

Factors deterring African SMEs from adopting sustainable practices.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to identify the factors that prevented and encouraged Ghanaian SMEs from adopting sustainable business practices (SBP) in their enterprises. Secondly, this study aims to examine the discussion amongst academics and practitioners on sustainability in SMEs based in Ghana. To fulfil this objective this study adopted a qualitative research philosophy and used a systematic literature review (SLR) to analyse the literature discussing this phenomenon. Only eleven articles were included in this study's sample based on the search criteria established in this study. Furthermore, using thematic analysis, this study identified four themes within the sample of articles: supply chains were the most prevalent topic, sustainability reporting (SR) was the second most prevalent topic, whereas green strategy and sustainable business practices (SBPs) were the least prevalent topics. Lastly, this study found that there was a dearth of literature focusing on green strategy and SBPs in SMEs based in Ghana. As a result, this study recommends that more studies should be conducted that explore how green strategy and SBPs may be implemented in SMEs based in Ghana.

Keywords: Africa, Ghana, sustainable practices, SMEs, enablers, and barriers.

1. Introduction

The advancement and development of Ghana have relied extensively on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For example, in 2016, ninety-three percent of all enterprises registered were SMEs (Johnson et al.2020). In addition, according to Adjabeng and Osei (2016), in Ghana SMEs contribute approximately 70% to the country's GDP. Furthermore, Amoah and Amoah (2018) found that SMEs employ roughly 82 percent of the country's working population. Selase and Woelanyo (2018) explain that SMEs in Ghana have played a

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critical role in alleviating poverty in the country, creating employment, and stimulating economic growth.

Despite SMEs' importance to Ghana's economic development and growth, Ghanaian SMEs still face many challenges that, according to Johnson et al. (2020), stem from the country's political, economic, and sociocultural environment. Johnson et al. (2020) and Okeniyi et al. (2020) argue that Ghana's socio-economic structures favour royal families at the expense of common families, which has hindered the growth of SMEs as common families have limited access to resources. In a study by Adjabeng and Osei (2022), restricted credit access, unfavourable regulatory environments, and technology are some of the challenges SMEs face in Ghana. Additionally, Johnson et al. (2020) explained that factors such as corruption, a limited number of skilled labours, high levels of risk, and lack of technology were detrimental to the development of SMEs in Ghana.

Access to finance for SMEs is a challenge that is not unique to Ghana but is common throughout West Africa as well. According to a report by the World Bank (2021), access to finance and financial services is one of the biggest challenges SMEs encounters in West Africa. The World Bank (2021) explains that this challenge may be amplified due to the size and inexperience of these enterprises, as well as their undocumented performance. According to Quartey et al. (2017), in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) access to funds from commercial banks (which are primarily responsible for providing credit to enterprises) is influenced by several factors, including the age, size, experience of the enterprise's top management, legal rights, credit information of these enterprises, and the performance of the firms in question. In addition, Quartey et al. (2017) elaborates that compared to SMEs large enterprises can obtain credit from commercial banks more easily since they have enough collateral and can demonstrate and prove their creditworthiness.

ECOWAS consists of fifteen countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo) that are based in West Africa. The biggest economy amongst the member states and Africa is Nigeria: this country has a GDP of roughly 443 billion USD in 2020 (UNEC,2024; Rojik,2024). In 2022, according to the African Development Group (AFDB), Ghana was the second largest economy in West Africa, and Cote d'Ivoire the third largest economy. The 4th largest economy in West Africa is Burkina Faso, a neighbouring country of Ghana, which is vulnerable to climate change like other countries in the region (AFDB, 2023). In spite of the fact that West African countries contribute the least to global warming, climate change has had adverse effects on the region (UNEC ,2016). For example, AFDB (2022) has explained that

climate change has posed a threat to the region's economic growth, access to water, and to energy security and supply.

