A critical evaluation of the role of human resources in the transition towards sustainable business practices in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria.

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2022

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE TRANSITION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES IN THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

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PHD   **2022**

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY·ABERDEEN

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Robert Gordon University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2022

ABSTRACT

Heightened pressure on organisations to be held accountable for the impact of their processes on the societies and the environment where they operate has resulted in sustainable business practices (SBPs) becoming a major area of focus in sustainability debates. Amidst growing research into various ways of achieving SBPs within organisations, relatively little consideration has been given to what role (if any) Human Resources (HR) can play in the transition towards SBPs implementation. This study addresses that concern by focusing on the understanding of HR's current involvement in sustainability from an organisational context and their potential role(s) in supporting the transition towards SBPs implementation in oil and gas organisations in Nigeria. The oil and gas industry in Nigeria, which is an important case in the sustainability discourse given the high-level impact of their business activities on the environment and the communities where they operate, is utilised as a case study. In the process of exploring the issue of SBPs within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria, this research creates a synthesis of different disciplines to provide a holistic view of the understanding of how such practices are undertaken. These include discussions from the viewpoint of environmental sciences, management and sociology fused together to support the arguments of this research.

An initial pilot questionnaire survey, focusing on Nigeria and the UK, was conducted to explore HR personnel's level of knowledge about sustainability within the oil and gas industry. This was then followed by 18 semi structured interviews which were conducted across two data collection exercises in Nigeria and the data was analysed using thematic coding. Data was obtained using a qualitative approach due to the explorative nature of the research questions and the need to provide a comprehensive view of the research context. The sociology of organisations theory was used to underpin the study. Some of the research findings include a) respondents had different perspectives of SBPs/ sustainability and this can influence action taken with regards to SBPs implementation, b) the dynamics within the Nigerian oil and gas industry is a complex one, of which HR need to be aware of, c) there are three major actors within the industry whose actions can either enable or hinder SBPs implementation, d) data indicates that HR appear to have a vital role to play in the sustainability discourse and in the transition towards SBPs implementation in Nigeria e) there is currently no HR function focused on sustainability in the Nigerian oil and gas organisations.. A conceptual model – HR sustainability model – was developed from the results as a guide for HR professionals in supporting the organisation in the transition towards sustainable business practices implementation. Finally, this research contributes to the scarce but growing literature on sustainability in the organisation through the lens of HR in supporting the acceleration of SBPs implementation in oil and gas organisations.

KEYWORDS:HR, SUSTAINABILITY, SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES, OIL AND GAS, NIGERIA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMO – Ability, motivation and opportunity

BPM – Business Process Management

CDI – Community Directed Intervention

CIPD – Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

CIPM – Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

DPR – Department of Petroleum Resources

EIA – Energy Information Administration

EITI – Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

ERA – Environmental Right Action

FGN – Federal Government of Nigeria

HR – Human Resources

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation

GHG – Greenhouse Gas

GI – Global Initiative

GIRG – Global Industry Response Group

GMOU – General Memorandum of Understanding

HRD – Human Resource Development

HRM – Human Resource Management

IOC – International Oil Corporation

IPIECA – International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

MNC – Multinational Companies

MOUs – Memorandum of Understanding

MPR – Ministry of Petroleum Resources

ND – Niger Delta

NDDB – Nigerian Delta Development Body

NDDC – Niger Delta Development Commission

NEITI – Nigerian Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative

NGFCP – Nigerian Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NNPC – Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation

NOC – National Oil Corporation

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

OD – Organisational Development

OGCI – Oil and Gas Climate Institute

OGUK – Oil and Gas UK

OPEC – Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries

PAIC – Presidential Amnesty Implementation Committee

PENGASSAN – Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria

ROI – Return of Investment

SAEJAS – Socially and Environmentally Just and Sustainable Development

SBPs – Sustainable Business Practices

SD – Sustainable Development

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SDN – Stakeholder Democracy Network

SHRM – Sustainable Human Resource Management

SITEI – Sustainability in Extractive Industries

TBL – Triple Bottom Line

UN – United Nations

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WBCSD – World Business Council for Sustainable Development

WST – World System Theory

CHAPTER ONE

1.1   INTRODUCTION – THE RESEARCH

This research study critically evaluates the role of human resources (HR) in the transition towards sustainable business practices (SBPs) within the oil and gas industry, Nigeria. It brings into light a focus on how SBPs can be strategically adopted into the oil and gas business operations through the lens of HR's existing function. In order to do this, literature was synthesised from a variety of disciplines including HR and management studies, sociology and development studies to illuminate how HR does and could operate within organisations to promote SBPs, developing that understanding through primary research within O&G corporations operating in Nigeria. To date no research has brought together these disciplines in this specific context and operationalized them in a way which enables the understandings arrived at to become tangible actions for corporations to follow.

Numerous efforts have been made by organisations, from the context of environmental, social and economic development, to ensure their strategic and operational activities are in alignment to sustainability while maintaining profitability. Despite these efforts, the issues surrounding sustainability such as environmental degradation and social inequality due to the negative impacts of environmental degradation persist. This is particularly observed where efforts to facilitate the social acceptance of oil and gas organisations by host communities have been witnessed. Oil and gas business operations have caused significant damage to the Niger Delta region in Nigeria (the research context) over the last five decades. Picking on one of such impacts, the region which is one of the 10 most valuable wetlands in the world has been described as the world's most harshly affected ecosystem by oil (Okonkwo et al 2015) due to the incessant oil spills in the region. The damage caused in the Niger Delta by oil spills (estimated 13 million barrels) would take at least 30 years to restore (UNEP 2011; Barolini 2016) and will cost an estimated $758million dollars per year (Adekola et al. 2015). These are staggering numbers especially given the fact that the damaging business activities continue to date. It is important to note that not only is the environment degraded, but the host communities suffer greatly due to the loss of means of livelihood for example, farming and fishing following land and water contamination. In addition, the scenario described above does not capture other impacts of oil and gas business practices such as gas flaring as well as other consequences including health impacts and conflicts.

With such negative impacts persisting, there has been a call for a change in human actions to address these issues. Several activities and initiatives such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) have been put forward by oil and gas organisations in response to this call. CSR activities have been utilised by the oil and gas organisations to obtain the required social license to enable operation within these host communities; with profound focus on increasing their profitability and corporate image. This research

considers this and asks a pertinent question: is CSR adequate? If not, why? The researcher argues that the flaws of many CSR initiatives are mirrored in some of the fundamental problems of the communities, such as continuous environmental degradation and the limited actions to facilitate sustainable socio-economic development as promised by the organisations.

Sustainable Business Practices (SBPs) have become a major area of focus (Hogevold et al 2014; Karlsson et al 2018) around organisations' environmental stewardness, social acceptance, as well as business viability (economics). The last decade has witnessed an increase in research on SBP but, the HR perspective – focusing on the coordination of human actions and practices – is under-explored within the broad context of SBPs including the oil and gas sector, and this research addresses this gap. The involvement of HR in sustainability appears to be growing and this research provides a unique perspective to further view HR as a fundamental strategic function to support in the drive towards SBPs implementation and potentially, help alleviate some of the persistent sustainability practices problems within the oil and gas industry as earlier described above. Since empirical data on the role of HR in driving SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry is scarce in general and non-existent within the context of Nigeria as at the time of undertaking this research, it became crucial to provide a thorough perspective of sustainability utilising relevant literature to explore how that aligns to the research context.

In the process of exploring the issue of sustainability within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria, this research has been able to create a synthesis of different disciplines to provide a holistic view of the understanding of sustainability and SBPs within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. These include discussions from the viewpoint of environmental sciences, management and sociology combined to support the arguments of this research. This is a new approach because previous research have always had a singular view of sustainability, but this research views the role of HR not only from management but also through a sociological lens and combines these to enable a more effective support from HR to achieve effective SBPs implementation. This support can be enhanced through the understanding of the dynamics within the organisation that can enable or hinder SBPs implementation. In addition, a transition process, which focuses on how organisations can view sustainability through facilitation at the strategic, operational and tactical level and feedback through monitoring and evaluation to inform improved strategy and operationalisation, was incorporated. This thesis thus provides a unique view in the exploration of HR role in supporting SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria through the strategic, tactical and operational roles within the organisation.

The literature review carried out (chapter four), highlights that HR support of SBPs implementation has not been analysed within the context of the dynamics within organisations especially within the Nigerian oil and gas industry, and how these can influence the attainment of the sustainability goal.

Therefore, the sociological studies examining how organisations operate were utilised to provide a theoretical framework to better understand how HR can adapt their function within the organisation to support in effective SBPs implementation in relation to the dynamics within the organisation. A key component of the sociology of organisation is a focus on how organisations are structured and how they function to attain organisational goals. Organisations are structured on certain principles which can either hinder or encourage internal goal attainment (Scott 2003). These principles include control, bureaucracy, power and authority. Organisations are dynamic and constantly require various social interactions in their quest to function and thrive. Due to the fact that these social interactions are carried out by social actors (employees within the organisation), it can then be argued that HR functions can be linked to business practices enhancement through functions such as recruitment and selection, training and performance management. By critically evaluating the potential role of HR in supporting in the transition towards SBPs implementation, this study has provided a unique synthesis of HR and sustainable development (SD) literature using a sociological lens to highlight HR's value in achieving SD through SBPs implementation in oil and gas organisations in Nigeria.

It is noted that there were challenges during the course of the research among which was the covid-19 pandemic that devasted the world. Challenges such as data collection at the height of the pandemic (see chapter five) and the progress of the research being impacted due to the need for re-evaluation of data collection strategy and the presentation of the thesis. These had an impact on the research, but also presented the researcher with the opportunity to reflect on the direction of the research and ways to address the challenges (see Appendix eight where a reflection on the covid impact was carried out). Despite the challenges encountered, the research achieved its set aims and responded to set research questions. This is demonstrated through the structure of the research (next section) which outlines how discussions of different concepts are brought together to provide a clear understanding of what the current sustainability practices are (if any), what should be obtainable and an evaluation of how HR can play a role in the transition towards SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry.

1.2   STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Given the complexity of the research context, the study utilised literature from a broad range of disciplines – social sciences, political science, law, business management among others – in a bid to enhance understanding of challenges of SBPs implementation and proffer effective implementation solutions. In addition, this detailed description was also important due to the challenges faced during the data collection exercises which resulted in the need to provide a very detailed contextualisation for data collected.

Building on key terms introduced in this chapter, chapter two focuses on a review of literature on sustainable business practices and the need for awareness on sustainability issues by organisations. The chapter further provides an overview of the contextual settings upon which SBPs are embedded – sustainability – with different perspectives highlighting (a) sustainable development and how it is intertwined within the context of SBPs; (b) the need for a change in human actions on the environment. Particular attention is also paid to the concept of CSR as a form of SBPs, focusing on the nature of the oil and gas companies' operations in the Niger Delta and whether this has helped advance sustainability in the region. The practices that should be obtainable are outlined based on the literature discussed.

The review of literature is continued in chapters three and four. A more detailed and critical discussion of the research setting is presented in chapter 3, outlining the environmental, social and economic problems faced by the host communities in the Niger Delta due to the oil and gas practices in the region; highlighting a need for a change in oil and gas practices to help alleviate these problems. The chapter outlines the relationship among the three major stakeholders within the Nigerian oil and gas industry namely the government, host communities and the oil and gas organisations. Finally, it summarises the initiatives set to address the challenges faced in the Niger Delta region.

Chapter four goes on to explain the term human resources, describes their function and also puts forward an argument of how these HR functions can be aligned to support the effective implementation of SBPs within the organisation. The organisation is also discussed, how certain factors or principles within it can either hinder or encourage SBPs implementation and how HR can align with these. This discussion is situated within the sociology of organisations, and this forms the theoretical framework of the study.

The research methodology is discussed in chapter five where methods employed, such as the steps taken to collect data for the study are outlined. These included an explorative pilot questionnaire survey, informal conversations with industry experts as well as two sets of semi structured interviews conducted across both IOCs and national oil and gas organisations based in Nigeria. The interview data analysis method – thematic analysis – is also discussed.

Key findings from the first set of interviews are outlined in chapter six while a detailed and critical discussion of these findings is carried out in chapter seven. This discussion weaves the literature review, research findings and the researcher's interpretation of the findings to create a robust description of current sustainability challenges within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria and the possible role HR can play in addressing these challenges. Chapter eight presents the findings of the second set of interviews, the discussion of these findings as well as synergising all research findings to provide a model that can be utilised to guide HR's involvement in supporting SBPs implementation.

The thesis is concluded in chapter nine where all the findings and interpretations from the literature and the data collected are brought together to give a holistic view of the research. The research questions, as set out in section 1.6, are responded to, and the thesis finally concludes with a summary of the research, presentation of research contributions, research limitations and recommendations for future research.

The research context will now be discussed in detail followed by a highlight of the research questions, aims and objectives.

1.3   RESEARCH BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The oil and gas industry remains a critical case in the discourse of sustainability, given the exceptionally high-level impact of their business operations and activities within the ecosystem. It is argued that they should be held accountable for the effect of their processes on the environment where they operate (White 2009). Oil and gas operations like drilling and production have potential for severe negative environmental impacts, which include oil spills and natural gas emissions (Schulz 2015) as described in the previous section. The environmental risks of their operations increase with oil and gas deposits that are located in areas of high ecological vulnerability such as in the Niger Delta (ND) region of Nigeria as illustrated in Figure 1.1.
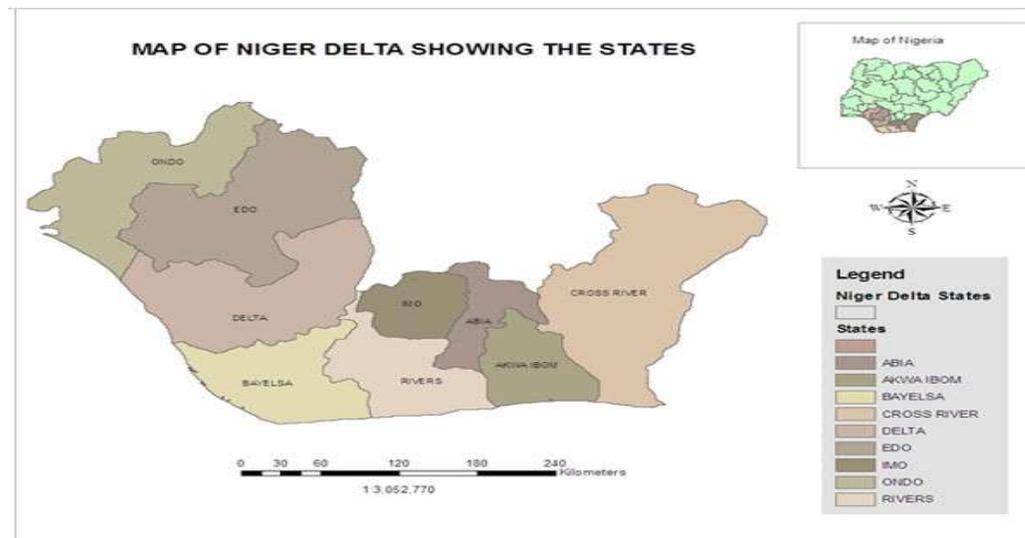
Figure 1.1: Map of the Niger Delta (Nwankwo and Ogagarue 2012)

The oil and gas industry and governments of host countries, under immense pressure, have created initiatives such as Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR), Sustainability themes (Schulz 2015) to

eliminate or reduce the adverse effects of oil and gas operations to the environment and the associated social and economic impacts. CSR according to the World Bank Institute (2013 in Toker 2013), is "the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life". This definition indicates a heavy emphasis on the need to improve the social and economic development of individuals within the business radius through activities by the organisation. The practice of CSR is prevalent but despite this, the issues surrounding sustainability persist (with particular reference to the research context) and this has led to an increasing move of businesses towards achieving SBPs (Madonsela et al. 2017; Caldera et al. 2017; Otto et al. 2017) which focus on identifying and reducing the negative impact of business practices on the environment and society. Picking up on the sustainability theme, many academics and sustainability professionals have identified concerns about the sustainability practices of the oil and gas industry, questioning their adequacy in relation to how effectively the concept has been integrated into their business operations and activities (Baker 2009; Schulz 2015). Numerous critics claim that oil and gas companies just "green wash" by exaggerating their commitment towards sustainability in order to improve their image in the public eye (Baker 2009). Many practices undertaken are CSR initiatives which have proven ineffective (Vertigans 2012) as against a change in business practices towards more sustainable business practices.

1.4   SBPs - A POTENTIAL SOLUTION

SBPs, which can be generally classified into people, planet, and profit (Cha et al 2018), are defined as "business behaviour(s) that leads to a net overall increase in the different forms of capital associated with sustainable development" (Moser 2001 p. 338). Based on his study of the petroleum industries in Colombia and Peru, Moser (2001) gave an example of SBPs as the identification and mitigation of potentially negative environmental, social and economic impact of hydrocarbon activity. Therefore, SBPs are practices that reduce the negative impact of the business on the environment and society.

