Strategic Leadership Practices and Organizational Sustainability of Agribusiness in Ogun State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study examined the theoretical relationship between strategic leadership practices and organizational sustainability of firms in agribusiness in Ogun state, Nigeria. The results indicate that strategic leadership practices such as strategic adaptability to change, stakeholders' collaboration and ethical leadership enhance organizational sustainability outcomes. Using a qualitative approach, the research relies on secondary data from peer-reviewed journals, policy documents, and industry reports. Thematic analysis was applied to examine how strategic adaptability to change, collaborative stakeholder engagement, and ethical leadership practices influence economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Findings suggest that adaptability enhances responsiveness to policy reforms, climate variability, and technological disruptions; stakeholder collaboration strengthens value chains and trust-building; while ethical leadership fosters transparency, accountability, and long-term legitimacy. These findings align with Stakeholder Theory and the Resource-Based View, underscoring the need for both internal leadership capabilities and external partnerships in achieving sustainability. The paper contributes to leadership literature in Nigeria by connecting strategic leadership to sustainability outcomes and recommend further empirical testing of the variables to obtain more evidences that will allow for statistical validation of conceptual model of this study.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Sustainability, Agribusiness, Adaptability, Collaboration, Ethics

Introduction:

Strategic leadership research has grown in recent years and is now regarded as a core activity in strategic management (Quansah et al., 2022). The concept has been studied by a considerable number of scholars (Samimi et al., 2022; Schaedler et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2023). Browning (2013) describes strategic leadership as an avenue of relentless change through inspiring and delineating methods of proper performance. Strategic leaders initiate change mainly because of the outside pressure and not so much due to internal factors.

On the other hand, sustainability is defined as a dynamic management philosophy that harmonizes organizational growth, profitability, environmental protection, social justice, and equality on economic, environmental, and social grounds (Fisher 2010). Strategic leadership is important to organizational sustainability because it allows the leader to think strategically, establish a sense of direction, foresee, act proactively, adapt to fluctuations, and interact with the external environment.

Strategic leadership is key in dynamic and competitive environments since it will drive growth and resiliency of the organization in the long term.

The research by Okara et al. (2025) linked revealed a positive correlation between strategic leadership and organization sustainability. However, limited studies existing attributing such findings to agribusiness sector in Nigeria. Majority of existing studies on the subject of strategic leadership and organization sustainability have been conducted in nonagricultural sectors. This theoretical research endeavors to address this gap by exploring the relationship between strategic leadership practices and organizational sustainability of firms in agribusiness in Ogun State.

Statement of the Problem

The concept of strategic leadership contributes to the resilience and long-term competitiveness of organizations. The resilience and sustainability of any organization are vital and demand the strategic leadership. Firms in agribusiness sector in Ogun State are experiencing a lack of leadership gap. This is evident; they focus on short-term profits, poor succession planning, inadequate innovation management, and a lack of collaboration with the government agencies and other business partners.

Failure to clearly understand the influence of leadership practices on the sustainability of agribusiness can lead practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders to adopt short-term solutions that will fail to ensure business sustainability in the long term. Inadequate strategic culture of leadership frequently leads to inefficient resource management, incompetence to adapt to the market environment and greater susceptibility to climate change.the outcome is stagnation, reduced profits, and business failure.

Thus, the question arises; to what extent does strategic leadership practices influence agribusiness sustainability in Ogun State? The need to provide answers to this question is urgent to the development of agribusinesses as well as to increase food availability and supply, to provide employment and contribute meaningfully to the Nigerian economy. Any effort to revive agriculture will be ineffective because it will not consider the leadership side of sustainability. Failure to give keen attention to the leadership aspect of sustainability will render any efforts at sustaining agriculture ineffective.

Aim and Objectives

This study seeks to examine from the theoretical perspective the relationship between Strategic leadership practices and organizational sustainability of agribusiness in Ogun state, Nigeria.