West Africa has found it challenging to address the threats posed by climate change (AFDB,2022). According to AFDB (2022), the region would need roughly 400 billion USD for the period 2020 until 2030 to address these challenges. However, as AFDB (2022) explains, the region has not been able to secure those funds. Burkina Faso, for example, according to AFDB (2023), has encountered challenges in securing climate finance. In addition, the report also states that accessing these funds has been extremely challenging for the private sector. As a result, very few climate funds are available in the country for its enterprises (AFDB,2023). According to AFDB (2023), transitioning to more sustainable practices is expensive in Burkina Faso, particularly for SMEs and large enterprises. Lastly, AFDB (2023) explains that there is a lack of knowledge among SMEs and large enterprises regarding how to access these funds.

This study has focused on Ghana because in comparison to Nigeria (ECOWAS' and Africa's largest economy), which has an Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Index score of 54, and Burkina Faso, which has an SDG Index score of 53, Ghana has the highest SDG Index Score of 62 (Sustainable development report, 2024). The SDG Index is an important index that compares and ranks the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries to track their progress in achieving the UN's SDGs (Bidarbakht-Nia, 2020). Environmental sustainability has become a crucial issue for West Africa and the rest of the globe. This study will assess the factors that both encourage and hinder SMEs from adopting sustainable practices in Ghana. This study has focused on SMEs because of their pivotal role in the economic growth and development of Ghana. In addition, this study focused on SMEs because, according to a study conducted by Bakos et al. (2019), SMEs create seventy percent of the pollution globally.

2. Literature Review

SMEs play a crucial role in the economic growth and development of West Africa (AFDB,2022). While economic growth remains crucial for Ghana, it is also important to examine the impact that this growth will have on the environment (Aboagye, 2018). For instance, a study concerning Sub-Saharan Africa conducted by Aboagye and Kwakwa (2014) revealed that the industrialization of these countries harmed the environment due to increased pollution, degradation, CO₂ emissions, and energy consumption during this period. In the scope of the present paper, the next section will provide the study's background context and will

additionally discuss some of the literature underpinning sustainability especially in the light of SMEs in Ghana.

3. Ghana

Ghana is located in West Africa, and in 2013, it had the highest per capita GDP in the region (Ho and Iyke,2020). Ghana is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS was created to promote cooperation and integration among countries in the region (Ogisi and Omozue, 2022). According to Ogisi and Omozue (2022), the purpose of ECOWAS was to create a large trading block across the region, to achieve collective self-sufficiency for its member states, and to serve as a peacekeeping force. Furthermore, Ghana has also entered into a trade agreement with the European Union (EU), providing duty-free access to the EU market, making the EU one of Ghana's main trading partners for its agribusiness products (European Union,2022).

4. SMEs

On the African continent, SMEs are crucial for the continent's growth and socio-economic development. As Pulka and Gawuna (2022) explain, SMEs contribute significantly to employment, poverty reduction, industrialization, and enhancing the country's technological capabilities. In Sub-Saharan Africa for instance, SMEs account for ninety-five percent of all enterprises (Muriithi,2017). In the Republic of South Africa (RSA) SMEs contribute approximately forty-five percent to the country's GDP and have created roughly sixty-one percent of jobs (Enaifoghe and Ramsuraj,2023). In a study by Pulka and Gawuna (2022) it was found that roughly ninety percent of enterprises in Nigeria were SMES. Additionally, Pulka and Gawuna (2022) also found that Nigerian SMEs contributed extensively to the country's GDP, employment, new technology adoption, and the production of novel products and services. As an example, according to the World Bank (2021), SMEs account for eighty percent of jobs created in Nigeria.

