability. On the other hand, the weak relationship between green human resources management and organizational climate is noted as being poor and as such, disqualify organizational climate as being a significant moderator of the relationship between human resources management and corporate sustainability. This study therefore concludes that the training and development of workers in green activities and practices leads to an improved regard and consideration for environmental, social and economic sustainability.

The study recommended that training programs should focus on engaging workers in active sustainability activities. Programs should be designed to allow for actual awareness and the development of positive attitudes towards the environment, the social development of host communities and organizational operational context as well as the adoption of business practices that embrace healthy and sustainable pursuit of economic wellbeing of the organization.

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