The stated aim will be attained via the following set objectives:

1. Examine the relationship between Strategic Adaptability to change and organizational sustainability
2. Determine the relationship between Strategic Collaboration with stakeholders and organizational sustainability
3. Assess the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational sustainability

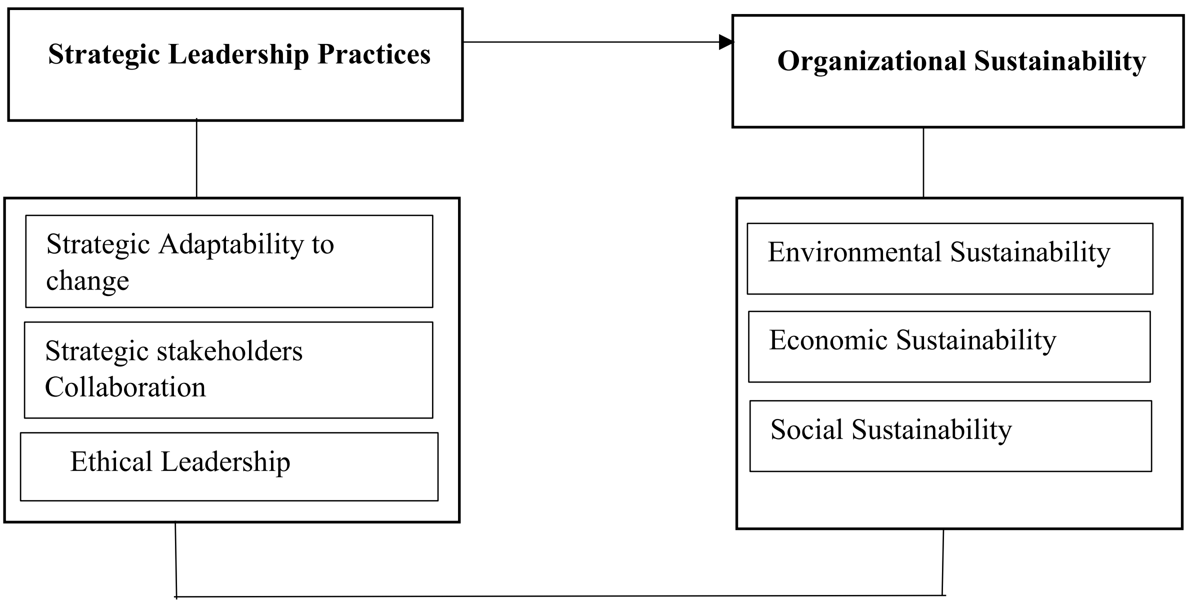
Significance of the Study

The study will be significant to the different stakeholders in the agribusiness sector. Potential stakeholders will understand the rationale of the strategies used in the study which assists management to excel. It is anticipated that the research will become helpful in making future plans and decision-making in agribusiness companies located in Ogun State to enhance competence and the attainment of the goals of production increase and customer satisfaction.

The results might also be used to support the management teams and directors of agribusiness companies in the state of Ogun and the rest of Nigeria. The study provides a good guideline for policy makers from which polices to guide the sector of agribusiness enterprises can be established. Finally, researchers and scholars may benefit from the study as it adds on to the growing body of knowledge in strategic management. This may act as a source of reference for studies to be done in relation to the area of study.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model for this study posits that strategic leadership, through key practices such as Strategic Adaptability to change, Strategic Collaboration with stakeholders and ethical leadership influences the sustainability of agribusiness firms. These practices are expected to enhance environmental, economic, and social sustainability of agribusiness firms.



Source: Researcher Data (2025)

Concept of Strategic Leadership

Several scholars have examined and conceptualised strategic leadership in different ways. According to Ireland and Hitt (2005), it is defined as a combination of distinct competencies: predicting future trends, envisioning possibilities, being flexible, thinking strategically, and enabling employees to come up with innovative ideas that lead to high performance. They argue that strategic leadership is one of the most critical issues for organisations today. Without it, an organisation's chance of achieving superior—even satisfactory—performance in a global economy is significantly reduced, especially when considering environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Boal and Hooijberg (2001) define strategic leadership as the ability of organisation leaders to anticipate future challenges, set a clear vision and direction, and align resources to meet long-term goals. This model combines both leadership and strategic management and focuses on foresight, scanning the environment, and making decisions. According to Akwale et al. (2021), strategic leadership aligns leadership practices with the national development objectives, which is crucial in ensuring that industries are competitive both locally and internationally. According to them, informed leaders who make decisions according to the industry trends and economic changes have greater chances to be innovative. These views demonstrate that strategic leadership transcends day-to-day management. It is concerned with the creation of a vision that is clear and focused on the motivation of the teams as well as the establishment of results that include the availability of an organisation in the long term and success. Strategic leaders balance economic, social, and environmental interests and maintain a green organisational strategy. This way, they enhance sustainability and ensure that the strategy of the organization remains strong and in line with the changing needs of stakeholders.