In Ghana ninety-three percent of all enterprises registered are SMEs (Johnson et al.2020). Furthermore, SMEs contribute approximately 70% to the country's GDP (Adjabeng and Osei ,2016). Abor and Quartey (2010) argue that SMEs contribute to roughly ninety-two percent of Ghana's GDP. Thus, as explained by Selase and Woelanyo, (2018) the survival, growth, and development of SMEs is crucial for the economic growth of Ghana. Since Ghana gained

independence in 1957, its economic performance has decreased significantly. According to Okeniyi et al. (2020), SMEs have also contributed to the slow economic growth of the country. Furthermore, Okeniyi et al. (2020) explains that Ghana's political, economic, and socio-cultural factors have negatively affected the growth and development of its SMEs. In Ghana, SMEs have a high failure rate: Asumah et al. (2023) explain that forty percent of SMEs fail within five years of conception. There are varying definitions of SMEs adopted in different African countries. In Ghana, for instance, the Ghana Enterprises Agency (GEA) defined SMEs according to the number of employees and fixed assets they have (GCB,2023). The GEA defined SMEs as enterprises with fewer than ten employees and fixed assets below ten million cedis (GCB,2023).

Globally SMEs face numerous challenges while simultaneously trying to remain competitive; these factors can affect SMEs' ability to adopt sustainable practices (Jayasundara et al., 2019). In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, SMEs have found it difficult to access climate funds (AFDB,2023). This has made it difficult for both SMES and large enterprises to adopt more sustainable practices (AFDB,2023). In Côte d'Ivoire, private climate finance remains low, the country's climate finance deficit continues to grow, and this deficit is worsened by the absence of sovereign funds (AFDB,2023).

5. Sustainability

Sustainability has become a prominent topic among many countries due to the potential impact of climate change on economic development and socioeconomic infrastructure (Agyei et al.,2016). Among forty-six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana was ranked eighth and 168th on numerous environmental sustainability indicators (Agyabeng-Menah et al.2024). It is argued by Agyabeng-Menah et al. (2024) that Ghana should enhance its environmental initiatives in order to improve the country's environmental sustainability. According to Anaman et al. (2023), sustainable enterprises meet their customers' and stakeholders' needs without harming the environment or limiting future generations' ability to meet their own needs. Sustainability consists of three main constructs: the social, environmental, and economic constructs. Bakos et al. (2019) explained that environmental sustainability focused on reducing pollution, eradicating practices that cause harm to the environment, and the act and process of being able to renew resources. According to Asumah et al. (2023), sustainable practices are essential as they aid enterprises in managing economic, social, and economic risks. Caladera et al. (2019) clarified that sustainable business practices are activities or tactics designed to be

environmentally friendly. Asumah et al. (2023) expound that sustainable practices are essential as they create many opportunities for enterprises which they can capitalize on. Additionally, a study conducted by Asumah et al. (2023) found that the development of environmental dynamic capabilities amongst SMEs is crucial as it helped improve SMEs sustainability performance in Ghana. This study will analyse the following research question:

Research question 1: What are the factors that hinder or facilitate the implementation of sustainable practices by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana?

6. Methodology

This study has utilized a systematic literature review (SLR) to answer the study's research question. Mengist et al. (2020) explain that a SLR differs from a narrative review because the process used to collect and analyse data is transparent, replicable, and scientific. According to van Dinter et al. (2021), a SLR is a method that researchers can use to identify, assess, and synthesize information on a particular phenomenon in order to answer the study's research questions. The next section will discuss the screening criteria used to include and exclude articles from the SLR. Furthermore, the SLR will provide descriptive information on the sample of articles selected and explain how the different themes were chosen.

7. Screening Criteria

The screening criteria, according to van Dinter et al. (2021), is used to determine whether an article should be included or excluded from a SLR. This study will only analyse articles published in peer-reviewed journals. Additionally, only articles written in English and focusing on sustainability among SMEs in Ghana will be reviewed. Lastly, only articles published from 2022 to 2024 will be included. This study will use the following keywords: Ghana, sustainable practices, sustainability, enablers, and barriers. For the keyword 'enablers' the researcher also used the keyword 'motivation' as a synonym. In addition, for the keyword 'barriers' the researcher also used 'challenges' as a synonym. The next section will provide descriptive information on the articles selected to be part of this study's SLR.