Scholars have argued about the benefits of SBPs implementation. For example, Melkonyan et al. (2017) asserted that SBPs have a direct link to lower operation costs and widen profit margin in businesses as well as improve brand and reputation. SBPs are at the forefront of a better future in an economic, social and environmental sense and now, a large proportion of businesses are beginning to recognise the benefits of engaging in SBPs as these potentially build long term stakeholder value (Melville 2010; Ulrich and Dulebohn 2015). In view of this, attempts to utilize a range of tools to achieve SBPs are being evaluated (Singh et al. 2015). Putting this into more context: it has been argued that until now, SBPs were not a core component of business strategy, and such strategy of any organisation can only be implemented through the actions of the employees within the organisation - employee actions which

are managed by the HR function. Hence there is a need for this study, which is to explore how HR can support organisations in the transition towards SBPs implementation especially given the nature of CSR activities in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria.

There remains a major challenge (Seidel et al., 2008) of how businesses should embed SBPs into their core business operations and activities to meet the diverse stakeholder values. Also, there appears to be more awareness of the need for and the benefits of integrating SBPs within core operations/activities. The following challenges inhibit their wide implementation amongst many businesses: inadequate integration with business strategy, limited understanding and contribution of employees at all levels, and lack of effective governance–led processes (Schulz 2015). If SBPs are to achieve their potential within the business context, they must be integrated into the planning and measurement systems of business enterprises (Neto et al. 2017). This study thus argues that the regular planning and measurement of business practices can in turn result in the review of such practices and encourage innovation such as SBPs within the organisation.

The implementation of practices, such as SBPs, requires some level of people management, driven in a way that responds to sustainability in an organisation's business context. Due to the nature of HR's people management functions, it is argued in this study that there is a potential for HR to provide the needed support within the organisation to bring about SBPs implementation in organisations, in this case, in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. Implementing SBPs appears to be an intricate task, in that broader patterns of change within an organisation setting are shaped by actions of key management personnel and employees at all levels. What is obvious is that the potential transition towards embedding SBPs in organisations can be shaped by the actions of people – strategic, tactical and operational - at all levels: this study gives a subtle insight pertinent to this argument from two perspectives. The first is the extent to which strategic action plans are formulated, thereby pointing to the importance of 'people's involvement' in making changes to address environmental, social and economic concerns including the need for SBPs implementation; this then leads to the second point: 'people's involvement' tends to require some level of HR influence and support.

SBPs have been argued to respond to persistent sustainability issues while ensuring the organisation's increased profitability and improved image. The research focuses on the Nigerian oil and gas industry where such issues concerning environmental degradation and the associated social and economic issues in the Niger Delta persist. The Nigerian oil and gas organisations operate within an environment where there are major actors whose political, social economic actions, as argued by the oil and gas organisations, have an impact on their sustainability efforts. The research explores and evaluates the extent to which SBPs are being deployed, if any, in the Nigerian oil and gas industry. In addition, the role of HR as a key catalyst to support in such SBPs implementation is assessed.

1.5 HUMAN RESOURCES – AN IMPORTANT FUNCTION IN THE DRIVE TOWARDS SBPs IMPLEMENTATION

The role of HR in the drive towards SBPs implementation has previously not been explored especially within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. Though SBPs are now a recognised term within the frame of sustainability, it has not been significantly incorporated into business strategy in industries such as the oil and gas industry. Hence, this research's uniqueness underpins the fundamentals of what SBPs are but through an HR lens to support sustainable practices implementation within the oil and gas business operations. One of the key elements within this view is the provision towards the basic understanding of 'people involvement' to drive sustainability and not just a management led green wash approach (Baker 2009) to support the global debate of climate change and sustainability.

Ernst and Young (2013) – a consulting firm providing sustainability services - posits that there are some critical success factors for implementing SBPs from an HR perspective, among which are engaging and motivating the workforce and the development of key HR capabilities which includes training and development, organisational leadership and change management to drive sustainability. HR can help organisations be successful in the achievement of SBPs in organisations through enabling and driving SBPs at all levels in the organisation and creating sustainable systems and processes. Ulrich and Dulebohn (2015) argued that HR generates value by ensuring that the services HR offers inside the company support the expectations outside the company.

The role of HR in creating value and driving SBPs at all levels within the organisation positions HR not just to act in response to strategy but to help shape and create it and thus be able to fully participate in contributing towards achieving SBPs. These arguments are in line with the main focus of this research where HR's involvement can potentially help shape a pathway to enhance SBPs implementation. However, it is just as imperative to realise that employees' knowledge and awareness of the issue of sustainability and their role(s) is important in achieving SBPs implementation within the organisation. Organisations therefore need to be deliberate with regards to the communication of sustainability goal(s) and agenda with employees at all levels, especially for SBPs. This study posits that such targeted communication can be a role of HR within the organisation.

Based on these arguments, the core research question is: *What is HR's current involvement and potential role in SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry?* It is vital to ask this initial question as HR involvement has traditionally been a marginal feature in promoting SBPs within business enterprises (Ehnert and Harry 2012), especially within the oil and gas industry where there are evident negative impacts of operational practices and activities on host communities as documented in the media (see Asu 2020; SDN 2020) and through empirical research (Idemudia 2017).

Therefore, to summarise the study's position, there appear to be actors who can support in achieving SBPs implementation. HR seems to have a role to play in the move towards achieving SBPs, through their functions within the organisation and develop the required actors that can shape and support in the transition - within the oil and gas industry. This study thus contends that one cannot effectively implement SBPs without focusing upon human resources capabilities/capacities to ensure their effective operation. However, at this time, it is still unclear what roles HR can play to drive SBPs in an oil and gas industry setting (case study) within the research context (Niger Delta). In a bid to gain a clearer understanding of what role HR can play within the organisation and the broader research context, it became important to understand the dynamics and principles within the organisation that can both encourage and hinder SBPs implementation and how HR can align their functions to support the organisation's sustainability goal.

1.6 RESEARCH AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to critically evaluate prospects for HR's support towards SBPs implementation through identifying key factors within the organisation that can enable or hinder the implementation of SBPs within the oil and gas organisation in Nigeria. The research study sought to achieve this aim by dividing it into four objectives as detailed below:

1. Discuss the contextual nature of SBPs within the framework of sustainability and sustainable development.

2. Examine current SBPs and/or sustainability initiatives in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria and the challenges involved in their implementation within the Niger Delta.

3. Assess the level of knowledge of SBPs among HR personnel within the oil and gas industry, as well as HR's current involvement in its implementation.

4. Critically evaluate how HR functions can be used to help address the identified challenges and proffer recommendations to enhance HR participation in facilitating the transition to SBPs.

1.6.1   Research Questions

In addressing the different research issues in the stated objectives, three sub-questions below were set out from the main research question stated in Section 1.1 - *What is HR's current involvement and potential role in SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry?* The research sub-questions are:

1. What SBPs are currently being implemented by business entities in the Nigerian oil and gas industry?
2. What roles do HR personnel play, if any, in facilitating the transition towards SBPs implementation in the Nigerian oil and gas industry?
3. How can HR support the organisation in transitioning towards SBPs implementation?

These research sub-questions pick up on some of the key elements surrounding the prospect of HR's function contributing to SBPs implementation. These questions were set out following a critical review of the literature to enable a closer look at the current SBPs within the industry and further examine the factors/ dynamics within the organisation that can aid or hinder the integration of SBPs within business operations and activities. At the same time, the level of knowledge HR has of SBPs and their prospective role in contributing towards SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry is assessed.

1.7   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study assumes an interpretative philosophical position. Therefore, in-depth interviews were utilised to produce data from key stakeholders for analysis and interpretation (Creswell 2007). Also, the research is inductive in nature, and to best respond to the research questions, it was necessary to align to an interpretative philosophy (Creswell 2009) therefore a case study of a particular industry was selected to enable rich description of subject matter. It is worth noting that the Nigerian oil and gas industry is complex with numerous stakeholders and factors impacting effective sustainability practices however the scope of the study and the data collection technique employed does not extend beyond the actors within the organisation.

The research utilized a qualitative approach of data collection because it focused on understanding the experiences and behaviours of research participants. Though the decision to use a qualitative methodology within the research was based on its relevance given the social context of the study (Bryman 2006), a quantitative method was incorporated in the form of a questionnaire for an explorative pilot survey conducted in Nigeria and the UK. The method employed helped to gain an understanding of HR personnel's level of knowledge/ understanding of sustainability and SBPs and the extent of HR

involvement, if any. Data collected from this initial survey also helped narrow the focus on precise problem areas to focus on during the main data collection.

Semi structured interviews were used for data collection due to the advantages of the method which combines the advantages of both the structured and unstructured interviews (Collins and Hussey 2003). A robust data collection exercise was carried out on a larger sample of oil and gas companies in Nigeria. A total of nine companies were selected through random sampling and subsequent snowballing for this purpose where HR personnel were interviewed in a bid to obtain answers to the research questions. The study utilised thematic coding analysis of the data collected from the interviews. Further discussion on this is provided in chapter five.

It is worth noting that the data collection exercise (and indeed the entire research) was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic which broke out early 2020. Due to the pandemic, the initial plan of travelling back to Nigeria for a second data collection exercise was cancelled and instead, telephone interviews were carried out. The recruitment of research participants was made even more difficult as everyone, including the researcher, were distracted by the devastating impacts of the pandemic, and were focused on their wellbeing and that of loved ones (see chapter five and Appendix 11 for full notes on the impact of the pandemic on the research). In addition, it became important for the researcher to provide a more comprehensive literature review to provide more research context and complement the limited data gathered due to the pandemic. Despite the negative impacts of the pandemic on the research data collection exercise and timeline, the research achieved its aims and contributes to knowledge.

1.8   RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

This study contributes to knowledge by adding to the scarce but growing literature on the link between HR and sustainability. There is currently no empirical study that focuses on how HR can help businesses adopt SBPs with a focus on Nigeria and within the oil and gas industry at the time of this study. This study addresses this gap and hopefully can be adopted by other oil producing developing countries as well as developed countries. In addition, this study aims to contributes to practice through an increase in the knowledge and understanding of sustainability and SBPs of HR practitioners, within the oil and gas industry, as well as their potential role in helping their organisations move towards SBPs implementation and attain the organisation's sustainability goal(s). Most importantly, this study presents a conceptual model that could provide practitioners (both in the oil and gas, and perhaps, other industries) valuable and usable information for improving and/or enhancing their SBP processes.

CHAPTER TWO

NATURE AND CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter builds on key terms already introduced in chapter 1 – Sustainable Business Practices in business enterprises. It provides a critical overview of the existing theoretical literature on sustainability with reference to its nature and key concepts, including its underpinning for Sustainable Business Practices in organisations. The chapter goes on to give an overview of the concept of development which has helped shape the conception of sustainability, and by extension the theme sustainable development (SD), and how both sustainability and SD are presently being applied within businesses, from the context of SBPs. The chapter then switches perspective towards the policy framework - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - linked to SD, further helping to reinforce the SBP concept and applicability. The chapter concludes by providing a brief context of an indicative SBPs initiative – the principle of CSR – with particular focus on how businesses have utilised this approach to underpin SBPs, the resulting impact of practising sustainability.

2.2   CONTEXTUAL NATURE AND CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES – WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

Over time, the term sustainability has become a word that has come to be applied to many terms, from products and lifestyles to business practices and reporting requirements (Hendrickson 2012). Terms such as sustainable agriculture, sustainable energy, sustainable cities, sustainable banking and sustainable business are frequently used in modern days, but the question of what is actually meant by the word sustainability still remains (Olsson et al. 2004; Thompson 2010) with varied definitions that highlight the importance of the relationship between human and planet (see table 2.1). The origins of the word sustainability lie in the Latin word sustinēre, meaning 'to hold' (Merriam-Webster, 2007). Clark et al. (1997 p. 17) defined it as the "ability to produce and/or maintain a desired set of conditions or things for some time into the future, not necessarily forever". At present, a universally agreed characterization of sustainability is non-existent (Somogyi 2016; Opon and Henry 2019) rather with the discourse on sustainability being more widespread and socially complex, different social forces are beginning to define the meaning which best shows their values and interests (Lima 2003). This viewpoint was mirrored by Ekins et al. (2003) who argued that sustainability is an abstract concept leading to its general misunderstanding while Dovers and Handmer (1992) are of the opinion that if a

definition acceptable by all parties involved is ever found, it would be a sign that such a definition is inadequate as the concept of sustainability is too fundamental to be easily captured. The definition of the term sustainability based on interests and values placed on it may imply that different actors may have varying understanding and, ultimately act differently with regards to sustainable practices based on their understanding. Therefore, this study argues that it is important that understanding and knowledge of sustainability are increased and controlled within the organisation to enable desired sustainable behaviours and actions.

Sustainability as a concept has been in existence as far back as the 17th century. However, several events in history have acted as milestones in the development of the concept. Table 2.1 highlights some of these events.

Chronological development of Sustainable Development

Date/ time period	Event
17th and 18th century	Focus on sustainable yield by forest experts in response to dwindling forest resources
19th and early 20th century	Ecologists and natural scientists focus on nature preservation due to its worth
Post second world war	A drive for economic development
Late 1960s and early 1970s	Modern environmental movement in the West to raise awareness of environmental degradation
1969	Santa Barbara oil spill led to global media coverage on environmental destruction
1972	Launch of The Club of Rome's limits to growth – call for a sustainable world system
1972	Ecologists call for a sustainable society – a blueprint for survival
1974	World Council of Churches Commission 'the future of man and society'
1975	The Ecology Party adopt a 'manifesto for a sustainable society'
Late 1970s	Shift of focus to poverty and inequality brought about due to economic growth at the expense of the environment
1980	IUCN – international union for conservation of nature in collaboration with united nation environmental program (UNEP) and world wildlife fund (WWF) published – world conservation strategy subtitled 'living resource conservation for sustainable development' taking into account environmental protection as well as social and economic factors (three pillars)

1980s	Rise of the radical social movement subduing the ecological and social critiques of economic growth
1987	Brundtland report calling for socially and environmentally sustainable economic growth: sustainable development
Early 1990s	Widespread use of the terms sustainability and sustainable development
1991	IUCN – a call for development that is people-centered and conservation based
1992	UN launched the commission on sustainable development (CSD)
2000	UN launch of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
Post 2015	UN launch of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Table 1: 2.1: Chronological development of sustainability and SD. Adapted from Purvis et al 2018.

The table above highlights the points in history when there was a rise in awareness of the need to preserve the environment and natural resource for mankind. After the 2nd world war, there was an increase in economic development and consequently, more demand on the environment and resources. This further led to an increase in awareness of the need to preserve the environment resulting in several calls to action for sustainability including the launch of the MDGs and SDGs in 2000 and 2015 respectively.

Thompson (2010) posits two varying theoretical constructs for the concept of sustainability: "resource sufficiency" and "functional integrity". The first - resource efficiency - interprets sustainability from a practical perspective where sustainability is understood as a measure of the durability of actions that lead to wellbeing. These could be actions or practices of an organisation that lead to wellbeing of people within the environment the organisation operates in. He then puts forward a second view of sustainability as a functional integrity where it directly relates to "the mechanisms that allow whole systems such as societies and ecosystems to maintain their activity over time" (p. 22). This can be likened to business sustainability and ensuring business continuity. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests that the central principle of sustainability is based on the idea that all that is needed for survival and wellbeing depends directly or indirectly on the natural environment. This concept therefore proposes that sustainability creates and maintains "conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony that permits the fulfilment of the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations" (EPA 2011 p. 1). Moore (2007 p. 223) presents a case for the discussion of sustainability as a storyline, as opposed to a scientific condition or concept. He argues that "sustainability is not a fixed condition but a dynamic meta-story line" which charts the progress of a place's social political, environmental and technological stories. This view of sustainability in terms of a constant dialogue between human activity and the evolution of nature highlights the temporal aspect of sustainability in relation to place. The Brundtland definition of

sustainability which is seen as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (WCED 1987) highlights the connection between time and space, bound within a system with a past, present and future which appears to be considered within sustainability (International Institute of Sustainable Development 2012). The idea of a steady dialogue between human activity and advancement of nature brings to front the need for frequent innovation of practices or actions including actions taken with regards to business practices to ensure sustainability. Furthermore, scholars have posited that to have truly sustainable business practices (SBPs), innovation is required (more discussions on this in section 2.5).