Strategic Adaptability to change

Adaptability is an organization's ability to respond quickly to opportunities and risks, turning them into a business advantage (Macmillan & Tampoe, 2000). It consists in making optimal decisions and taking actions with the aim of adapting to the past, current, and future climate (Li et al., 2011). Changes in agribusiness firms manifest in various forms including policy changes, innovation, climatic changes, evolving market demands, and the dynamics of the global trade. Strategic adaptability can transform an organization's capabilities by introducing innovative ideas that address both internal and external changes (Shufutinsky et al., 2020). It does not just focus on ensuring survival but it puts the organization in a position to succeed in an uncertain world as well as making the business sustainable in the long run. Strategic leaders who are adaptable create flexible business models that mitigate disruptive forces, ensure organizational sustainability, and fulfill regulatory requirements. They are also proactive in embracing the application of related technologies, employee training to innovation, and enhancing long-term sustenance of agribusiness firms.

Strategic stakeholders Collaboration

In organizational, strategic, and sustainability literature, stakeholder management has been discussed extensively (Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020). Stakeholders are usually classified as primary or secondary based on how much they influence decision-making and the organisation's survival (Freeman et al., 2007). The greatest attention in the value-creation activities goes to its primary stakeholders namely shareholders, employees, customers, and suppliers. Secondary stakeholders, such as universities, government agencies, NGOs, and competitors, are also impacted by value creation, yet they are rarely included directly in those activities (Clarkson, 1995). Collaboration can be considered as a type of interaction between stakeholders that allow organizations to spread sustainability programs off-peak, as well as distribute knowledge, resources, and technology to partners (Blackmar et al., 2018). The collaboration approach enables organizations to enhance the value chain, minimize post-harvest losses, and enhance product competitiveness by connecting producers to processors and distributors. Sustainability of organizations in stakeholder collaboration is enhanced by trust, sharing of knowledge and pooling of resources.

Ethical Leadership

The ethical leadership is becoming more and more recognised as an element of sustainable organisational practice. It focuses on transparency, fairness, accountability, and integrity of decision makers (Lawton and Páez 2015). Effective agribusiness leadership must mold the culture and trust among the stakeholders ethically, which is essential to longevity. It extends beyond the compliance level where they develop a moral culture that enforces just sustainable practices. Transformational leadership and social-learning theories show that ethical leaders inspire their organisations to embrace sustainability (Flammer & Ioannou 2021). Similarly, the stakeholder theory emphasizes the fact that ethical leaders strike a balance among various interests, foster stronger relationships, and enhance success over the long term (Freeman et al. 2010). Ethical leadership enhances corporate transparency, which is one of the essential criteria to keep stakeholders trustful and assure long-term financial prosperity (Gillan 2021). Additionally, it helps build credibility and legitimacy by promoting fair labour practices, ensuring environmental compliance, and discouraging exploitation (Eccles et al. 2014). Therefore, ethical leadership is a moral guideline and a business sustainability strategy tool in agribusiness. It guarantees a sustainable development by being inclusive, socially accountable, and environmentally friendly.

Concept of Organizational Sustainability

Organisational sustainability involves integrating sustainable development principles including social equality, economic efficiency, and environmental awareness into the day-to-day operations of organisations (Varsei et al., 2014; Pislaru et al., 2019). Senge (1990) defines organizational sustainability as the capacity of an organization to learn, adapt, and innovate continuously to generate value to the stakeholders without causing adverse effects to society and the environment. In the case of agribusiness this incorporates profitability, implementation of environmentally friendly operations and improvement to the community. Freeman et al. (2010) defined organisational sustainability as the ability of an organisation to build and maintain long-term relationships with all its stakeholders—employees, customers, shareholders, and the community. According to this school of thought, sustainability transcends the financial performance of a company and involves giving a equilibrium between economic goals and social responsibility and environmental protection. Zen et al. (2023) add an additional aspect to the definition and introduce the concept of sustainability to the global discussion of the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance. In their argument, they claim that organizations who concentrate exclusively on profit maximization run the risk of losing stakeholder trust, long term competitiveness and reputation or other regulatory risks. Conversely, the more actively organizations incorporate stakeholder expectations (e.g., green manufacturing, responsible sourcing, social inclusiveness, etc.) the more resilient to shocks they can be.