Descriptive information on the articles selected to be part of this study's SLR

The researcher created an Excel spreadsheet as part of the SLR to identify and analyse articles. Only eleven articles were selected based on the screening criteria and keywords. After analysing

the spreadsheet, the researcher used the Scimago database to determine the quartile ranking of the journals. The table below shows the journals from which articles included in the SLR were retrieved, along with their respective quartile rankings according to the Scimago database.

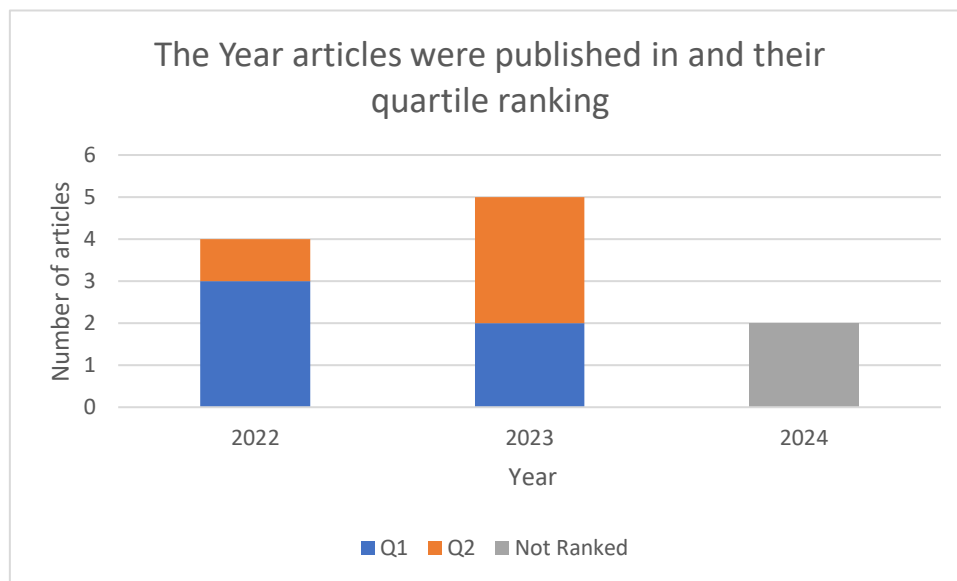
Table 1: Quartile ranking of journals from which articles were retrieved

Name of Journal	Ranking of the Journal
International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management	Q1
International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management	Q1
Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing	Q1
Journal of Environmental Planning and Management	Q1
Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management	Q1
Business Perspectives and Research	Q2
Cogent Business and Management	Q2
Journal of Global Responsibility	Q2
Small Enterprise Research	Q2
Journal of Contemporary Marketing Science	Not ranked on Scimago
Technological Sustainability	Not ranked on Scimago

Source: Author's own compilation

Table 1 illustrated that all eleven articles included in this SLR were retrieved from eleven different journals. Furthermore, the table shows that five articles included in the SLR were retrieved from Q1 journals, while another four articles were retrieved from journals classified as Q2 according to Scimago database. Lastly, only two articles from the sample were not found in the Scimago database.

Figure 4: Number of articles published each year and quartile ranking



Source: Compiled by the author

Figure 1 illustrates how many articles for this SLR were published between the years 2022 and 2024. As illustrated in Figure 1, in the sample of articles, four articles were published in 2022, three were retrieved from journals ranked in Q1, and one from a journal ranked in Q2. For the year 2023, two article was retrieved from journals ranked in Q1, and three from a journal ranked in Q2. Lastly, for the year 2024, only two articles were retrieved, and the two articles retrieved using the Scimago database were not ranked.