Definitions	Reference
Sustainability as the capability of a human system to withstand or acclimatize to endogenous and exogenous change in the foreseeable future.	Dovers and Handmer (1992)
Sustainability as way humans should behave in relation to nature and their responsibility for themselves and future generations.	Ayres (2008)
Sustainability can be viewed as growth that comprises of environmental, social, institutional and economic dimensions.	Saunila et al. (2018),
Sustainability as an equilibrium between the three pillars of sustainability – social, economic and environment.	Elkington (1994)
Sustainability is seen as a desired development and environmental management goal which changes in meaning within different fields and context in which it is used.	Brown et al. (1987)

Table 2.2: Sustainability definitions. Source Author generated

Sustainability definitions (as shown in table above) tend to express three common perceptions: (i) the consideration of three interconnected pillars: social, environmental, and economic resources (as illustrated in figure 2.1); (ii) all appear to support the integration of the three pillars that could offer substantial and maintainable benefit to the people and planet (iii) involvement of a concerted effort towards organising or forming an inclusive, viable and resilient future. Thus, one can infer that in its literal principles, sustainability means a capacity to maintain some entity, outcome, or process over time. While defining sustainability, some scholars place the environment at the centre of the sustainability discourse (for example, Coomer 1979; OECD 1990) while others place humanity (human needs) at its centre (WCED 1987; Hossain 1995).
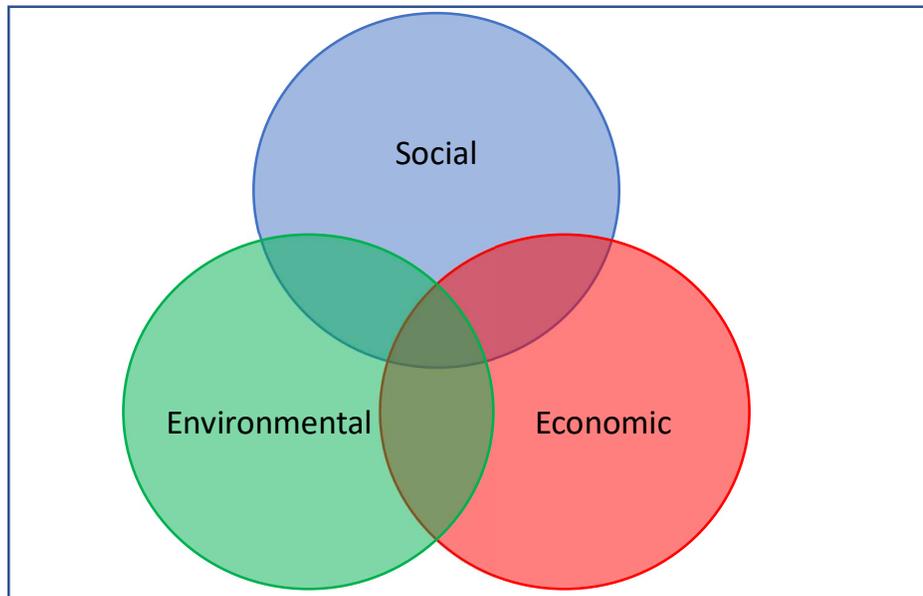
Figure 2.1: Sustainability interrelated components. Source: Willard 2010.

Giddings et al (2002) posit that sustainability is most times shown as a connection between the environment, economy and the society all of which are considered to be interrelated though separate. This is illustrated in Fig 2.1 above. Though there are three main pillars, there are other factors in play with regards to sustainability within any given area. Conducive environmental conditions ensure bearable situations for individuals living within that environment and also ensure that viable economic activities are carried out. The equitable factor depicts social justice which is the fair distribution of resources within communities (Clifton and Amran 2011). Clifton and Amran (2011) proposed the concept of well-being + justice criteria where justice entails four major components which align with the components of the pillars of sustainability:

- Distribution – fair distribution of goods, services and wealth within the society
- Recognition – acceptance in the political and moral community of people
- Participation – fair and equal decision-making process
- Capabilities – ability to transform goods into full and flourishing life (Schlosberg 2007)

The fair distribution of goods, services and wealth within the society as well as fair and equal decision making aligns to the social aspect of sustainability as these argue for social equality and social coordination of economic activities. Subsequently, the coordination of economic activities supports the economic aspect of sustainability which focuses on wealth generation and the ability to transform goods into full and flourishing life. Such creation of wealth activities should be done with minimal environmental degradation and ensure reduced negative impact of such degradation thereby further

enhancing the fair distribution of wealth in the society. Based on these discussions, it can be argued that practices should conform to these components to be regarded as sustainable/ sustainable development.

As highlighted earlier, the concept of sustainability can be said to have come about as a result of increasing awareness of the relationship between growing environmental issues, socio economic issues and concerns for a healthy future for mankind (Hopwood et al 2005). It has also become more and more useful to view sustainability and sustainable development as a 'triple bottom line' (TBL). The triple bottom line framework was put forward by Elkington (1997) where he posits that businesses should not only focus on wealth creation but also protect and focus on the remaining two pillars of sustainability – human (social) and the environment. It is difficult to separate one from the other as all three pillars are interrelated and actions from one affects the other.

2.2.1   Economic pillar

This pillar focuses on profit-making and how companies stay in business. This can be linked to sustainable business (business sustainability which is the act of keeping an organisation in business). Economic sustainability is seen as the organisation's ability to earn a profit and add to economies at a domestic and global level (Roberts and Tribe 2008). According to Munasinghe (2007) economic sustainability aims for the highest flow of income and at the same time preserve stock of assets.

This pillar of sustainability requires that economic advantages meet and/or surpass the costs of attaining such advantages. There should be a balance to ensure that though costs are kept low, the business practices should not have a damaging effect on the social and environmental aspects of the system (Akinsete 2012). It is important that resources are used in a way that "do not damage the environment nor impair the capacity of renewable resources to continually replenish their stocks" (Munro 1995 p 5). Aligning this point to the context of the study, it can be argued that economic sustainability is diminished due to the damage on the environment in the Niger Delta and the communities' impaired capacity to earn a living through fishing and farming thereby also resulting in social inequality. This makes it important for organisations to implement SBPs to prevent such negative impact(s) on the economic stability of host communities.

2.2.2   Social pillar

This pillar is much less well comprehended, and this means many organisations find it difficult to have a clear understanding of what their social responsibilities are. According to Hogevold et al (2015), it is problematic describing social sustainability as it involves definitions of culture, community and the society. However, a simple way to describe social sustainability is that it focuses on patterns of

behaviour, values among people and social interaction relations (Roberts and Tribe 2008). Lehtonen (2004) explained social sustainability as social equality, reasonable income and access to goods and services and employment. It deals with the ability to ensure the welfare of a system while taking into account the equitable distribution of health services, education and the provision of security among all social actors (Harris 2000; SOGESID 2012). Boudreau et al (2008) asserted that major corporations will need to incorporate sustainability into their corporate strategy in order to attain societal sustainability. Also, according to Akinsete (2012), the concept of social sustainability is rapidly gaining prominence as the theory and practice around sustainable development evolves despite having previously received lesser attention than the concept of environmental sustainability.

2.2.3   **Environmental pillar**

This pillar focuses on environmental actions of organisations, policies and set objectives for reducing their environmental effects. Environmental sustainability can be described as 'the dematerialisation of economic activity since a decrease in material processing can reduce the pressure on natural systems and expand the provision of environmental services to the economy' (Sartori et al. 2014 p 4). Using the research context as an example, less dependence on the land for crude oil can in turn result in lesser environmental degradation and consequently, a lesser impact of such degradation on the host communities who depend on the natural resources for sustenance.

There is a constant interplay among these three pillars. For example, environmental sustainability entails the preservation of the environment through the reduction of the pressure civilisation places on it. Sartori et al (2014) argued that once the pressure on natural systems/ resources is reduced, then environmental sustainability can be achieved. However, one can argue that any scale of human activity can have the potential to damage the environment and prevent environmental sustainability. This can in turn have an effect on economic sustainability. Therefore, according to Bartelmus (2003), it is important to maintain natural resources to avoid an economic downturn. A case in point is seen in the Niger Delta where due to the degradation of the environment, there has been a significant loss of livelihood of inhabitants of those communities and subsequent reduction in their general standard of living (Idemudia 2009). This has in turn led to social inequality resulting from loss of livelihood as well as the unequal distribution of oil wealth in the region.

The idea of the three pillars is that all three are dependent on each other and the actions within one pillar affects the other pillars (Hockerts 1999). For instance, the state of the soil affects crop production which in turn affects the livelihood of the people, the economy and by extension the people who live within the society. Also, important factors in play are natural resources exploited in the process of development

as well as the interrelations between actors involved and power play amongst them in the form of institutions, governments and actors within the organisations.

Sartori et al. (2014) argue that the term sustainability has been inconsistently interpreted and applied with a high degree of ambiguity, but despite the varying definitions and understanding of sustainability, one fact needs to be reiterated – there is a need for a change in human actions on the environment. That is, a change in the relationship between the environment and the humans living in them (Dovers and Handmer 1992). Therefore, organisations, suppliers and consumers have been moved to alter the way they produce and consume due to the evident depletion of resources and the current damage being done to the environment (Jaca et al. 2018).

In the world of business, the concept of sustainable management introduced sustainability especially in how companies produce their products and services, maintain and improve their human and natural resources (see Fauzi et al. 2010; Porter and Derry 2012; Gaussin et al. 2013). Achieving sustainability is dependent on the interest in attaining that goal. Thus, the level of ambition for sustainability is a social construction favoured by society and shown as formal policies (Lee 1993, Clark 2002). Axelsson et al. (2011) argued that sustainability can be implemented with varying levels of ambition, and this is further described as a weak and strong sustainability (Neumayer 1999). They viewed weak sustainability as the extension of economic welfare, so wealth generated by the current generation can be a recompense to future generations for the loss and damage of natural capital (Fiorino 2011). He also posits that natural systems cannot be eroded or destroyed without compromising the welfare of future generations. Based on this argument, it is necessary that a subset of the entire natural capital is preserved in physical terms to enable their functions to stay intact, and this is termed strong sustainability. Sustainability, broken down, means that business success should be achieved by organisations while simultaneously focusing on the impact of their practices on the environment (Granados and Gamez 2010) and by extension on the societies within these locations.

Hopwood et al (2005) maintain that the growing awareness and support for the sustainable development concept indicates a potentially crucial shift in the understanding of interactions between people and the environment. Previously, environmental problems were usually based on natural resource management and seen to be a local thing. However, the Brundtland report of 1987 stresses that environmental issues are not local but global and this is reflected in the development goals launched globally. Embedded within these goals is an aim to ensure resources can be managed to guarantee longevity. The concept of sustainable development can be said to have come about as a result of increasing awareness of the relationship between growing environmental issues, socio economic issues and concerns for a healthy future for mankind (Hopwood et al. 2005).

It is worth pointing out that there is no particular origin of the three pillars of sustainability concept (Purvis et al 2019). Based on an extensive systematic review of sustainability literature, Purvis et al (2019) posit that the sustainability discourse has emerged largely from diverse disciplines and schools of thought. One constant factor that remains is that sustainability is intricately linked to sustainable development.

2.3   SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – UNDERPINNED BY DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

A close look at the Brundtland definition as outlined in WCED (1987), shows that it provides the notion of sustainable development (SD) as an integral element and perhaps an end product of sustainability or vice versa. There are two schools of thought with regards to the relationship between sustainability and sustainable development (SD). One argues that they are one and the same while the other maintains that they are two different concepts. The first school of thought views sustainability as an aim or goal and sustainable development as the process leading to the achievement of the goal (Dovers & Handmer 1992; Sartori et al. 2014). The second school of thought sees sustainability as the process of achieving sustainable development (Elkington 2001). The two terms are frequently used interchangeably (Norton 2005) due to their relationship. One demonstration of this is through the definitions of sustainability where achieving sustainable development is viewed as attaining sustainability (WCED 1987; Saunila et al. 2018). For this study, these two concepts will be treated as same.

The term sustainable development was officially accepted in an international political framework during the first world conference on man and the environment, the UN conference on human environment (UNCEH) in 1972 (Dresner 2012). The issues relating to development using natural resources were the basis of the concept of sustainable development (Bolis et al. 2014) – carrying out development in a sustainable way. Scholars such as Carson (1962) and Meadows et al (1972) warned that development must be carried out in a sustainable fashion to avoid complete depletion of the natural environment and subsequent disasters that could arise from that.

As can be seen from the account of the concept of sustainability and sustainable development above, and also that outlined below, sustainability and development emerged as ideas from the global north. As such there are scholars who argue that as a concept it does not fit easily in the global south and can in fact be considered a kind of colonialism (Freistein and Mahlert 2016, Ziai 2016) (see Chapter 3 for a further discussion of the applicability of SD concepts for this research). Nevertheless, for those who work in transnational and multinational corporations, terms such as sustainability and sustainable development are commonly used terms and can provide a useful starting point for discussions around social and environmental impacts of organisational activity. Whilst it is clear that the lens afforded by

postcolonial studies could shed light on many of the issues discussed here, including adding to our understanding of the relationships between companies, governments and communities and the impact of internal colonialism (Adeola 2009). Buckler (2021) describes how concepts which emerged from the industrialised, global north can be seen as a contested attempt to impose ways of being upon the peoples of the global south. Nevertheless, this is not a lens used in this study where the interest was in understanding from within the paradigms of the corporations where data was collected from and also wanted to use a language and engage with literature which would be meaningful to the research participants. As such this research has focused on literature around HR, the O&G industry, Nigerian history and sociological work focused on organisations and human individuals. To do this is not to deny the impacts of colonialism, however it is to acknowledge that colonialism is not the only lens through which the global south (and Nigeria specifically) can be viewed. Post-colonial studies is the only body of literature where thinkers from the global south can be found, and indeed the researcher is influenced by a number of writers from non-western back grounds such as Idemudia (2006) and their work can be found woven throughout this study, providing postcolonialism (and the communities of the Niger Delta) with a complementary perspective on the current social and environmental injustices currently taking place, and possibly also an idea for a way forward.

2.3.1   <u>Development and its link to business practices</u>

The term development in its present sense dates from the post-war era and has carried different meanings over time (Neverdeen Pieterse 2009). Despite this, the basic understanding of development is of (economic) growth as shown by Bologna (2008) who defined development as the material and quantifiable growth of a country or region's economy. It is important to highlight that development covers both theory and practice, i.e., ideas about how development should or might occur as well as real-world efforts to put different facets of development into practice (Desai and Potter 2014).

From a theory perspective, there are two broad schools of thought on development – those who view development as an improvement in socio-economic wellbeing and those who view it as a whitewash comprising of conflicting factors at play. Cowen and Shenton (1996) argued that the remedies of progress limitations are termed as development while Hodge (2007) posited that development commenced as enlightenment ideas of 'improvement' – or making a more efficient and orderly use of land – accompanied by colonial rule from as early as the eighteenth century. Colonialist power viewed as development improvements involving the development of infrastructure (where linked to European trade or settlement), the rise in economic output (benefitting metropolitan interests) and the expansion of the population with European settlers (Desai and Potter 2014).

Many ideas, policies and priorities of post-independence development genealogies can be linked to the colonial era, where they were shaped through metropolitan concerns to maintain and modernise colonies. Numerous post-colonial states were persuaded to rely on colonial experts of various kinds – agriculturalists, other technical advisors and colonial district officers (Kothari 2006a; Hodge 2007). Desai and Potter (2014) argued that these professionals also contributed to 'development' becoming an academic discipline in the second half of the twentieth century.

In his analysis of development thinking history, Hettne (1995) posited that 'development' encompasses three things: development theories, development strategies and development ideologies.

Development theories may be regarded as sets of seemingly logical propositions which aim to explain how development has occurred in the past and/ or how it should occur in the future (Potter et al. 2008). Development strategies can be defined as the practical paths to development which may be pursued by international agencies, states, non-governmental organisations (organisations) and community-based organisations or indeed individuals in an effort to stimulate change within particular areas, regions, nations and continents. Different goals and objectives will be represented by different development agendas reflecting different social, moral, political and religious influences to form development ideologies (Kothari 2005; Desai and Potter 2014).

Bolis et al. (2014) demonstrated a variety of approaches towards development that can be taken from a focus on economic development, through combining economic, social and environmental aspects, to focusing on human development alone. Whilst in an attempt to fully yoke together environmental and economic issues, neoclassical economic theories of development were put forward which argue that man's well-being is affected by environmental issues (Wiesmeth 2012).

Development theories can also be grouped into two: positive and normative theories (Desai and Potter 2014). The first group of theories is the Positive theory i.e., what has been the case and therefore these can be seen as historical approaches of development; for instance, dependency theory where scholars such as Fernando Cardoso and Andre Gunder Frank sought to understand the history of development of Latin America countries. Normative theory on the other hand focuses on what should be the case – the path development should take. Within this school of thought is modernisation theory. This school of thought includes alternative approaches like basic needs approach, ecodevelopment and sustainable development. This leads to the practice perspective of development and according to WCED (1987 p. 43), 'humanity has the ability to make development sustainable'.