Concept of Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is defined as the combination of organizational competencies and overall performance that reduces the carbon footprint of a company's products (Lam & Lai, 2015). Environmental sustainability evolves around four main natural resources such as air, water, soil and minerals and also the energy resources (GRI, 2002). To determine the impact of an organization's activities on such resources, regulators also observe non-renewing sources of energy and fossil fuels. To ensure environmental sustainability, some of the strategies are implemented by companies that include reduction of carbon emissions, energy efficiency, and incorporation of the principles of a circular economy (Hart and Milstein, 2003). Elkington (1997) remarked that companies that conserve the environment not only secure their ecological base, but also enhance competitive advantage in the market, since environmentally friendly products are becoming a growing demand among consumers and the international markets.

Concept of Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability refers to the manner in which the activities of an organization influence the economic environment of its stakeholders, as well as the overall economies, both locally, nationally, and globally (GRI, 2002,). Organizations that gain competitive advantage by possessing good economic and non-economic capabilities have the potential to be productive in the long run (Svensson, 2007). Firms need to be economically stable and sustainable to ensure long-term sustainability. Since sustainability may be defined by a plethora of various situations, the effects, which are produced by firms, have an essential role in the discourse of Sustainability (Borimde et al., 2019). In the agribusiness sector, economic sustainability includes profitability, financial strength, resource productivity, and competitiveness. It is the foundation upon which environmental and social sustainability can be constructed, as organizations which are not financially stable, would find it difficult to invest in higher sustainability initiatives.

Concept of Social Sustainability

Social sustainability refers to a condition and practice that enhances the quality of life of a community (Colantonio, 2010). According to Mostafa and El-Gohary (2014), social sustainability is associated with equal distribution of quality life in the present and future. The basic understanding of social sustainability seems to be common, and other themes are social capital, human capital, and quality of life are a guiding idea behind particular measures and indicators. Social development based on the presence of sound social infrastructure may prove to be economically sustainable, transgenerational, intercultural, environmentally friendly, and ecological health oriented. On this basis, sustainable social development fulfills all user needs, leading to satisfaction, happiness, safety, health, and an overall higher quality of life. Firms in agribusiness can boost social sustainability by providing food that is safe, nutritious, and affordable. Rigorous enforcement of quality standards and ethics by the leaders assists in ensuring food availability in the country and protecting the welfare of the consumers. So, social sustainability will enable all populations to access the benefits of agribusiness, which has been reinforced in the legitimacy of the organization, its durability, and stability.

Theoretical Review

Stakeholder theory

Edward Freeman proposed Stakeholder theory in 1984. It asserts that firms ought to ensure value is created to not only shareholders but all stakeholders. This theory is founded on the concept that businesses are embedded in a network of relationships involving employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and the environment. It questions the traditional shareholder-centric approach that is based on the alternative perspective that considers the interests of all the individuals affected by the operations of the company (Mahajan et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the theory has been criticized on basis of being hard to practice. Perhaps the biggest problem is that there is no detailed guide to its implementation that can be confusing and conflicting in terms of reconciling opposite stakeholder interests. Xiao (2023) states that these mechanisms of applying the theory are usually not practical and that a significant number of groups can be neglected. In spite of these criticisms, Lohakare et. al. (2022) mentioned that stakeholder engagement in agribusiness increase productivity through opening new markets, technologies and monetary sources. stakeholder engagement harmonises interests and minimise inefficiencies and promote growth sustainability.

Resource Based Theory (RBT)

Resource Based Theory (RBT) postulates that internal resources are more of a factor in attaining a sustainable competitive edge compared to any external factor (Conner and Prahalad, 2013). According to this perception, the sustainability of a firm is determined by the internal resources of the firm; physical resources, human capital, and the firm capabilities. In strategy formulation, Companies should evaluate the combination, variety, quantity, and character of these internal resources first. RBT approach presupposes building, leveraging, and continuously enhancing distinctive resources and capabilities. According to the theory, companies can succeed by implementing a strategy that is not being utilized by other companies. The resources should be scarce, imitable, or replaceable.