Theme Identification

In order to identify the themes amongst the sample of articles the researcher has conducted a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method researchers and practitioners use to identify, analyse, and report patterns in data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As Alhojailan (2012) explains, thematic analysis is useful for extracting information from a dataset, identifying relationships between variables, and comparing them. This study will follow the thematic analysis process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) as referenced by Vaismoradi (2013):

- Scanning and reading the data
- Creating initial codes within the dataset
- Searching for patterns within the data set and collecting all the information required for each potential pattern and theme.

- Assessing whether the themes that were identified are aligned with the different codes extracted from the dataset.
- Naming the themes and communicating what the themes encompass of.

To identify and analyse the themes or patterns amongst the literature the researcher utilized an Excel form. By using the Excel form, the researcher was able to analyse and compare the sample of articles, as well as their purposes, findings, methodologies, and their sample size. Only eleven articles were reviewed based on the keywords suggested in this SLR. From the sample of eleven articles four themes emerged: Supply Chains, Green Strategy, Sustainable Reporting, and Sustainable Business Practice. The following section will discuss the different themes that were identified in the sample of articles.

Themes emerging from the sample of articles

Theme: Supply Chains

The topic of supply chains has become prominent in literature focusing on sustainability because this issue plays a pivotal role in linking numerous actors such as producers, retailers, distributors, and consumers (Taghikhah et al., 2019). In the sample of articles for this SLR, supply chains emerged as a prominent theme and included four quantitative articles. Interestingly, three out of the four articles shared the same first author, Agyabeng-Mensah. The communality amongst all four articles is that they all focused on supply chains, however, all the articles had different objectives. For example, the article by Mumin et al. (2024) investigated whether information and communication technology (ICT) capabilities had an impact on supply chain fraud in SMEs based in Ghana. In contrast, the article by Agyabeng-Mensah et al. (2022) examined the different factors that may affect the circular supply chain performance of SMEs based in Ghana.

Table 2: Supply Chains Theme

Theme : Supply Chains				
Authors	Purpose of the study	Sample and Method	Research Questions	Research Findings
Agyabeng-Mensah et al.(2023)	“This study examines the relationships between SCEL (supply chain ethical leadership), CSC practices, internal EO (Environmental orientation), external EO and corporate sustainability performance (CSP) through the theoretical lenses of leader-member exchange theory (LMXT) and contingency theory (CT)”	122 SMEs in Ghana Quantitative	This study had two research questions. The first research question investigated whether the relationship between SCEL and CSC practices was positive. The second research question investigated whether internal and external EO moderated the relationship between CSP and CSC practices	The results from the study proved that ethical behaviour did push the implementation of CSC practices across the supply chains of manufacturing SMEs in Ghana.
Agyabeng-Mensah et al.(2022)	This study offers insight into the different factors that drive circular supply chain performance of small and medium enterprises in Ghana.	153 SMEs in Ghana Quantitative	This study had 7 research hypotheses. These research hypotheses analysed the role of Green supply chain learning (GSCL), Green organizational citizenship behaviour (GOCB), Green employee creativity (GEC) in achieving circular supply chain performance (CSCP)	The results from the study proved that SCL did not have a significant positive effect on CSCP. In addition, the study’s results suggest that CSC thrives in SMEs on more than just information and skills acquired from their customers and suppliers.
Agyabeng-Mensah et al.(2022)	“Exploring the role of external pressure, environmental sustainability commitment, engagement, alliance and circular supply chain capability in circular economy performance”	124 SMEs in Ghana Quantitative	This study had only one research question. This research question inquired whether external pressure would positively affect the ESC of SMEs in Ghana?	The results from the study proved that external pressure did have a significant impact on ESC. Secondly, this study found that ESC positively impacted ACA, ENC and circular supply chain capability.
Mumin et al.(2024)	Focusing on Ghanaian SMEs this study examined whether information and communication technology (ICT) capabilities had an impact on supply chain fraud	102 SMEs based in Ghana Quantitative	“RQ1. What are the effects of ICT capability and supply chain fraud on supply chain sustainability? RQ2. What is the mediating effect of supply chain fraud on the linkages between ICT capabilities and supply chain sustainability?”	The results of the study illustrated that ICT capabilities in Ghanaian SMEs did decrease supply chain fraud.