There are variations to arguments of sustainable development and the position which aligns to the research will be discussed. The concept of a sustainable world has been proposed. This means, in general terms, the 'flourishing of life on earth over an indefinite time frame' (Clifton and Amran 2011

p. 122). They identified two diverse methods of articulating the features of attaining a sustainable world. These are the transformational and the reformist approach. According to the reformist approach, the existing leading socio-economic system is quite capable of allowing and promoting human or sustainable development. The only challenge identified by this approach is finding ways to maintain the existing socio-economic system and at the same time addressing the social and ecological problems created by the system. In other words, make the system more socially just and this bears a resemblance to corporate social responsibility (CSR) advocates who promote technological advancement along with CSR initiatives so as to 'give back' to the society (see discussions in section 2.5). However, many of these initiatives do not address the environmental issues resulting from said technological advancement or development.

The transformational approach sees the current socio-economic system as the main cause of unsustainable behaviours and seeks transformational change to achieve a sustainable world (see Clifton 2010). They advocate for smaller businesses and lower consumption growth. This school of thought believes that multinational companies (MNC) cause ecological problems and poverty. They argue for a complete change in behaviour of these companies before sustainability can be achieved. This line of argument can be said to support the awareness, and the need for more sustainable business practices within organisations which may involve a change in behaviour and culture within the organisation to align to sustainability. This research will therefore explore how such change in behaviour can be achieved and what role HR has to play in supporting the organisation to achieve this and ultimately leading to sustainable business practices implementation.

One common theme emerging from the discussions of sustainability and sustainable development is the need for the regulation of human actions on the environment which will involve behavioural change. For organisations, this change can come through board involvement in sustainability (Cha et al. 2018) resulting in formulation of sustainability policies which consider the environment and societies, as well as business growth (Starik and Rands 1995). Therefore, it is important to consider the role of HR/ the implications of HR activities on sustainability initiatives within organisations as they have the responsibility of people management. Further, in the world of business, the concept of sustainable management introduced sustainability especially in how companies produce their products and services and maintain and improve human and natural resources (see Fauzi et al. 2010; Porter and Derry 2012; Gaussin et al. 2013). The expectation that organisations should be more sustainable can be said to have stemmed from the call for action at the national and organisational level through the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

2.3.2 Sustainable development goals and sustainable business practices – any relation?

Giddings et al. (2002) argue that though the concept of sustainable development has been accepted by both governments and businesses, the concept itself has various interpretations. Elkington (1998) notes: 'sustainability can be a 2 + 2 = 5 (or even 50) game' (p. 37). Meanwhile, Hopwood et al. (2005) maintain that though there are many debates with regards to the nature and context of sustainable development, one thing is agreed upon – 'society needs to change' (p. 47). They further argue that transformation is essential given the necessity for vital change and a profound connection between the environment and human life. With the awareness that there is a need for change, the United Nations launched the sustainable development goals (SDGs) to ensure sustainable development is achieved.

These SDGs were launched at the end of 2015 by the United Nations (UN). It sets out a guideline towards building a strong people focused prosperity and sustainability of the environment (Jayasooria 2016; Gupponi and Gain 2016; Gupta and Vegelin 2016) with the aim of including different stakeholders in various levels of governance (Gellers 2016). Of great importance are five fields called the 5ps: planet, people, peace, prosperity and partnerships (Jayasooria 2016) which underscore the SDGs and were approved by 193 countries (including Nigeria and the UK) in New York, USA in September 2015. Herein the "2030 Agenda for sustainable development" comprising of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) – see figure 2.2 below - and 169 targets was presented by the UN General Assembly.

Figure 3: 2.2: sustainable development goals (SDGs). Source: UN (2015)
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/

The 2030 Agenda defines itself as "an Agenda of the people, by the people, and for the people – and this will ensure its success" (United Nations, General Assembly 2015 p. 12). Subsequently, the twofold part of the human element as both the originator and the beneficiary of SDGs implementation can be recognised (Chams and Garcia-Blandon 2018). They posit that with regards to "prosperity" and "people", the goal of the SDGs are to ensure suitable settings and specific conditions that advance the progress of continued economic growth, effective resource distribution, shared prosperity, and decent work environments. On the business side, the definitive goal of the SDGs is to create "sustainable, innovative, and people-oriented" economies (UN 2015). They also state that organisations should aim to ensure their workforces are well educated and healthy as well as develop the consciousness and proficiencies needed to produce industrious employees and active citizens that give to society; consistent with recent studies on the effect of the human aspect on sustainable development and resource conservation (Pfeffer 2010; Speth 2010). Therefore, SDGs aim to instigate sustainability integration into firms' operations, focusing on present and future stakeholders' needs thereby leading to the attainment of SD for society (Rosati and Farai 2019).

HR can play a vital role in this regard by ensuring that the human resources of an organisation are aligned to its sustainability agenda. However, little research has been done to date as to how this can be achieved. This study aims to address this gap. Achieving the aims of SDGs[1] entails a strategic process including a number of actors within the private and public sectors, multi-national enterprises, governments, philanthropic and non-governmental organisations as well as individuals (Chams and Garcia-Blandon 2018). This means that there is a relationship with HR functions through the mutual factor of the human element, because social and ecological practices are determined by people's behaviours, attitudes and consumption of resources. From this perspective, the objective of HR is to support achievement of the organisational sustainability goals, while maintaining business growth (Jennings and Zandbergen 1995; Starik and Rands 1995). However, it is still unclear how this can be done, and this study aims to explore how to remodel the role of HR in the organisation to achieve this goal. In chapter four, the potential of HR in fostering sustainability within organisations is further discussed. However, before engaging in discussions on HR involvement, it is helpful to look at sustainability in business and initiatives that have been explored to date as they may shed more light on how to achieve this move towards sustainability.

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[1] It would be interesting to study how these SDGs were formulated however, this is outside the remit of this study.

2.4   SUSTAINABILITY AND BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

The majority of large organisations especially in Europe and the US appear to accept that sustainable development is vital (Giddings et al 2002). Subsequently, such awareness has led to the creation of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development – which consists of more than 200 of the world's leading businesses in different sectors including mining, oil and gas, banking and finance, working together to create a more sustainable world by targeting the realisation of the SDGs (WBCSD 2018). As a result of the Paris Accord agreement of 2015, as well as on-going debate towards addressing global warming, the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI) aims to show sector leadership in the response to climate change and was enacted in 2016 (Haszeldine 2016).

This level of commitment shows that more and more organisations are buying into the idea of sustainability either because of the growing pressure by the society to 'do the right thing' or because they are beginning to realise the benefits of being sustainability conscious. Another line of argument could be that companies are beginning to engage in sustainable practices due to the increasing popularity of sustainability reporting. This means that organisations have to declare how their business practices are aligned to the sustainability agenda. Not only do businesses report on their sustainability practices, but they also report on the benefits gained from implementing such sustainable practices. As Willard (2012) argued, such advantages and benefits are quantifiable and sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved by companies through employing sustainability strategies. He views sustainability as 'a race to the top' (p 2).

As stated by Willard (2012), 'if saving the planet is not good enough reason, there's another incentive for companies to contribute to sustainable development – it boosts profits' (p. 4). All of the awareness of sustainability and the call for businesses to engage in sustainable practices has given rise to the concept - sustainable business practices.

2.4.1   Sustainable Business Practices

Sustainable Business Practices (SBPs) have become a major area of focus in discussions about sustainability (Hogevold et al 2014) due to the increased pressure on organisations to be held accountable for the effect of their processes on the natural and social environments where they operate (White 2009). According to Seidel et al (2010), SBPs are increasingly the focus of businesses due to a call from the general population for more sustainable practices.

With the increased awareness of the need for SBPs, over time, there have been several definitions of SBPs put forward. Moser (2001) defined sustainable business practices as 'business behaviour that leads to a net overall increase in the different forms of capital associated with sustainable development' (p

293). DiPietro et al (2013) describe SBPs as business activities that lessen adverse environmental impact through the implementation of environmentally friendly practices. This implies that there should be due consideration of the impact of business practices on the environment. Svensson and Wagner (2012a) elaborate on this need for consideration of the environmental impact by defining SBPs as '…. a company's or an organisation's efforts to manage its impact on earth's life and ecosystems and its whole business network' (p 5). Clearly human action is required to regulate such impact on the environment, action that can be encouraged by HR (O'Donohue and Torugsa 2016).

2.4.2 <u>Benefits of SBPs implementation</u>

Several scholars have argued the benefits of implementation of SBPs in organisations including strengthened brand image, reduced operational costs/ operational efficiencies (Dos Santos et al 2014) amongst others. Ortiz-de-Mandojana and Bansal (2016) notes some researchers claim that SBPs increase companies' operations, reputation and market access. They also argue that though some benefits of SBPs are long term, many research studies test for an immediate effect on business outputs which are harder to demonstrate. It is therefore not surprising that there has been limited support for SBPs (Margolis, Elfenbein and Walsh, 2009). It is important to point out the long-term benefits of SBPs rather than dwelling solely on short term benefits.

Research has demonstrated the benefits of implementing SBPs (Dos Santos et al 2014; Porter and Van der Linde 1995). However, despite all the benefits of SBPs implementation, many organisations do not express interest in implementing SBPs and also doubt the benefit of such implementation (Hassini et al 2012). For successful implementation of SBPs, genuine change must come from inside the organisation (Madonsela et al 2017).

Preceding discussions and definitions point towards organisations being conscious of their actions and the effects these have on both the environment and the societies in which they operate. Why then are the problems such as environmental degradation, loss of livelihood of host communities as a result of the environmental degradation and the incessant conflict due to a struggle for basic human rights, discussed in previous chapters still rife? One reason could be that there are uncertainties towards the implementation of SBPs despite the increased awareness. The HR function could have the potential to help eliminate these anxieties by equipping the employees to align to the organisation's sustainability agenda as well as acting as 'tools' in achieving these goals. This can be done through several HR functions including sustainability training and development, recruiting people in the right role and aligned to the organisation's sustainability agenda amongst others (see detailed discussion in chapter four). With this, the benefits of SBPs implementation can then be realised.

2.4.3 Barriers to SBPs implementation in organisations

The concern and discussion for the need for SBPs in businesses and the society is not new (e.g., Carson 1962). However, Svensson et al (2010), argue that the different aspects of SBPs are far from being addressed and stress that the concepts depicting SBPs such as CSR, corporate governance and sustainability need to be embedded in the business ethics of the company. Another concern with the understanding and implementation of SBPs is that SBPs frameworks presented in the literature to help understand sustainability are frequently conceptual and atheoretical (Melville 2010). Adding to that, strategic complexities of implementation and evaluation of SBPs are not acknowledged (Kolk and Manser 2002 cited in Holton et al 2010). Also, only a minimal percent of the vast research on sustainability focuses on all three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environment (Global Reporting Initiative 2006) and how business practices can be aligned to these. The organisational and strategic complexities and costs associated with the implementation, recording and evaluation of SBPs are not sufficiently acknowledged by conceptual frameworks used (Holton et al 2010; Dos Santos et al 2013).

Hence, despite the recognised benefits of SBPs, there are some factors that can hinder their implementation in organisations. These have been termed as the 'green killers' by Phillips and Phillips (2013) illustrated in Fig 2.3 below. They argue that these 'green killers' inhibit progress and achievement of sustainability initiatives in organisations.
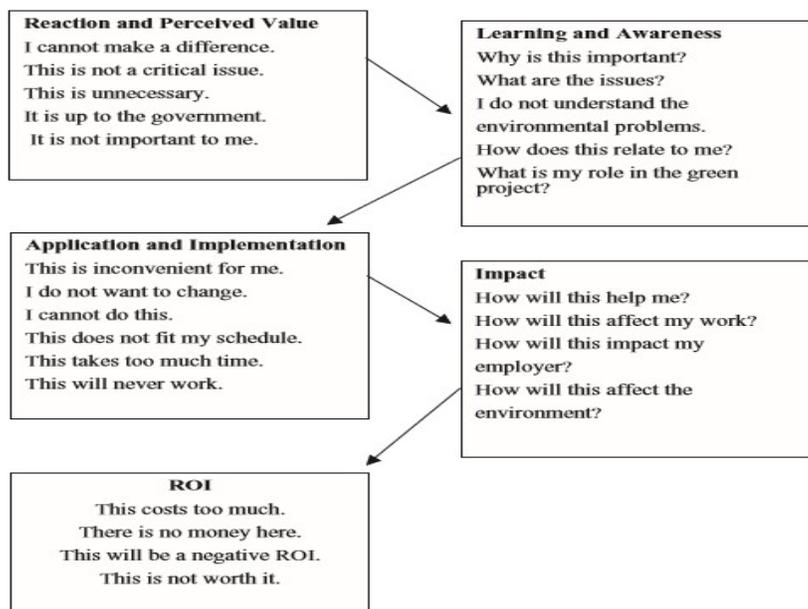
Figure 4: 2.3: Green Killers. Source: Phillips and Phillips 2013, p.39.

The green killers could be challenges from employees due to their lack of understanding of the benefits of SBPs or how they, as employees, can add any value or what role they can play in the implementation of SBPs. There could also be the problem of the employees being resistant to change – this resistance could be from top management or any employee within the organisation. On the part of the organisation, a concern for how SBPs implementation will affect the bottom line of the organisation could be a reason for the resistance. These green killer classifications can also be grouped into two broad categories – employee views and actions; and the organisational view on SBPs. Despite blocks to the implementation of sustainability initiatives, sustainability is frequently seen as the 'right thing to do' (Padin et al 2016). However, Svensson et al (2010) maintain that there is a concern that despite their popularity, sustainability initiatives including SBPs have become tick box exercises. They argue that SBPs cannot be truly achieved without focus on being ethical that if an ethical stance is adopted then it naturally follows that sustainable business practices will be adopted. Boudreau et al (2008) posit that organisations have a choice to bear costs of waste products or externalise them thereby making the community in which they operate in pay. Regrettably, more often than not, organisations opt to pass on the cost of its 'eco-inefficiency' on to the community for example, air and water pollution. In the case of the Niger Delta, the air polluted due to gas flaring and the rivers and streams are polluted due to oil spillages (see discussions in chapter 3).

2.4.4   Enablers of SBPs implementation

Despite widespread awareness of sustainability, both organisations and individuals still require a 'push' towards attaining sustainability. Goetz (2010) posits that it has become commonplace for both businesses and government outfits to seek new methods of encouraging both individuals and industry to be more sustainable. Seidel et al (2010) present four main groups of enablers of SBPs adoption from an organisational perspective. They are strategy definition, organisational support, motivation, and traceability. This finding is corroborated by Cha et al (2018) who found that the biggest influence on adoption of SBPs is board support a finding which emphasises the importance of buy-in of top management to sustainability initiatives as against a mere tick box exercise.

A study centred around of one of the biggest steel manufacturing companies in South Africa led Madonsela et al (2017) to argue that SBPs are dependent on continuous innovation. They posit that continuous innovation embedded in a context of business process management (BPM) is the core element of SBPs and that the dissemination of knowledge should be through the organisation's business processes. HR can play a role here through sustainability training and development programs within the organisation to support in building the required culture of sustainability. They also found that continuous innovation should be embedded from top to bottom within the organisation. Their findings

demonstrate that increased transition towards SBPs' implementation lies in the organisation's culture because SBPs are dependent on continuous innovation and continuous innovation is embedded in the organisational culture. An enabling organisational culture should be created by the top management within the organisation. The question that now needs to be asked is: how can an enabling culture be created, and innovation encouraged?

Sustainable business practices must be encouraged by appropriate policies (set at the strategic level) and linked to supporting new ideas for their integration Loorbach and Rotmans (2010). Meanwhile Geels (2012) notes that innovation is a shared activity and goal relating to a number of actors with diverse perceptions, interests and roles, which enables the achievement of organisational goals. Crowther and Green (2004) agree that goals are achieved because people act together.

Business managers are beginning to enquire how sustainability performance can be increased by organisations (Christman 2000, James 2000). In response, Phillips and Phillips (2013) detail how ROI (return of investment) methodology can be applied to sustainability/ green initiatives to ensure their benefits are obtained. Unruh (2010) has further debunked the theory that developing sustainable practices only result in loss for the organisation. He argued that sustainability should not be an end point rather it should be 'a way of life'. However, while claims are made by organisations that sustainability is embedded in their company values and strategies (White 2009), Holton et al (2010) posit that there is room for improvement in the understanding of 'strategic organisational intricacies' that go together when SBPs are implemented.