Relationship between Strategic Adaptability to change and Organizational Sustainability

Organizations need to be strategic in adapting to change since it allows them to keep up to date and remain competitive in an ever-evolving market. In the contemporary harsh and dynamic business environment, where change is a constant threat, organizations are either going to be left behind or will end up becoming redundant, unless they adapt (Rossi and Sengupta, 2022; Capssa et al., 2022). To remain competitive strategic leaders, need to review and modify their strategies constantly. They achieve this by foreseeing market and customer needs, as well as upcoming technology changes and responding swiftly and efficiently to such changes (Atieno & Kyongo, 2020). Strategic adaptation enables agribusiness firms to enhance sustainability, particularly through the adoption of new technologies, innovation, and business process reengineering (Atieno and Kyongo, 2020). Altogether, strategic adaptability to change is the dynamic capability that supports organizational sustainability. In its absence, companies will become obsolete or even go bankrupt.

Relationship between Strategic stakeholders Collaboration and Organizational Sustainability

Managing stakeholders and collaborating with them is recognized as a key driver of business sustainability and lasting value (Lane and Devin, 2018; Ranängen, 2017). Stakeholder collaboration offers organizations several benefits: it helps set sustainability priorities, increases transparency, and builds long-term trust (Freeman, 2017). When organization include stakeholders in decision-making, they create shared value and lower reputational risks (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Collaboration with suppliers also ensures that they acquire high-quality raw materials. Collaboration with financial institutions enhances the guesting and investing prospects. Working with distributors and customers will help to increase market penetration, reduce transaction costs, improve financial performance, and competitiveness (Olaniyan and Amenta, 2025). Overall, strategic collaboration minimizes risks, disseminates new ideas, and establishes channels of shared value. It transforms agribusinesses of independent character into stakeholders of a sustainable system. The result of this move has been an increase in collaboration - not as a relationship, or practice, but as a long-term sustainability strategy.

Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Organizational Sustainability

Ethical leadership focuses on moral values and ethical decision-making within organisations. As Brown et al. (2005) assert, it entails the exemplification of the normatively acceptable behaviour pursuant to personal behaviours and interpersonal bonds, and the promotion of these kinds of behaviour among followers in terms of reciprocal communication, enforcement, and decision making. Ahmad and Umrani (2019), on the other hand, define ethical leadership as leaders who continuously demonstrate ethical behaviour equality, justice, and fairness that encourages and inspires subordinates to follow suit. These leaders create positive working environments, address tasks, provide staff with increased freedom, and structure jobs to enable growth. From another perspective, they facilitate work growth and foster a workplace that supports idea exchange among employees (Islam et al., 2019). As Iqbal et al. (2020) emphasize, ethical leaders breed committed sustainability employees, which provides positive feedback.

Empirical Review

Adeyemi and Fadeyi (2023) with focus on the banking industry in Nigeria, analyzing the strategic relationship leadership, between innovation, and organizational performance. The authors suggested that strategic leadership enhances performance by promoting a culture of innovation, especially in technology-driven initiatives such as digital banking and mobile payment systems. Their findings indicated that leaders who prioritize innovation leads organizations to better align with the evolving financial ecosystem, resulting in improved service delivery, customer satisfaction, and ultimately, enhanced performance.

Nwankwo and Adekoya (2019) investigated the role of strategic management in enhancing the competitiveness of agribusinesses in Southwestern Nigeria. Their findings emphasized that agribusiness firms that engage in comprehensive market analysis and long-term strategic planning are better positioned to capitalize on emerging opportunities and mitigate risks such as price fluctuations and supply chain disruptions. The study also highlighted that the absence of these strategic practices often results in poor performance, as firms are left vulnerable to external shocks. This research underscores the importance of strategic management in ensuring the sustainability and growth of agribusiness firms.

Olasehinde et al. (2025) studied the role of strategic leadership in innovations and performance in the selected industries in Lagos state in Nigeria. The research provides a knowledge gap in the clarity of effects of strategic thinking and leadership innovation on the results in volatile business settings. Its aim was to test the relationship between strategic leadership and innovation, determine the impact of leadership innovation on performance, and discuss mediating factors that promote or inhibit strategic leadership performance. A descriptive survey of management personnel of twenty-five firms in technology, healthcare, finance, and manufacturing industries was conducted. The results revealed a positive relationship: strategic leadership and innovative thinking significantly boosted organisational performance. The paper concludes that an optimal leadership impact involves promoting strategic thinking, encouraging innovation, and having enough resources. Development of strategic leadership, creation of an organizational culture that is receptive to innovations and enhancement of communication recommendations have been made to bring leadership objectives in line with corporate goals.