Source: Author’s own compilation.

Theme: Green Strategy

Green strategy, according to Rathore (2018), is a business strategy that places sustainability at the core of the enterprise's value proposition. According to Rathore (2018), enterprises adopting green strategies are environmentally aware and are trying to ensure that their operations and activities cause minimal environmental damage. This theme consisted of two quantitative articles; both articles had a sample size of more than 200. Even though these articles were part of the same theme, they covered different aspects of the green strategy and had different objectives. For example, the article written by Afum et al. (2022) investigated whether green market orientation (GMO) enhanced green value-based innovation (GVI), green reputation (GR) and enterprise social performance (ESP) in Ghanaian SMEs. In addition, it investigated whether GMO reinforced the implementation of lean management. In contrast to the article written by Afum et al. (2022), the article written by Nyameye et al. (2024) investigated the impact that green communication, green technology had on new technology implementation. Additionally, the article investigated the impact of new technology implementation on green corporate performance.

Table 3: Green Strategy Theme

Theme : Green Strategy				
Authors	Purpose of the study	Sample and Method	Research Questions	Research Findings
Afum et al.(2022)	This study examined the role of lean management (LM) in the relationship amongst green market orientation (GMO), green value-based innovation (GVI), green reputation and enterprise social performance (ESP)	217 managers from SMEs Quantitative	“Q1: Does GMO strengthen GVI, GR and ESP? Q2. Does GMO significantly reinforce the implementation of LM? Q3. Does LM provide an indirect mechanism through which GMO impacts GVI,GR and ESP?”	“The empirical results of the study suggest that although green market orientation has a positive impact on green value-based innovation, the effect is not significant. However, the results confirm that green market orientation has a significant positive impact on green reputation and enterprise social performance.”
Nyameye et al. (2024)	This study tested the study’s proposed framework. This framework assessed whether green marketing initiatives strengthen the implementation of new technology which focuses on improving green corporate performance, underpinned by institutional isomorphism	225 employees from SMES Quantitative	This study had three different research hypotheses. These hypotheses assessed the impact that green communication, green technology had on new technology implementation. Additionally, the research questions assessed the impact of new technology implementation on green corporate performance.	“This study found that green communication and green strategy alignment have a significant predictive effect on new technology implementation. Cultural isomorphism significantly moderated the effects of implementing new technology (i.e. green communication and strategy alignment)”.

Source: Author’s own compilation

Theme: Sustainability Reporting

An enterprise’s sustainability report (SR), according to Traxler et al.(2020), communicates the enterprise’s triple bottom line, which consists of economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. In addition, Hamad et al. (2020) expounds that SR enables an enterprise to both measure and report their enterprises’ impact on the economy, society, and environment. A study conducted by Amoako et al. (2023) that was based on SMEs in Ghana found that internal audit effectiveness, risk management process, and sustainability sensitivity had a significant positive relationship with SMEs’ sustainability audits. Another study conducted by Owusu et al. (2022) found that in terms of the three pillars of sustainability (environment, social, and economy) 65% of SMEs in Ghana reported their economic impact, 26.5% of the enterprises reported their environmental impact, and 23.3% of enterprises reported

their social impact. As a result, Owusu et al. (2022) found that SMEs in Ghana report an average of 38% sustainability performance across the three pillars of sustainability. In contrast to the articles written by Amoako et al. (2023) and Owusu et al. (2022), the article written by Kwarteng et al. (2023) examined the different ways that accountability presents itself in a circular economy. SR is one of the themes identified in the sample of articles for this SLR. This theme consisted of three quantitative articles.