2.5   CSR… AS A FORM OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES (SBPs)

Despite the increase in awareness (White 2009; Hogevold et al 2014), many organisations still try their hand in SBPs at an informal/ unplanned level (Seuring and Muller 2008, Chabowski et al. 2011). Nevertheless, some companies have successfully implemented SBPs within and outside the organisation (Dos Santos 2011, Hogevold 2011, Hogevold and Svensson 2012, Svensson and Wagner 2012). Suggett and Goodsir (2002) note that there is increased pressure on organisations to expand knowledge of their activities, consequently, organisations have sought to implement sustainability initiatives through different ways such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. However, whether CSR activities help achieve the sustainability agenda is not always clear.

Over the years there have been numerous definitions and constructs on the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and it has been posited that different disciplines present their specific perspectives on the concept of CSR (Van Marrewijk 2003; Carroll 2015; Latapi Agudelo 2019). In this same vein, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2000) argued that there is no "all-

encompassing definition of CSR" (p. 3). The European Commission (2011) has defined corporate social responsibility as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society". To be socially responsible, enterprises "should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders" (Idowu et al. 2013 p. 124). This should include a review of business practices to ensure they are sustainable and align to the organisation's social responsibilities. Due to its perception as a lens that describes the role(s) that organisations play within the society, CSR has gained a prominent place in the socially conscious business space (Baron 2001; Baughn and Mcintosh 2007; Latapi Agudelo 2019). Socially conscious suggests that an organisation needs to be aware of its responsibility both towards its internal and external stakeholders which includes the society in which they operate. This suggests that if carried out correctly, CSR initiatives could help strengthen the relationship between the organisation and the society.

The idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was envisioned by Bowen (1953) as part of his broader vision of an improved American society where social and economic goals strengthen each other (Lee 2007). Ethics and social responsibilities of organisations were Bowen's focus with no link to corporate financial performance. He believed that organisations have certain responsibilities within the society therefore the question raised was not whether the organisation had any responsibility, but what their responsibility(ies) were within the society. Within the research context, the question can then be asked: what are the responsibilities of the oil and gas organisations within the host communities? Are they aware of these responsibilities? Based on Bowen's arguments, oil and gas organisations should engage in ethical activities for example, protecting the environment and societies where they operate and balance this with profit making goals (see chapters three, seven and eight for further discussion).

Despite the compelling arguments put forward by Bowen (1953), scholars such as Friedman strongly opposed the idea of CSR arguing that it compels unfair and expensive responsibility on the organisation's shareholders and presents the danger of misappropriation of funds by executives under the guise of CSR (Friedman 1962; 1972b). The concern of the cost associated with CSR implementation was also expressed by managers within organisations which led to resistance to the idea of CSR (Lee 2007). Friedman (1972a) contended that corporate managers' most important obligation was to increase shareholders' wealth. On the other hand, Friedman defined the social responsibilities of businessmen as 'the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society' (Friedman 1972a in Lee 2007, p. 58). It can be argued that this definition contradicts Friedman's previous arguments as values of the society can be separate from financial values and here Friedman appears to align more towards the arguments of Bowen (1953) who advocated for the organisation's investment in and for the society to bring about sustainability.

CSR has been frequently linked to sustainability in businesses, it is seen not only as a means through which businesses can counteract the negative impacts brought about by their operations/ business practices but also as a way to contribute to sustainable development (Idemudia 2009). Increasing levels of interest has led to increased corporate activities within the CSR field (Idowu 2011) which have been followed by debates in academia and the business world over its suitability and the purpose of businesses having social responsibility (Vertigans 2012; Yu and Liang 2020). Many companies all over the world are now involved in CSR however, among the leading industries in advocating for CSR is the oil and gas sector (Frynas 2005). These companies are voluntarily undertaking CSR activities and projects but an increasing lack of confidence in national governments' motivation and ability to affect change has led civil groups and consumers to target International Oil Companies (IOCs) to bring about the desired change by threatening risks to reputation. Predominantly vulnerable to these risks are the energy companies as their brand is dependent on intangibles like trust, reliability, credibility, consistency, relationships and transparency alongside tangibles such as investment in employees, communities and the environment (Vertigans 2012). Based on this assertion, it can be assumed that their (IOCs) brand is dependent on positive stakeholder relationship. Vertigans (2012) does put forward an argument that IOCs are paying financially the price for their policies and questions to what extent will these investments be recovered through business practices/ opportunities. In line with this school of thought, it can be argued that if recovery of funds spent on CSR initiatives is pursued then this might in turn affect business practices as organisations might feel justified that their 'dues' have been paid.

Though CSR is a global phenomenon, Vertigans (2012) argues that it takes place in areas where the practices of IOCs are often unregulated or at best lightly supervised which is reflected in the presence of inappropriate, incomplete and abandoned projects. Shell operations and practices in Nigeria are a prime example of failed CSR initiatives. For example, Idemudia's (2009) discussion with a women's leader of one of the communities revealed that 'the discussion for Ibom rice farm (Nigeria) started in 1999 and till date, the farm is yet to begin full operation…. The women decided to form a cooperative to run the poultry farm with Mobil but till date we have still not been able to benefit' (Survey respondent 14 April 2005 p. 101 in Idemudia 2009).

This leads to the question: why do companies get involved in CSR? Different scholars have postulated the reasons why organisations commit to CSR. For the purpose of this study, those identified by Frynas (2005) will be discussed. These are:

- managing external perceptions,
- maintaining a stable working environment,
- obtaining competitive advantage and
- keeping employees happy.

One reason for the practice of CSR is to counteract bad publicity. Many social initiatives have been started in the wake of bad publicity (Frynas 2005) and these can be viewed as a way to redeem the company's reputation. In a bid to divert attention from negative press, short term projects with high visibility are developed by companies rather than long term capacity building initiatives (Barkemeyer 2007). The question could be asked – what is the reason for such bad publicity if business practices are proclaimed to be beneficial to all parties involved? This can be linked to the fact that the environment (Natural resources) which have a very important role to play in human lives is being damaged by the practices of these organisations.

One common theme is the importance of preservation of environmental or natural resources which provide livelihood of people especially in the rural areas who depend on it for sustenance. In addition, a look at how these communities can be supported in their development process (Desai and Potter 2014) has been neglected despite the effect of the business practices within these communities. To compensate for the consequences of their action, companies are said to be spending considerable amounts of money in the communities they operate in under the guise of CSR. The diversion of CSR intended funds might be linked to the fact that there are numerous cases of abandoned CSR projects.

Eilbert and Parket (1973) in Idemudia (2009) conceptualised CSR in relation to good neighbourliness which involved the responsibility not to spoil the neighbourhood (negative injunction duties) and affirmative duties – the intended assumption of the duty to help resolve neighbourhood problems. Yet, this does not seem to be the case in current CSR practices in businesses. Rather, Idemudia (2009) explains that IOCs have progressively responded to the challenge of poverty, such poverty that can in part be attributed to the negative effects of the oil and gas practices within the communities they operate. The IOCs respond by adopting partnership strategies to enable poverty reduction in addition to securing the communities' acceptance for these organisations to operate in the communities. This being the case, what is the reason for the inability of IOCs to secure their social licence to operate? Why do local communities continue to complain of usual corporate misdemeanour (Idemudia, 2007a)? These questions are responded to in chapter three section 3.3 – 3.5 but it is clear at this point that the success and usefulness of CSR initiatives in the oil and gas sector has been questioned more and more (Idemudia 2009). Vertigans (2012) argues that CSR approaches have failed to solve many of the problems they are linked with creating despite increased investment by companies. In fact, CSR policies are worsening existing problems while creating new ones[2].

According to the Business Partners for Development (2001), business has three choices in relation to meeting its 'developmental' responsibilities. They can a) assume all responsibility at high cost, low risk

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[2] It is interesting to note that with the growth of CSR, IOCs have been portrayed more as the solution to the challenges of global poverty and under-development than the reason for these challenges (Rajak 2011).

and foregone opportunities b) assume minimum responsibility at low cost, high risk and foregone opportunities or c) share responsibilities with the government and civil society organisations which carries manageable costs and low risk. The third option appears to be the preferred option for oil and gas companies as seen in numerous partnership ventures in communities they operate in. The dilution of responsibility is favoured by transnational companies (Desai and Potter 2014). In addition, following the arguments above, it can be surmised that businesses deal in the line of weak sustainability (see section 2.2.3) where the goal is wealth generation.

2.5.1 <u>What Should Be Obtainable – Embedded CSR?</u>

The investor's corporate responsibility and the role of the business in ensuring sustainability has come under scrutiny. This has resulted in their obligation to their shareholders to make maximum profit no longer an excuse to neglect their social responsibility towards the country/ communities they carry out their business in (Moller 2010). In line with this, a solution is required to ensure that businesses do not neglect their social responsibilities within the communities where they operate. It appears that proper implementation of CSR initiatives will be a move in the right direction, however, this goal is yet to be achieved. Aguinis and Glavas (2013) proposed new concepts to help conceptualise what needs to be done – Embedded CSR and Peripheral CSR. "Embedded CSR involves an organization's core competencies and integrates CSR within a firm's strategy, routines, and operations, and therefore affects all employees" (p. 314). On the other hand, Peripheral CSR concentrates on actions not embedded in the organisation's strategy and operations.

It is important to have sustainability CSR embedded in an organisation's core strategy for it to be meaningful. Embedding sustainability in general in the strategy (not just labelled as CSR) also ensures that it is driven by the organisation's management to achieve its goal. Just as Desai and Potter (2014) argued that there is a need for better understanding of the role the state/ government can play in providing measures of adaptation, there is also a need for better understanding of the role of the organisation in achieving sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Though the practice of CSR is widespread in various industries including the oil and gas industry, it has not fully addressed the issues of environmental degradation as well as associated social issues due to several reasons. These reasons include improper implementation of CSR initiatives and actions towards implementing SBPs not executed from the strategic level. Therefore, more action is required. Aguinis and Glava (2013), have sought to proffer solutions such as embedded CSR and holistic CSR to address these gaps while Goetz (2010) argues with regards to CSR and SBPs that "while both are important, we

believe changing behaviour by encouraging sustainability is the most important activity" (p. 1043). Therefore, building the right behaviour is important in achieving SBPs implementation. The implementation of SBPs has also been revealed as a way to ensure that businesses effectively manage their impact on the environment and across the business network (Svensson and Wagner 2012). Hence one of the motivators for this study is to understand their current practices and how HR can support in moving these businesses towards the implementation of more environmentally friendly practices and by extension, become more favourable to the societies therein.

Prior to the discussion of HR's potential role, it is important to explore the nature of the oil and gas industry and their operations to enable a better understanding of the current situation, as well as the possibility of HR support for effective SBPs implementation within the industry which is the next point of focus.

CHAPTER THREE

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY – OPERATIONS, IMPACTS AND EXISTING SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the context by providing a brief overview of the history of the oil and gas industry – globally and specifically focusing on Nigeria. The chapter goes on to review critically, the oil and gas exploration and production practices and their effects, with a focus on the practices within the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This is done by providing a detailed description of the Niger Delta region and the impact of oil and gas operations on the environment and its people – through the lens of the three key stakeholders within the region: the Government, host communities and the oil and gas organisations. The chapter then switches perspective towards existing oil and gas policy initiatives set up to address the issues surrounding the impacts of oil and gas practices. This is linked to the call for climate change awareness – the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – which help to further reinforce the Sustainable Business Practice (SBP) concept and applicability. By providing an argument of the persistent problems linked to oil and gas practices despite numerous policies and regulations, the chapter concludes with an argument for the need for HR involvement in the transition towards SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry.

3.2 OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY – ITS ORIGIN AND GROWTH: GLOBAL, AFRICAN AND NIGERIA

The oil and gas industry has had a long history from the discovery of petroleum up to current day exploration and production of many types of goods from petrochemicals. Petroleum has been used to provide key economic products that serve human needs in areas such as transportation, electricity and household use including lighting, heating and cooking. Several factors have helped shape the growth of the oil and gas industry (Longwell 2002) from the demand for oil products for the sustenance of economic growth to technology advances within the exploration which have led to increased oil production. Guoyu's (2011) analysis shows how the long and complex history of oil and gas as we know it today started from very simple beginnings. As at 1857, the world quantity of oil was only 300 tons, but this has increased steadily and as oil began to substitute coal, the early oil industry witnessed an expansion (Mitchell and Mitchell 2014). New markets were created as oil began to fuel different means of transportation and was used to generate power formerly reliant on coal and "the greatest

exploration success occurred prior to the creation of OPEC[3] driven by large discoveries in the middle east and Russia" (Longwell 2002, p. 101). Statistics show that at the turn of the century, global oil production rose from 20 million tons in 1990 up to 3.36 billion tons as at 2000. This is more than 150-fold rise within the century. This increase in oil production indicates prominence of oil and gas in the global energy industry and discourse.

According to the EIA (2020), developing countries hold majority of the world's potential and proven oil and gas reserves. Africa is richly gifted with oil, gas and added energy resources and according to Longwell (2002), a high level of growth projection of oil and gas consumption is likely to take place in the top two African proven crude oil reserve holders which according to the Energy Information Administration country analysis report of 2017 are Nigeria and Libya. Nigeria also holds the largest natural gas reserves in Africa (EIA 2020). The presence of abundant oil and gas in the West African region has meant that the region has continually dealt with a wide range of issues linked with the oil and gas business sector. The majority of the petroleum producing countries in Africa for example, deal with corruption, civil unrest, inadequate infrastructures (Moller 2010) as well as environmental degradation. For example, the Minister of State Petroleum Resources Nigeria, Dr Ibe Kachikwu, stated in an interview that the reason for the untold hardship and neglect faced in Nigeria's oil producing region is due to misappropriation, diversion and misuse of funds which have been budgeted for the development of this region (Alagbe 2016). This untold hardship further leads to militia, civil unrest as well as unscrupulous ways of getting funds for survival including kidnapping (these will be discussed further in section 3.4). However, the abundant reserves that can be exploited in West Africa and at a low cost remain an attraction (Frynas and Paulo 2006) for production especially to the IOCs because substantial dividends can be gained from investments with very little returns to the country as a whole and its people (Moller 2010).

Nigeria is a sub-Saharan African country with proven vast oil reserves (Akinrele 2016; World Bank 2020). The history of the Nigerian oil and gas industry began when exploration was started by a German company, the Nigerian Bitumen Corporation, in the Araromi area, in the western part of Nigeria, between 1908 and 1914 (Playfoot et al. 2013). Proven crude oil reserves in Nigeria are 37.2 billion barrels according to OPEC (EIA 2017) and many buyers within the international market are attracted by Nigerian oil which is of high quality "and most environmentally friendly relative to oil from other countries" (Badmus et al. 2012, p 47). According to EIA (2020), Nigeria is the eleventh largest oil producer and also the eighth largest exporter of oil in the world but the largest producer of oil in Africa. Moreover, 90 – 95 percent of Nigeria's export revenues is accounted for by the country's oil and gas

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[3] OPEC which is the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries is an intergovernmental organisation whose aim is to unify petroleum policies among member countries

industry (Okotie 2018). Nigeria earns billions of dollars through the exportation of oil. For example, $17 billion was earned in 2016 through oil exports (Nnodim 2018).

3.3 EFFECTS OF OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION – ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND ITS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECT(S)

Though there are numerous economic benefits associated with oil, there are negative impacts of oil and gas exploration and production, and this research focuses on those negative impacts associated with the exploration and production of oil and gas (the upstream sector). The reason for selecting the upstream is due to the nature of the business practices of organisations within this segment which includes drilling and processing of crude oil. These practices have been reported to result in air and environmental pollution. In addition, oil spills are a regular occurrence.

Oil and gas operational practices have been documented (Okpanachi 2011; Yunusa et al. 2016; Okotie 2018) to have negative effects on the environment and the inhabitants of these environments. Oil spills and gas flaring appear to be the two main harmful consequences of the oil and gas practices within the industry (See Murphy et al 2016; Idemudia 2017; Okotie 2018). In addition, some of the effects of these practices will be discussed in a bid to put into context the need for intervention and reduction in environmental degradation caused by these practices through the introduction of sustainable business practices (SBPs). There is a need to understand the wider operational practices of the oil and gas industry. On an international level, the example of the Gulf of Mexico (2010) oil spill will first be discussed as the spill, its cause and effects are well documented as against poor documentation of the cases of oil spills in the Niger Delta region due to the presence of controversies around the matter.

3.3.1 Oil Spill

Oil spill, as stated above, is one of the main detrimental consequences of oil and gas practices. This can occur either on land or water depending on the location of operations. Some of the notable oil spills in the world include the Exxon Valdez, Santa Barbara and the Deepwater Horizon accidents which attracted significant global attention. Oil spills on land and water possess different characteristics as detailed in table 3.1 below.