Adebayo and Olayanju (2020) have carried out a research on the strategic leadership in the manufacturing industry of Nigeria. They concluded that strategic leadership is pivotal in establishing a culture of innovation, especially in the sector that is subject to economic variations. Proactive and visionary leaders who promote continuous learning enable organizations to become more adaptable, a factor that promotes innovation. Their study emphasized the role of strategic leadership in identifying new market opportunities and matching the capabilities to utilize them to eventually improve performance.

Gap in Literature Review

Strategic leadership plays a key role in ensuring organizational sustainability. Through strategic adaptability to change, stakeholders' collaboration and ethical leadership practices, a leader can create a strong foundation for long-term growth and positive impact on the economy, environment, and society. The concept of organizational sustainability involves economic, environmental and social aspects that can be integrated into strategic decisions and daily operations. By adopting sustainability principles in their business, agribusiness firms can not only survive in global competition but also become sustainable contributors to economic and social development. Although research on strategic leadership has developed rapidly, especially in the context of firms in manufacturing, banking, FMCG industries in Nigeria, studies related to strategic leadership in agribusiness in Nigeria are still limited. Apart from this, there are no known existing study that combined dimensions of strategic leadership (strategic adaptability to change, stakeholders' collaboration and ethical leadership) adopted in this study on sustainability outcomes, Therefore, further understanding of how the concept of strategic leadership can be applied effectively in the context of agribusiness firms is necessary in other to close the existing gaps. The current study aims to fill these gaps that exist. For theoretical contributions, this study fills the gap in the literature related to strategic leadership research on agribusiness firms' sustainability using a Stakeholder theory and Resource Based approach (RBV).

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to analyse how strategic adaptability to change, stakeholders' collaboration and ethical leadership practices, influence organizational sustainability of firms in agribusiness. A systematic review of related literature was conducted, drawing from peer-reviewed journal articles, case studies, industry reports, and sustainability frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Secondary data from empirical studies, corporate sustainability reports, and industry whitepapers serve as the primary data sources. Thematic analysis was used as the analytical framework to identify key patterns, emerging themes, and insights from existing literature.

Conclusion

The relationship between strategic leadership and organizational sustainability is assessed in this study. The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between strategic strategic leadership dimensions depicted by the conceptual model of the study (strategic adaptability to change, stakeholders' collaboration and ethical leadership) and the measures of sustainability adopted in the study (economic, environmental and social sustainability) within the context of firms in agribusiness. Through reviewing theoretical literature and empirical literature, this study assessed strategic leadership components and understands how they influence organizational sustainability. The guiding theories of this study were resource-based view and stakeholders' theory. In the study, an appropriate theoretical model was proposed and it helps in illustrating the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variables comprising of strategic leadership and organizational sustainability. The literature reviewed suggests that there is possible relationship between strategic leadership, and organisational sustainability. This work contributes to existing knowledge on strategic leadership by providing insight on how practices such as strategic adaptability to change, stakeholders' collaboration and ethical leadership influences organisational sustainability. Those who could benefit from the proposed conceptual framework are corporate strategic leaders, organisational strategy practitioners, policymakers, scholars and students. The following conclusion can be drawn from the present study that there is a need to use this study as a base for future studies. Whilst this study did not confirm the conceptual framework or model empirically, it did partially substantiate the empirical testing of the proposed conceptual framework.

Future Research Directions

This study provides qualitative insights on the role of strategic leadership practices on organizational sustainability in agribusiness firms in Ogun State, It reveals the gaps that can be filled by further research. Primary data can be used to conduct empirical testing to obtain more evidences. Future research can adopt a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between the components of strategic leadership used in this study (e.g., adaptability to change, stakeholder collaboration, and ethical leadership) and certain measurable performance outcomes. This would allow for statistical validation of conceptual model adopted in this study. Lastly, research must consider more than just organizational leaders and examine how the (public) sector and institutional leadership could positively influence the sustainability of agribusiness, such as policies, regulations and multi-stakeholder platforms.

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