Table 4: *Sustainability Reporting Theme*

Theme : Sustainability reporting				
Authors	Purpose of the study	Sample and Method	Research Questions	Research Findings
Kwarteng et al. (2023)	The purpose of the study was to examine how accountability presents itself in a circular economy	35 Qualitative	“RQ1. How is accountability manifested in the CE in contemporary times? RQ2. How accountability manifestations contribute to the sustainability of the firm?”	This study found that in both formal and informal processes within a circular economy accountability may present itself in various ways
Amoako et al. (2023)	The purpose of this study was to examine whether internal audit effectiveness, risk management processes and sustainability sensitivity had a relationship with sustainability audits.	1340 SME managers	This study had four different research hypotheses. These hypotheses examine the influence of risk management, sustainability sensitivity, and internal audits effectiveness on sustainability audits. Additionally, the research hypotheses examine how enactment, policies and standards influence sustainability.	The results from this study proved that internal audit effectiveness, risk management process, and sustainability sensitivity had a significant positive relationship with sustainability audits.
Owusu et al (2022)	This study examined the different perspectives held by SMEs on sustainability performance reporting in Ghana. Additionally, it examined the different factors that both encourage and discourage the SMEs’ decision to participate in sustainability performance reporting	183 SMEs in Ghana Quantitative	This study did not have clear research questions. However, the questionnaire examined participants’ sustainability reporting practices	The findings of this study revealed that amongst SMEs based in Ghana the sustainability performance reporting was thirty-eight percent. Additionally, this study identified factors that discourage SMEs form participating in sustainability performance reporting.

Source: Author’s own compilation

Theme: Sustainable Business Practice

Sustainable business practices (SBP), as defined by Yacob et al. (2022), refer to the policies and activities of an enterprise that focus on resolving the enterprise’s environmental and social problems whilst ensuring that the enterprise remains profitable. There were only two articles

on this theme related to SBP. The first article was a qualitative study conducted by Anaman et al. (2023). To collect data Anaman et al. (2023) interviewed eight participants and identified three main themes: Environmental stewardship, Process excellence, and sustainability-oriented culture. In addition, the study's research participants identified these three themes (Environmental stewardship, Process excellence, and sustainability-oriented culture) as crucial to their SBPs. The second article included in this theme was a quantitative study by Akomea et al. (2022). This study examined how sustainability practices may impact SME performance through EO. Furthermore, this study found that sustainability practices acted as a mechanism by which EO influenced SMEs' performance in Ghana.

Table 5: Sustainable business practice amongst SMEs

Theme : Sustainable business practices				
Authors	Purpose of the study	Sample and Method	Research Questions	Research Findings
Anaman et al. (2023)	This study focused on Ghanaian MSMEs. It examined their sustainable business practices (SBPs) and the nature of these SBPs amongst the MSMEs. In addition, it assessed the effects that SBPs could have on MSMEs.	8 SMEs in Ghana were interviewed Qualitative	This study did not have clear research questions	Three main themes emerged from the interviews conducted by the researcher: Environmental stewardship, Process excellence, and sustainability orientated culture. According to the research participants, the three themes constitute sustainable business practices in MSMEs in Ghana
Akomea et al. (2023)	This study examines how sustainability practices may impact the performance of SMEs through EO	323 CEOs of SMEs in Ghana Quantitative	This study had four different hypotheses. The four hypotheses examined the effect of EO on performance and the mediating effect of sustainability practices on this relationship.	Based on the results of this study, sustainability practices acted as a mechanism by which EO influenced SMEs' performance in Ghana. In addition, this study found that at high levels of competitive intensity, the relationship between EO and sustainability practices is at its weakest.

Source: Author's own compilation

8. Results and Discussion

The objective of this study was to identify the factors that encourage and discourage SMEs in Ghana from adopting sustainable practices. Through the use of a SLR, the researcher collected articles that focused on this phenomenon in the Ghanaian context. As part of the study's screening criteria, the keywords 'Ghana', 'sustainable practices', 'sustainability', 'enablers', 'motivation', 'challenges', and 'barriers' were searched on both Taylor & Francis and Emerald databases, focusing on the period 2022 to 2024. Based on the study's screening criteria, only

eleven articles were found to be relevant for this SLR. In addition, from the sample of articles four themes emerged: supply chains were the most prevalent topic, SR was the second most prevalent topic, and green strategy and SBPs were the least prevalent topics.