Oil on land	Oil on water
• Spilled oil is generally slow moving or static. • The oil collects in depressions or against natural and man-made barriers. • Usually the size of the affected area is small and it is easy to define the location and amount of surface area. • Only light oils spread to form a thin layer; there is often considerable pooling of oil. • Weathering slows considerably after approximately 24 hours.	• Spilled oil is moved by winds and/ or currents and often remains in motion for days and sometimes weeks. • The size of the affected area increases with time and it can be difficult to locate some or all of the oil; the oil may submerge or sink. • Oil on the water surface typically spreads to form a very thin layer. • Weathering and emulsification are dynamic processes that continually alter the physical and chemical properties of the oil.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of oil spill on land and water. Source: Stout and Wang (2016).

Although the characteristics differ, the spilt oil changes the areas or environs where the spill has occurred. Effects of oil spills on the environment are numerous and can include lethal toxicity to marine habitats (Murphy et al 2016) as well as inhabitants who depend on these for their livelihood as has been widely documented (Beyer et al. 2016).

According to Kingston (2002), oil contamination can continue within the aquatic environment for numerous years following an oil spill. This can subsequently have a long-term negative impact on the inhabitants within the environs. The issue of long-term negative effect is similar to that of gas flaring (discussed below) where the global warming potential of a kilogram of methane emitted during gas flaring is projected to be twenty-one times more than that of a kilogram of carbon dioxide when the impacts are measured across a hundred years (Ismail and Umukoro 2012).

3.3.2   Gas flaring

A cause for national and global concern is gas flaring (Ismail and Umukoro 2012). According to Boxall et al. (2005), gas flaring is a way of disposing waste gases, which are by-products from oil and gas production (Orubu et al. 2004). These waste gases increase carbon emission and are a fundamental problem worldwide, attracting a lot of attention globally (Yunusa et al. 2016).

Figure 5: 3.1: Image of gas being flared during oil and gas production. Source: Modern diplomacy (2018) https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/07/18/new-satellite-data-reveals-progress-global-gas-flaring-declined-in-2017/ (accessed 28/08/2020).

Though gas flaring is in no way environmentally, socially or economically friendly, it is quite prevalent as organisations find it easier to choose the option of flaring due to very high costs of harnessing such gases for economic use (Malumfashi 2007). Among the countries with the highest gas flare figures is Nigeria (Ishisone 2004), and this has caused substantial climate and infrastructural damage as well as health concerns. The continuous action of gas flaring negates the commitments countries made under the Kyoto Protocol and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to combat climate change under the Paris 2015 agreement (more discussion on this in section 3.5). The World Bank report (2020) states that Nigeria is ranked as the 7th highest in the world for gas flaring based on figures from 2014 - 2019. Not surprising then that it was also reported by the World Bank that Nigeria accounts for 13 percent of world flare figures and according to Okoji (2000), the gas flared by the country could be sufficient to address Nigeria's energy needs. Expectedly, the act of gas flaring has resulted in the loss of approximately $2.5 million dollars annually (Malumfashi 2008) in Nigeria, a country whose public debt is now at a 50 year high according to a 2022 World Bank report (Ikpoto 2022). Based on the 2020 report by the Nigerian gas flare commercialisation project set up by the Nigerian government, the amount of gas flared in Nigeria in 2017 alone amounts to approximately $1billion lost, could generate 300,000 direct and indirect jobs and can be used to generate 3,000MW of electricity for the country. See figure 3.4.
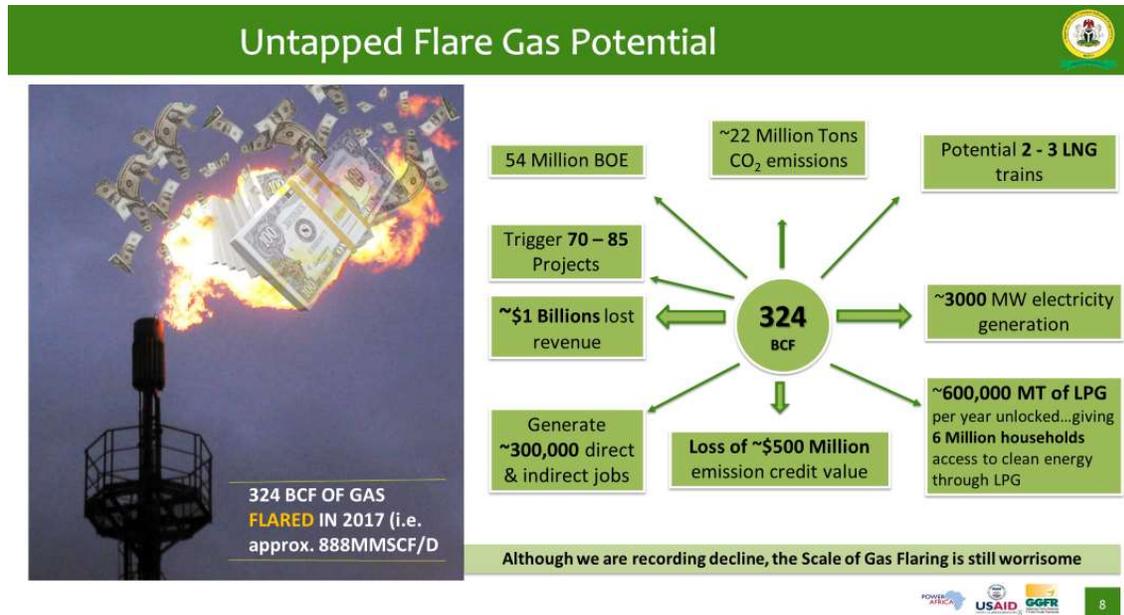
Figure 6: 3.2: Untapped flare gas potential. Source: Derefaka (2020)

In addition to financial loss, there are other negative effects of gas flaring and Ismail and Umukoro (2012) argue that the health of inhabitants of the communities within the locality of the flares are profoundly affected. According to a 2020 report by the Nigerian Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme (NGFCP), 17 onshore gas flare points in Bayelsa state are estimated to cause 120,000 asthma attacks, 4,960 respiratory illnesses among children within the region. As at the time of writing, Covid-19 has been classed as a respiratory illness (WHO 2020) which can mean that individuals who have developed respiratory diseases due to the effects of gas flaring will be more at risk from the virus. Given this fact, it is fortunate that the rate of the Covid-19 spread in Nigeria and the Niger Delta in particular has not been as high as anticipated by experts and scientists. As of September 2020, the total confirmed cases were 58,647 and 1,111 associated deaths and the Niger Delta region accounts for 10,690 and 309 of these figures respectively (NCDC 2020). It was important to note the impact the Covid-19 pandemic may have had on the inhabitants of the Niger Delta to further emphasise the magnitude of the health risks being faced by them due to the impacts of the oil and gas business practices. Evidently consequences of oil and gas practices have negative effects on the livelihood, health and general standard of living of the host communities.

3.4   NIGER DELTA – NIGERIA'S OIL BASIN

The centre of oil exploration and production in Nigeria since 1956 is the Niger Delta region when oil was found in commercial quantity by Shell D'Arcy in Oloiribi in Bayelsa state and production began in 1958 (Okotie 2018). It is classed as Africa's largest wetlands and is one of the largest in the world. The Niger Delta is situated in the South East of Nigeria and spans across an area of approximately 70,000 square kilometres, half of which is a wetland (Ajide 2017). It consists of 9 states – Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, Cross River and Rivers states (Nwankwo and Ogagarue 2012) (see fig 1.1). The population of the region is estimated to be around 30 million people (SDN 2020) with diverse culture and over 40 ethnic groups including Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, Bini amongst others. The Niger Delta region is an enormous floodplain which has been created by the build-up of silt washed down from the Benue and Niger rivers over the centuries. The coastal barrier islands, lowland rainforests, freshwater swamp forests and the mangroves are the four primary ecological zones in the Niger Delta, and it boasts of high biodiversity with numerous exceptional species of animals and plants (Eweje 2006). As succinctly put by Omotola (2006), there is an abundance of wildlife resources within the creeks and lagoons of the Niger Delta as well as a presence of a variety of fauna and flora therefore it is no surprise that the major means of livelihood in the area include farming, fishing and hunting.

As at 2016, there were 606 oil fields in the Niger Delta of which 355 are onshore while 251 are offshore (NNPC 2020) accounting for the country's main source of income. The Niger Delta region is not exempt from the negative impacts discussed previously. Despite the region being responsible for huge income generation for the country, scholars have argued that oil became a curse to the Niger Deltans (See Watts 2008; Idemudia 2009). This view is captured by Watts (2008, p 44) who stated that "by any measure of social achievement the oil states (in Nigeria) are a calamity… nestled shacks, broken down canoes, and children who will be lucky to reach adulthood". On a daily basis, gas flaring and oil spills occur in the Niger Delta (Jike 2004, Asu 2020). Environmental experts have since identified oil spill and gas flaring as a key variable to have had a negative impact on host communities with the Niger Delta region. Murphy et al.'s (2016) study revealed that many residents of the Niger Delta experience chronic and high magnitude exposure to spilled hydrocarbons. This is through their drinking water, contaminated food, outdoor air and skin contact. Based on his empirical study within the Niger Delta region, Ibaba (2001 p. 12) argued that "Oloibiri is a shadow of its former self. Farming which used to be the mainstay of the community's economy has been paralyzed as farmlands have been destroyed, fishing activities grounded, and aquatic life virtually castrated by many years of oil prospecting and exploration.". These effects within the region will be discussed in more detail below.

3.4.1   Effects of oil and gas exploration – Environmental degradation and its social and economic effects on host communities in the Niger Delta

The exploration and production of petroleum resources (Adeniyi 2014) within the region has resulted in gas flaring and oil pollution and these have been cited frequently as a major challenge facing the Niger Deltans and the environment and its sustainability (Idemudia and Ite 2006). These impact negatively on the local communities as their livelihoods such as farming, fishing and hunting are destroyed (Olojede et al 2000; Vertigans 2012). Interviews and household surveys in Nigeria by Idemudia (2009) highlighted that gas flaring and oil spills are the two most negative practices linked to oil production with overwhelming impact on community sources of livelihood (See also Okoko 1999; Okoji 2002; Jike 2004; Watts 2008 and Idemudia 2014). According to Okoko (1999), empirical research has shown the effects of oil spillage within the region which includes:

- Destruction of fish and crustaceans leading to the loss of sources of livelihood and weakening of human nutrition
- Vegetation and soil damage leading to negative impact on agricultural productivity and again damage to human health.

Unfortunately, the Niger Delta became significant not for the anticipated positive benefits of oil production but for its negative impact on host communities. "Despite its vast oil resources, the Niger Delta region still remains poor" (Idemudia and Ite 2006, p 397) both economically and environmentally. Since the discovery of oil, oil wealth has brought along with it social deprivation and environmental catastrophe to the Niger Deltans. Referring to the Niger Delta region, Okpanachi (2011) argues that "with the worst cases of oil spills and gas flaring in the world, oil exploration invariably destroyed livelihoods and wreaked havoc on both flora and fauna in the region" (p 28) (see figures 3.3 and 3.4 below).

Overview: Part of spill impact on 4″ Kanbo 3L Flowline at Egbemo Angalabiri Agbidiama. Picture was taken during Joint Investigation of 30th January 2020.

Figure 7: 3.3: Oil spill in Egbemo Angalabiri Agbidiama Bayelsa state, Nigeria. Source: Shell (2020)
https://www.shell.com.ng/sustainability/environment/oil-spills.html (accessed 15/05/2020).

Overview: Part of spill impact on 20″ Trans Escravos Pipeline at Ugboegugun. Picture was taken during Joint Investigation of 5th January 2020.

Figure 8: 3.4: Oil spill in Ugboegungun, Rivers state, Nigeria. Source: Shell (2020)
https://www.shell.com.ng/sustainability/environment/oil-spills.html (accessed 15/05/2020).

These images paint a truly disturbing picture, but information from the oil and gas organisations show intent of sustainability measures undertaken to ensure that environmental damage is mitigated. For example, according to Shell (2022), the organisation engages with the government, host communities and civil societies to ensure that effective spill clean-up is carried out and cleaned up location is approved and signed off as complete by all parties involved. Despite such declarations, the region and the people within these communities are of the opinion that they are being neglected by the oil and gas industry leading to attacks on oil and gas infrastructure and personnel, sabotage and communal unrest amongst others (Kupolokun 2004, Okpanachi 2011). In addition, due to neglect and loss of livelihood caused by environmental degradation, inhabitants of these host communities get involved in illegal oil bunkering as a source of livelihood resulting in a vicious cycle. Murphy et al (2016, p 7) stated that an "at-risk population that has been relatively neglected in considering the health effects of oil spills is the communities of the Niger Delta in Africa, where almost 7000 spills between 1976 and 2001 released approximately three million barrels of oil". A report produced by Amnesty International (2018) further highlights the extent of the oil spills in the Niger Delta where reports from only two O&G organisations shows that there were 1,830 oil spills between 2011 – 2017 amounting to 21.7 million litres of oil spilled.

Murphy et al (2016) argued that the 'oil-soaked' Niger Delta communities should be 'Ground zero' for human oil exposure. In addition to environmental degradation and loss of livelihood, there has been incessant conflict in the Niger Delta regions as a result of the negative effects mentioned above. Underdevelopment of host communities is a major challenge for Nigeria (Adeniyi 2014) subsequently leading to conflict and violence.

The incessant problems of environmental degradation, poor standard of living, conflict and violence within the Niger Delta region can be viewed from the perspective of three major stakeholders within the region:

- The Federal Government of Nigeria
- The Oil and Gas organisations
- The Host Communities

The relationships between these three stakeholders will be discussed in an attempt to understand how these affect oil and gas operations (and vice versa) within the region. The evaluation of these relationships will further highlight the presence of various factors that can either enable or hinder the implementation of SBPs by oil and gas organisations and also show how HR can align to support the organisation in achieving its sustainability agenda through SBPs implementation.

3.4.2   The Government and the community – their role and impact on oil and gas operations

Ross (2013) argued that though the influence of the IOCs (such as Shell, Mobil) over the destiny of oil producing countries within the developing world was remarkable, for much of the 20th century, such influence has diminished following the nationalisation of these countries' oil industries. Oil curse can be traced back to governments of oil producing countries and a further link to how oil revenues are used by these governments. Oil curse is described as the social, economic and political ailments associated with the presence, exploration and use of oil (Ross 2013). Prior to the discovery of oil in Nigeria, the country's economy was dependent on the exportation of agricultural produce such as palm oil, cocoa, palm kernel and groundnut. The country also exported solid minerals such as coal, tin and bauxite (Oguagha 2017). However, since the discovery of oil, oil revenue has occupied a leading position in the Nigerian economy (Ariweriokuma 2009).

The Nigerian government is a major player within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. There are three tiers of government in Nigeria: the local, state and federal government. The Federal government is further comprised of three main arms: the judicial, legislative and executive. The executive arm of the government is divided into Federal ministries and these ministries are responsible for different government owned corporations such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) which manages the oil and gas business for the federal government. By 1971, six major foreign companies – Agip, Chevron, Elf, Mobil, Shell and Texaco - dominated the oil and gas industry in Nigeria through exploration and production of oil (Odularu 2008). Due to the increase in the number of international oil companies operating within the Nigerian oil and gas industry, the Nigerian government sought for an avenue to increase indigenous participation. Two actions were subsequently taken:

- The Petroleum Act was created to increase its control over oil production.
- In 1977 the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) was set up to regulate the Nigerian oil and gas industry (Playfoot et al. 2013).

Government participation in oil and gas industry can be viewed in two ways: a) participation in the oil and gas exploration and production through joint venture with oil and gas organisations and b) Regulation of the industry through different regulatory agencies shown in table 3.2. The Nigerian government established the Nigerian National Oil Corporation (now NNPC) with the main objective of managing the oil and gas business on behalf of the Federal Government through the acquisition of a controlling interest (joint venture) in all oil and gas companies operating in the Nigerian oil and gas industry (Obi 2014). NNPC which is a state-owned oil company controls and supervises all areas of the Nigerian oil and gas industry (Oguagha 2017). It was further divided into different sectors to achieve its aim. These sectors include the Ministry of Petroleum - the administrative arm of the government which handles policy regulation, administers license bidding rounds, exploration and production (Huem

et al. 2003). Within the Ministry of Petroleum is a key regulatory body which is the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) and its main obligation is to set standards to supervise and control oil and gas operations in the industry (Playfoot et al. 2013). Also established is the Niger Delta Development Commissions (NDDC) whose primary role is the design and implementation of development plans and policies for the Niger Delta (Oguagha 2017).