From the sample of articles in this study, only two articles were found that discuss SBPs in Ghanaian SMEs. Due to the limited number of articles that focused on SBPs in Ghanaian SMEs, this study was unable to adequately address the study's research question. According to Anaman et al. (2023), the adoption of SBP in SMEs is crucial due to their environmental impact on the planet. Caldera et al. (2018) further explains that it has become essential for SMEs to adopt SBPs because of the high amount of pollution that these enterprises produce. For example, a study by Bakos et al. (2019) found that roughly seventy percent of pollution is created by SMEs.

Despite the lack of literature on SBP in Ghanaian SMEs, SBPs have become increasingly important in many developed and developing countries, which resulted in the emergence of SR. According to GRI (2017) and Owusu et al. (2024), SR communicates to various stakeholders the measures and progress the enterprise has made towards addressing its economic, environmental, and social concerns. In addition, according to GRI (2017), SR is important as it enhances the enterprise's transparency with investors and stakeholders. A study conducted by Owusu et al. (2024) explored the different perspectives that SMEs in Ghana had on sustainability reporting (SR). This study found that 65% of SMEs in Ghana reported their economic impact, 26.5% of the enterprises reported their environmental impact, and 23.3% of enterprises reported their social impact.

As a conclusion, this study shed light on a variety of topics related to sustainability in SMEs in the Ghanaian context, such as supply chains, SR, green strategy, and SBPs. In addition, the SLR showed that there is a limited number of articles on this phenomenon in the context of Ghana, particularly in areas such as green strategy and SBPs. Lastly, the recommendations section of this study suggests areas for further research within the context of SMEs in Ghana.

9. Limitations

This study found that there were a limited number of articles available on sustainability that focused on Ghanaian SMEs. As a result, the number of articles analysed for this study's SLR's was low, as only eleven articles were analysed. However, similar studies focusing on sustainability in SMEs also have a relatively low sample size. For example, Opoku- Mensah et al. (2023) evaluated sustainable procurement in Ghana from 2007 until 2023 but only had a

sample size of 25 articles despite focusing on a longer time frame. Another SLR conducted by Martins et al. (2022) focused on developed countries, primarily European ones, and had a sample size of only 42 articles despite the longer time period and the availability of literature on developed countries.

10. Recommendations

- As there are varying definitions of sustainability, this study recommends that stakeholders and students should agree on what sustainability is and what it entails. The lack of clarity regarding sustainability and what it entails has negatively affected the use of this concept (Salas-Zapata and Ortiz-Munoz,2018).
- Additionally, this study found that there was a dearth of literature focusing on SBPs in SMEs in the Ghanaian context, thus this study recommends that more studies should be conducted on this phenomenon in the Ghanaian context.
- A study conducted by Caldera et al .(2018) explains that there is a lack of consensus on what constitutes as SBPS. Furthermore, Caldera et al .(2018) argue that there should be a well-established method that stipulates how SBPs may be incorporated into SMEs. Thus, this study recommends that more studies should be conducted that explore how SBPs may be implemented in SMEs based in Ghana.
- This study recommends that the Ghanaian government should provide support and incentives to SMEs that have adopted SBPs. In addition, this study recommends that the incentives provided by the government should be provided based on SMEs sustainability performance.
- Furthermore, this study recommends that Ghana should create laws and institutional mechanisms that evaluate the progress that SMEs have made towards adopting SBPs.
- This study recommends that more information should be provided to SMEs about sustainability and the impact that pollution has on the country and the region, as this may encourage more SMEs to become environmentally conscious and aware.

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