	Governmental Body	Established	Roles/ Functions
1.	Nigerian Delta dev body (NDDB)	1962	To address the prevalent environmental and developmental challenges rife in the region
2.	Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR)	1971	Have responsibility for approval of field development plans. Responsible for awarding oil mining lease (OML) and oil prospecting license (OPL). Ensure compliance to petroleum laws.
3.	Ministry of Petroleum Resources (MPR)	1975	To monitor, regulate and supervise oil and gas activities and operations through formulation of policy
4.	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC)	1977	Set up to manage government investment in the joint venture
5.	Niger Delta dev commission (NDDC)	2000	Identification, planning and implementation of development projects in the Niger Delta.
6.	Nigerian Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme (NGFCP)	2016	To competently attract third parties to access and use flared gas. It is a market driven program

Table 4: 3.2: Governmental bodies set up to regulate oil and gas activities. Author generated

Owning controlling shares in oil and gas companies makes the Federal Government a party in a joint venture and while governmental bodies set up to regulate the oil and gas industry in Nigeria have created policies and regulations, it has been observed that these policies are not being enforced and that the government sometimes pose as an obstacle to SBPs implementation. In addition, Osobajo (2017) reviewed Nigeria's oil and gas policy documents and found that some issues were not addressed by these. It is then no surprise that in spite of these governmental bodies which have been set up to ensure that the oil and gas industry is well managed and regulated, the problems associated with the industry and within the region still persist.

The Nigerian Government as a player cannot be discussed without the mention of the Niger Delta region and the accompanying problems. The Niger Delta is plagued with a low standard of living and conflict. The struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta has led to the rise of militia who are inhabitants of the host communities in the Niger Delta (Omotola 2006). These militia share in the belief that the oil and gas companies are the source of the problems of environmental degradation, loss of livelihood and

poor standard of living within the region leading to the subsequent attack of oil and gas companies and oil pipelines at intervals in the Niger Delta (Ajide 2017). Another line of argument is presented by Dick (2016, p. 188) who concluded that "the emergence of militancy in the region comes as a result of lack of political will to protect the ecosystem from the consequences of oil exploration". The presence of these militants has led to incessant conflict within the region as they task themselves to fight for justice and be the voice of the people of the Niger Delta. In addition, the region has become a battle zone between the government and militias resulting in the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) deploying the Nigerian Navy and Army into the region to guard oil and gas installations and respond to the attacks of these militia. This is ironic as the situation has worsened following the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999 and unabated gas flaring continues (Okpanachi 2011). This situation is exacerbated by the rise in the use of Niger Delta militants by politicians to attain victory during elections thereby giving credence to their existence and actions. At the same time, the Federal Government has laid the blame of the problems in the Niger Delta on militants, stating that said armed conflicts and militancy were the major factors working against the development of Niger Delta. This severely compromises the provision of basic services and income generating activities (Atoyebi 2019). As a last resort to bring an end to the violence and conflict in the Niger Delta region, a Presidential Amnesty Implementation Committee (PAIC) was set up to manage the amnesty process which involved disarming and rehabilitation of ex-militants back into the society. However, the amnesty programme failed due to a series of challenges including corruption, poor management and funds embezzlement (Ajide 2017).

The failure of the government to achieve the anticipated development within the Niger Delta region in spite of the revenue being generated from the region has led to community antagonism towards the government and a sense of neglect (Osobajo 2017). Despite apparent efforts by the government to alleviate poverty in the Niger Delta region, the crisis continues which according to Okpanachi (2011) is as a result of the prolonged state of neglect as well as discontent with the IOCs, oil spills, environmental degradation and abject poverty (Davis 2009, Idemudia 2014, Okotie et al. 2018). In addition, Okonta and Douglas (2003) maintain that the relationship between the host communities and the oil and gas companies is broken down. The negative impact of the oil and gas operations is mainly felt by the host communities. The view of the host communities about the federal government and the oil and gas companies is such that the communities see both actors as adversaries to be opposed (Ibeanu 2006). The fight for justice for the Niger Delta by armed groups has also served as a means for some undesirable activities including oil pirates and illegal bunkering (Obi 2004) thereby worsening the situation within the region. This is still the case as the governor of Edo state (one of the oil states) Gov. Obaseki recently bemoaned the incessant theft of oil in the Niger Delta amounting to a loss of 22 million barrels of oil within the first six months of 2019 (Shittu 2019). Shell (2022) has also

reported that "from observation and experience we have found that Illegal refining activities cause the most environmental damage in the Niger Delta, whilst at SPDC-JV facilities, crude oil theft and sabotage cause the majority of oil spills". The illegal bunkering is viewed by the host communities as a way of taking what is theirs i.e., the oil. Kupolokun (2004), Ado (2007), Joab-Peterside (2007) and Okpanachi (2011) all opine that government intervention did not bring the much-needed peace and relief to the Niger Delta region. On the contrary, it has been argued that government involvement has led to the worsening situation in the region (see Hazen and Horner 2007, Davis 2009, Obi 2009). This includes non-fulfilment of government promises and the use of militants for political violence. An example of this is seen through the protest of non-payment of allowances promised to former Niger Delta militants by the Federal Government (Akasike 2019) as well as the protest of women from oil producing communities for alleged neglect and underdevelopment of their communities due to allocated funds not being released despite government promises (Igoni 2020).

Watts (2004) asserted that government dependency on crude oil revenue has resulted in the government enacting certain laws and decrees that are unfavourable to the communities in the region. For example, the Land Use Act. Ojakorotu and Gilbert (2010) maintained that the Land Use Act disempowered and disinherited the people of the Niger Delta. Though the federal government lays claim to the land where oil and gas are explored, the communities perceive themselves as very important to the success of oil and gas organisations operating in the Niger Delta. Ajide (2017) describes how the traditional rulers of these communities perceive themselves as major actors in maintaining a good relationship between the communities and the oil and gas organisations. Ajide (2017) asserts that the traditional rulers play a vital role within the oil and gas discourse in the Niger Delta through several ways including serving as the go between for discussions and negotiations between the oil and gas companies and communities. Also, lands are owned by individuals and communities who are in turn governed by the traditional leaders (Wopara 2015). However, though these lands are owned by the communities and members of the communities, the Federal Government controls the oil as a resource which is mined from these lands, and this brings further frustration to the communities.

In addition to the frustrations caused by environmental degradation and dearth of basic infrastructure, the states do not have the authority to "monitor and enforce compliance with environmental laws" (Okpanachi 2011, p. 37). According to Chief DSP Alamieyeseigha, a former governor of Bayelsa state, even though the activities of the oil and gas organisations are undertaken in areas belonging to the oil states, these states are prohibited by law from penalising the "polluters and destroyers of the environment" (Alamieyeseigha 2003 In Okpanachi 2011, p. 37). That is due to the fact that oil and mining subjects are reserves of the federal government and this is specified in Nigeria's constitution exclusive legislative list.

Since 1956 when oil was discovered in the Niger Delta, increase in oil production has been paralleled with deterioration in ecological sustainability (Okpanachi 2011). Okpanachi argued that communal crisis and unrest stemmed from the annihilation of the ecosystem which provided sustenance for host communities as well as repression of people both by the IOCs operating in these communities and the government/ military state.

3.4.2.1 <u>**Niger Delta – The Ongoing Conflict**</u>

It is vital to uncover and determine the reasons for the conflicts within the region in order to determine the best ways of resolving such conflicts (Berman 2000). The quote "Blood may be thicker than water, but oil is thicker than both" Anderson (2001, p 10) rings true in the Niger Delta as oil appears to be the underlying factor for many economic and environmental actions in the region. The transfer of powers over oil and oil revenue from the IOCs to the government of oil countries has resulted in ethnic minorities of oil producing regions taking up arms to contest for a bigger share of government revenues from oil (Ross 2013). August 2007 saw a horrendous period of chaos and bloodletting in Port Harcourt, one of the cities within the Niger Delta region (Watts 2008). Between 1999 and 2004, the breakage of pipelines due to sabotage and vandalism almost doubled from 497 – 895 with an estimated cost of 6.8 billion USD. The escalation of violence in the Niger Delta is multi-faceted and complex and involves destruction of oil installations and infrastructures (Watts 2008). According to Idemudia (2017), the conflict in the Niger Delta appears to have been shaped by three major factors: a) occupancy of ethnic minorities, b) fear of heterogeneity led to enactment of decrees that dispossesses the Niger Delta people of their ownership of the petroleum or land and c) the oil extracted makes up for 95 percent of the exports of the country. The issue of the Niger Deltans being part of the ethnic minorities in Nigeria means that the possibility of being overlooked for certain benefits and instances of decision-making process is highly likely. Being side-lined then increases the level of resentment and conflict. In addition, the Niger Deltans believe that the land and the oil mined from it belongs to them and they therefore should have a claim to it. This then means that being dispossessed of the land by the Federal Government has led to more resentment and conflict. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was set up in 2000 with the sole responsibility of developing the Niger Delta region. This commission is funded with proceeds from the oil income. Despite the formation of this commission and the funds being provided, the region remains in abject poverty. The fact that the region accounts for majority of the wealth/ income of the country but is severely underdeveloped has resulted in ongoing conflict between the IOCs and the communities. In fact, the economic interests of these oil and gas organisations often clash with interests of the community and protecting the environment. Cillers (2001) posits that IOCs operating in conflict zones face a dilemma of obtaining economic benefits for the organisation and performing actions that will foster peace and bring about sustainable development.

This strengthens the argument for the need for more sustainable ways of doing business. Frynas (2006), Idemudia (2017), Melkoyan et al (2017), Cha et al (2018) have all posited ways to achieve this through CSR and so on but the problems persist. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the role HR can play in the transition towards sustainable business practices in the oil and gas industry to assist in striking the necessary balance between economic benefits of oil and achieving sustainability.

Eweje (2006) revealed that inhabitants of Ogoniland, are of the opinion that there are various factors which cause environmental degradation, citing oil spills and wastes, flooding and gas flaring as stated above, however these problems and their causes are viewed differently by different stakeholders. On one hand it could be said to indicate that the oil and gas organisations may be, to some degree, transferring some blame to the communities and not taking full responsibility of the effects of their practices on the environment. On the other hand, communities are involved in sabotage as a way of claiming what they believe is rightfully theirs and blaming the oil and gas organisations for the consequences of their actions. To complicate matters further, there is also a presence of intracommunity conflicts. These conflicts can stem from different issues including conflicting interests, land ownership disputes, boundary disputes as well as lack of trust and confidence in community traditional leaders. Ajide (2017) demonstrated that different actors within the communities are not open and honest with each other with regards to oil and gas matters leading to conflicts.

In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that the traditional leaders are not objective, and some people may question how effectively they represent the people with regards to oil and gas disputes and negotiations with the oil and gas organisations.

Eweje (2006) went further to argue that multinational oil corporations "have a moral responsibility to protect the physical environment and society in which they carry out their operations" (p 37). On the other hand, it can be said that the oil and gas organisations attempt to compensate the host communities for the environmental degradation caused by their business practices, but this is not always successful as stated by Idemudia (2017) who claims that "it can rarely be certain that the compensation will reach those for whom it is intended" (p. 42). Amnesty International in their 2018 report maintained that the oil and gas organisation has a duty of care to the environment and the communities regardless of the reason or cause of an oil spill. One can then argue that the best solution would be to prevent these occurrences (environmental degradation) and this could be demonstrated and achieved through the implementation of sustainable business practices by oil and gas organisations to limit the impact of their business operations.

3.4.3   The oil and gas organisations

Ross (2013) posits that IOCs that go into oil rich countries to exploit these resources for profit are to blame for the problems related to oil exploration. The "polluters and destroyers of the environment" as previously referred to by Chief Alamieyeseigha are the oil and gas organisations, a majority of which are IOCs, operating within the Niger Delta (Okpanachi 2011). Oil and gas upstream operations including drilling, laying pipes and the associated negative consequences of such practices like oil spills result in environmental degradation. Therefore, oil and gas organisations have come under fire due to the effects of their practices during exploration and production following a call for greater awareness of sustainability and climate change as discussed in chapter two (sustainability and sustainable business practices).

Oil and gas companies have contributed to the conflict in the Niger Delta (Frynas 2005; Idemudia 2017; Okotie 2018) because the host communities protest due to the oil and gas organisations' neglect of the negative effects of their operations on these communities. Ajide (2017) asserted that there is a breakdown of trust and understanding between the communities and the oil and gas organisations which is reflected by the lack of understanding of community perceptions by companies when planning their strategy which impacts the community-company relationship. This is argued further by Idemudia and Ite (2006) who note that there is lack of in-built sustainability mechanisms within these projects. This is in addition to poor community involvement in the design and implementation of these projects which lead to their failure. The General Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU) which is an agreement between the host communities and the oil and gas organisations and a proper means of engaging and communicating with the communities (Egbon et al 2018) might be seen to be a mechanism to address this concern. However, poor community and company relations is prevalent due to two factors which are: a) lack of consideration for the views of the communities, and b) the domination of the oil industry by the government and the oil and gas companies.

Though different stakeholders within the oil and gas industry are obligated by law to observe stipulated environmental and safety standards when executing their operations, corruption and compromise by industry regulators as well as the lack of appropriate and adequate penalty for perpetrators by the judicial body have resulted in lack of compliance (Ite et al., 2016; Odumosu, 2016). This unsustainable state of affairs has led to the evolution of various environmental human rights organisations such as the Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) and Environmental Right Action (ERA). Such bodies have been created to monitor the activities of the Nigerian government and oil and gas companies and ensure basic human rights and demand responsive governance (SDN 2020). These human rights organisations work on varieties of programmes that aim for inhabitants to live in a safe and healthy environment, and for the oil and gas companies to be governed responsibly with minimal negative impacts to the environment and the inhabitants of these environments.

It is clear that a challenge facing the oil and gas industry is to produce oil in an environmentally sound way as well as economically. Fears over possible climate change have led to a call for better regulation of energy rise and could well hinder our capacity to yield sufficient amounts of energy (Longwell 2002). Several initiatives which will be discussed in section 3.5 have been designed to reduce these impacts (also taking into context global impact referred to in section 3.2). The organisations operating in the Niger Delta have adopted a number of strategies to lessen the impact of their operations on the communities, deal with conflicts and ensure that business operations continue with as little interruption as possible. The most common and widespread initiative is corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR has been utilised with the aim of achieving these within the Niger Delta region. This will now be discussed, and its effectiveness in providing necessary solution to the problems within the Niger Delta described in previous sections will be assessed.

3.5   SUSTAINABILTY PRACTICES IN THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY: CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

As we have seen (see section 2.5) various authors have described CSR in different ways. The theoretical context of CSR has been discussed previously in chapter two. The focus in this section will be to discuss how organisations apply these initiatives and their effectiveness towards responding to some of the negative impacts from the oil and gas operations in the Niger Delta.

3.5.1   <u>CSR in Nigeria</u>

According to Idemudia (2017), IOCs in the Niger Delta appear to adopt the 'coping CSR strategy' (Jamali and Ramez 2010) with regards to keeping the peace. Empirical evidence to support this is presented through Idemudia's (2009) study in Akwa Ibom (Niger Delta) where CSR initiatives are initiated but never followed through. As a result, company-community relations still remain tense (Ogula 2012) and conflicts abound. According to Idemudia and Ite (2006), expectations of the communities of responsible corporate behaviour mostly form the origin and underlying factor for community behaviour towards organisations. Frustrations of host communities of not being listened to tends to lead to conflict and violence which are costly to the oil and gas organisations. For example, in 2006, SPDC lost $6.8 million a day as a result of violence in the Niger Delta (Watts 2008). These continued outbreaks of violence and conflict despite CSR efforts by the oil and gas organisations, indicate a need for further actions. Ogula (2012) posited that an understanding of expectations of the host communities will assist organisations operating in such communities to integrate such expectations into their CSR strategies to achieve better results.

According to Idemudia (2017), there have been unilateral attempts by IOCs to resolve conflict in the ND through Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) which details CSR initiatives to be set up such as the delivery of schools, roads and hospitals. However, these efforts have had negative rather than positive outcomes due to poorly executed agreed MOUs (Idemudia 2010). A specific cause of conflict is the issues surrounding environmental degradation and "there are limits to what CSR alone can achieve" (Idemudia 2017, p. 52).

3.5.2   CSR as a tool to achieve sustainable development

Some scholars have argued that IOCs have felt obliged to make up for the failure of the state to provide basic infrastructure (Ite 2007, Aaron 2012). CSR interventions are therefore based on the organisations' perception of the needs of the communities (Schultze-Kraft 2013) indicating that the CSR strategy adopted is not 'high CSR', based on classification of Jamaila and Ramez (2010) where collaboration with host communities is necessary.

Aaron (2012) argues that IOCs efforts are unsustainable as most initiatives do not address the communities' needs and those that do, are not well maintained. Instead, a culture of dependence on the IOCs was created (Ite 2007) which then led to a rethinking of corporate driven community strategy. Nzeadibe et al (2017) termed what followed as community directed intervention (CDI) strategy. To achieve this, the concept of General Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU) was introduced to ensure community "participation in identifying development needs" (p 377) for the community. Nevertheless, Aaron (2012) has maintained that Shell and Cheveron's adoption of the GMOU is yet to achieve the benefits of sustainable development for the Niger Delta people. Faleti (2009) argues that though host communities are largely and regularly annoyed and displeased due to the environmental degradation caused by oil and gas practices, these environmental issues and their remedies are not captured in the GMOU. Nzeadibe et al (2017) found this to be the case based on their empirical study within the region. Such argument of the ineffectiveness of the GMOU is strengthened by research carried out by SDN (2021 p. 1) who report that "This sounds good on paper, but the structures are not robust enough to ensure meaningful participation and accountability… the decision-makers claim that community members will always nominate projects that satisfy the very basic needs and are ignorant to climate resilience". They stated that community respondents believe that the organisation (in this case Shell) already have a predetermined approval list which does not contain matters of climate change or the environment. This gives the adoption of the GMOU the appearance of a tick box exercise resulting in the persistence of the prevalent problems within the Niger Delta.

Many of the host communities and observers perceive the CSR practices in the Niger Delta as actions taken to protect the organisation's reputations or cosmetic attempts to act in a socially responsible way

(Ite 2004). There appears to be no real sense of urgency with regards to CSR activities in the Niger Delta where concerns of communities are not dealt with urgently. For example, continuous gas flaring despite complaints of its effects by the host communities (Idemudia 2009). Indeed ground-breaking research carried out by Amnesty International found that the Ogoniland in the Niger Delta region is still being polluted through oil and gas practices (Amnesty International 2018).

3.6 GUIDELINES OF OIL AND GAS PRACTICES – SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

In order to ensure IOCs can achieve their stated aims of operating more sustainably the question needs to be asked: what can be done from within the organisation to bring about effective transition towards sustainable business practices implementation by oil and gas organisations and ensure minimal environmental degradation? This research intends to explore this question and in order to understand the context such interventions would take place in, it is imperative to evaluate what is being done within the industry to achieve sustainability.

3.6.1 International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA)

The International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA) is a non-profit association which provides a forum that encourages constant improvement in performance within the oil and gas industry. It is currently the only international association which involves both the downstream and upstream sectors of the oil and gas industry. The association is founded on the belief that issues that dominate sustainable development (SD) agenda are too big for individual companies to tackle alone and therefore the industry must work together to achieve improvements that have real impact. Subsequently, at the request of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the association was established in 1974 to advance a shared industry response to social and environmental issues.

It is interesting to note that IPIECA work on environment issues does not include drilling practices and their consequences on society and environment. Also, despite initiatives and partnership set up to deal with oil spill issues, the problem persists as seen in section 3.4. This suggests that these initiatives are yet to achieve their set goal or not being implemented within the Niger Delta. IPIECA guidance publications for good practice within the oil and gas industry include suggested guidelines which all oil and gas organisations should adhere to in the course of their daily practices to achieve sustainability. Sustainability reporting in particular has been adopted by many oil and gas organisations due to its benefits.

3.6.1.1 <u>Sustainability Reporting</u>

Clear reliable sustainability reporting is aimed at assisting oil and gas companies in creating a platform for productive engagement with stakeholders and drive performance enhancements.

Given the fact that there are several IOCs within the IPIECA who operate in Nigeria, there is an expectation that these companies will comply with the set guidelines and standards in all areas in which they operate.

3.6.2 <u>Oil and Gas Climate Initiative</u>

Oil and gas climate initiative (OGCI) is a voluntary CEO-led initiative taking practical actions on climate change, consists of 13 members including Total, Shell, Eni, ExxonMobil, Chevron (all of whom operate in Nigeria) and account for 32 percent of global operated oil and gas production. They have three objectives:

- Reducing energy value chain footprint,
- Accelerating low-carbon solutions and
- Enabling a circular carbon model.

In line with the objectives, a target has been set to achieve zero routine flaring by 2030 - reduce methane and recycle carbon as well as reduce carbon emissions. One of the ways by which the OGCI aims to drive the industry response to climate change is through climate investments supporting low carbon technology and projects thereby supporting the Paris Agreement and its aims.

3.6.3 <u>Paris Agreement</u>

At Community of Parties 21 (COP21) in Paris, on December 12, 2015, parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reached a landmark agreement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future. It brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so. The agreement provides for an enhanced transparency framework for action and support.

The recently concluded cop26 held in Glasgow UK in November 2021 saw commitments from 153 countries (including Nigeria) to reduce GHG and achieve net zero (zero emission) by 2030. This commitment is particularly relevant to the oil and gas industry and the oil and gas organisations have been seen to focus on the achievement of the SDGs as well as these targets. The achievement of these will be an indication of the necessary transition towards sustainability.

3.6.4 <u>Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI)</u>

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) was initiated in 2002 at the world summit for sustainable development in Johannesburg SA. The assumption was that the companies in the extractive industries are not transparent in their dealings and therefore the call for transparency will encourage oil and gas organisations to follow set guidelines to ensure sustainability. Nigeria was the first country, out of 24 countries in Africa, to sign on to EITI (NEITI 2010a). Nigeria became a member of the EITI in 2003 and was "the first and only EITI member nation to make the EITI part of its national laws" (Brief History of NEITI, 2016, p xx). This is in addition to the implementation of the Nigerian Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (NEITI).

However according to Adunbi (2019), the focus of NEITI is on the revenue stream of the extractive industries and pays no attention to the impact of the extractive practices on the "… daily, lived experiences of the impact people who live in extractive industries" (p xx) – a burning issue within the Niger Delta. This is a significant flaw as a focus on the operations and their impact could lead to a higher level of accountability and awareness of impacts and subsequently lead to implementation of sustainable business practices.

The Nigerian extractive industries transparency initiative (NEITI) act stipulated that a fine of 30 million naira (approx. £60,000), upon conviction, will be levied on any extractive organisation who does not provide accurate and timely information. However, a very fundamental issue with transparency within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria is the opaque use of revenues from the oil and gas especially within the oil and gas host communities. For example, according to Senator Ita Enang, the special adviser to the President on Niger Delta, funds from oil and gas meant for the development of the Niger Delta are being diverted to other use especially personal gains. This he argued is being done by the Niger Delta governors (Punch 2020). Also, Ross (2013) opined that governments frequently conspire with IOCs to have their transactions concealed. Therefore, it appears that Federal Government efforts and involvement will be required along with a change in oil and gas practices to resolve the prevalent issues (Okpanachi 2011) of environmental degradation and human and economic sustainability of host communities.

Despite the widely acclaimed success of NEITI, Rustad et al. (2016) argue that NEITI has fallen short by failing to exact further reaching objectives for societal development. The majority of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta area are impoverished due to the impacts of oil and gas operations in the region (Adunbi 2019). "The exploitation of oil in the Niger Delta has been causing catastrophic environmental impacts for years but nowhere in the EITI/ NEITI proposition is the issue of environmental degradation addressed because such is not considered as important to transparency…" (Adunbi 2019, p 807) resulting in the neglect of a major concern of host communities. As discussed in section 3.3, thousands

of barrels of oil have been spilled every year over the past 50 years without effective clean up initiated. Due to the secrecy surrounding spills, it is likely these numbers are much higher (Allen 2012). This amount of spill plainly has a massive impact on the environment. Adunbi (2019) argued that when spills happen, organisations are "not held accountable" rather the blame is laid on the communities citing sabotage 'against the state' (p 807). This stance could also affect the sense of responsibility of the oil and gas organisations in taking actions to tackle the issue of environmental degradation (more discussion on this in chapter seven where the opinion of respondents on subject matter are analysed and discussed).

CONCLUSION

The oil and gas industry in Nigeria is characterised by a complex political, social and economic environment that affects the implementation of SBPs. For IOCs, HR would need to help navigate this environment in order to support the oil and gas organisations in the transition towards the effective implementation of SBPs. Environmental responsibility entails a method or approach which involves removing emissions and waste, assessing business products and circumventing business practices which are not environmentally friendly (Eweje 2006), all areas which HR can assist with. Due to an increase in awareness of the negative effects of oil and gas practices on the environment and how this affects the lives and health of host communities, oil and gas organisations came under immense pressure to "do more for their host communities in order to justify their continued operations" (Eweje 2006, p 36). This chapter shows that the problems caused by oil and gas operations persist, more so in the Niger Delta, despite the initiatives that have been developed to tackle and reduce these negative impacts by the Federal Government and the organisation through CSR. This creates an argument for the need for a different approach to the implementation of sustainable business practices within the industry.

Both the communities and the government can also be seen as barriers to SBPs implementation, however ways to address this is not within the scope of this study and much research has already been undertaken to show the relationship between the government and the community (See Ajide 2017, Osobajo 2017). It is apparent that there are a number of factors in play within the oil and gas industry itself and despite a number of initiatives the problems still persist, hence the focus of this research on what role HR can play from within the organisation to support in the effective implementation of SBPs within the oil and gas industry. In addition, given the nature of the HR role, the potential of HR involvement in the transition towards such implementation can be explored through strategic, tactical, operational and monitoring and evaluation levels to help ensure that the employees within these organisations are well equipped to carry out SBPs implementation effectively. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

HUMAN RESOURCE (HR) AND THE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF THE RESEARCH

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Having set out the context and some of the limitations of this study (i.e., it is not concerned with either government or community interventions and does not delve into the colonial underpinnings of the concepts of CSR and sustainability), this chapter focuses on the roles/functions of Human Resources (HR) with regards to achieving sustainability goals within organisations especially within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. The chapter starts with a discussion of the theoretical assumptions of organisations and the dynamics that underpin social interactions within an organisation. A historical overview of three fields that make up the next generation HR – Human Resource Management (HRM), Human Resource Development (HRD) and Organisational Development (OD) – is then provided using the operational and strategic, and reactive and proactive classifications. The chapter goes on to critically discuss the strategic role of HR in the organisation and highlights the call for the strategic involvement of HR in the sustainability discourse. A brief discussion of sustainability is undertaken from an organisational and HR perspective. The chapter then concludes by discussing various HR sustainability initiatives as put forward by scholars within the field, how HR can aid in the attainment of sustainability on a practical level.

4.2 THE ORGANISATION AND ITS SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

In order to better understand the principles that could guide effective HR interventions to assist in delivering SBPs it is useful to go beneath superficial understandings about how individuals behave in organisations and draw on research that examines the deeper motivations and impetuses which inform both behaviours and beliefs.

4.2.1   <u>Understanding the organisation</u>

A steady rise in the number of organisations has led to a variety of attempts at understanding the multiple and competing objectives of participants in organisations (Cyert and March 1963 in Scott 2003). Organisations are 'complex and multifaceted' (Morgan 1998 p. 3) and permit the generation, diversification and management of expertise, knowledge and resources over space and time in endlessly diverse ways, always restructuring social life in the process (Webb 2006). Though organisations are varied, Silverman (1970) maintained that they possess three unique characteristics. An organisation:

- Is a purposefully established 'relic' with goals and rules which can be 'displaced' at some point. This means that the organisation is usually set up with a goal/ purpose in mind, the goals can change, and the organisation can cease to exist at some point in the future.
- Has relationship patterns – there are social interactions within the social actors within the organisation which can lead to relationship patterns being developed.
- Its planned changes in social relations are given required attention meaning that changes within the organisation are planned and proper attention given to such planned changes.

These characteristics highlight the active nature of organisational interactions through setting of goals, dealing with changes as well as the continuous social interactions that occur in the process. This aligns to the nature of the organisation created to bring about the achievement of specific goals.

Organisations are instruments used to accomplish goals that would have been otherwise hard or impossible for isolated individuals to attain on their own (Handel 2003). A more comprehensive description is offered by Scott (2003):

> "Organizations as social structures created by individuals to support the collaborative pursuit of specified goals. Given this conception, all organizations confront a number of common problems: all must define (and redefine) their objectives; all must induce participants to contribute services; all must control and coordinate these contributions; resources must be garnered from the environment and products, or services dispensed; participants must be selected, trained, and replaced; and some sort of working accommodation with the neighbours must be achieved". (p. 11)

So organisations are dynamic and require various social interactions in their quest to function and thrive. In corporations these social interactions can all be linked to HR functions within the organisation from recruitment and selection, through employee performance management, to training and development. Webb (2006) argued that 'organisations cannot be understood either solely as structures inhabited by passive and entirely interchangeable people, or solely as the sum of their constituent actors' (p. 6).

4.3   THE THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE ORGANISATION

Organisation theory is focused on the understanding of, explanation and prediction of human behaviour within organisations (Bowey 1976). In the quest to understand and predict these behaviours, scholars have taken different views of an organisation.

Older understandings of organisations tend to view the individuals within them as cogs in the wheel of a machine (e.g., Weber 1962) or as oppressed with organisations acting as instruments of domination.

For instance, Karl Marx maintained that organisations unjustly extracted surplus value from their employees for their own gain. Such perspectives are reflected in more recent studies in developing countries; people are dispossessed (Hartman et al. 2003) or their means of livelihood destroyed in the organisation's bid to achieve its aim (Idemudia 2009) as is the case in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Similarly, Benn et al (2014) argue that organisations are coming more and more under fire for providing substandard or harmful products due to a focus on a financial bottom line. Organisations are often viewed as instruments of domination to further their interests at the expense of others (Morgan 1998).

An alternative perspective sees the organisation as organic emphasising growth, adaptation and environmental interactions (See Hannan and Freeman 1975; 2005). Here the organisation is seen to influence as well as be influenced by its environment. An organisation can adapt to its environment through a change in its internal processes to enable survival.

Organisations can also be understood based on cultures which are in turn based on values, norms and beliefs (Schein 1996) and the organisational culture affects the behaviours of employees within the organisation. For example, if an organisation has an environmentally conscious outlook, beliefs and values, then its practices would reflect such.

For the purpose of this study, the organisation is viewed as a unit which has been set up to achieve set goal(s), are guided by rules and there are social interactions, through communication of information, within the organisation which can encourage or hinder the achievement of set goal(s) such as SBPs. This view informed the study's approach in determining how the culture within the organisation can affect goal attainment and how such culture can be developed through the actions of employees within the organisation both at the strategic and operational levels.

4.3.1   Action and organisations

HR is a branch of management which concerns how human beings behave and how those behaviours are managed within an organisation. Weber (1947) classified actions into affectual (emotional), traditional ('always done it this way'), value-rational (desire goal for self-interest) and instrumentally rational action (most efficient means of achieving goals).

HR and sociology have some areas in common when it comes to considering the links between organisations and why humans act the way they do. Bowey (1976) pointed out that:

a) Sociology is concerned with *meaningful action (author's emphasis)* and not just behaviour

b) Particular meanings persist through their reaffirmation in actions

c) Actions can also lead to changes in meanings' (p. 56)

For instance, if an individual receives a desirable response to his/her actions, then s/he is likely to repeat such actions thereby allowing the persistence of these actions.

We might wonder 'who controls and what are the consequences of that control' (Hinings and Greenwood 2002, p. 413). They posit that this control, which is the unanticipated consequences of bureaucracy, can be addressed through a focus on the understanding of dynamics within the organisation. Walton (2005) maintains that bureaucracy has remained the dominant organisational form within business organisations to coordinate comprehensive shared activity. Bureaucracies can also be used for substantial collaborative efforts in addition to being 'instruments of domination' (Ingvaldsen and Engesbak, 2020) used by organisations to ensure that employees are aligned, and organisational goals achieved. Certainly, it can be argued that O&G IOCs are bureaucratic organisations – so, within these organisations exploring 'who controls and what are the consequences of that control' could be a useful lens for the research.

4.4 GOAL ATTAINMENT FROM AN ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Scott's (2003) description of an organisation (see section 4.2.1) highlights the need for the control and coordination of participants and their actions within the organisation to achieve set organisational goals where organisational participants are individuals who, in exchange for a range of incentives, make contributions within the organisation (Simon 1997). It is crucial to highlight from the onset that participants are, above all, social actors; the structure of the organisation is shaped by their energy, ideas, their conformity and nonconformity to rules and these aid the organisation carry on its functions (Scott and Davis 2007). Weber (1962) posited that an action is 'social' if the individual undertaking the action also takes into account action and possible reactions of others and acts accordingly. Therefore, by reflecting on their situation and choices available to them at any point, s/he (a social actor) uses their consciousness to shape their world in a variety of ways. Social actors can bring about both continuity and change which is the creation of novelty and innovation (Bourdieu 1977 trans.). That is to say actions of social actors i.e., employees within the organisation, can be aligned to bring about change within the organisation. Change which could be in the form of implementation of new processes to enable the realisation of organisational goals; in the case of this study – sustainable business practices (SBPs) implementation (as previously discussed, see chapter two). Employees as social actors can, through inculcation of necessary values and beliefs, develop behaviours that would align to organisational goals. An example is given of Intel, where employees aligned their actions and ideas to create a positive impact for the company and the society in which they operate in relation to sustainability (Aguinis and Glavas 2013). The implication for HR, whose role is people management within the organisation is that they have the task of ensuring proper alignment of employees to implement such changes. This could be

through performance management and/or remuneration. It can then be argued from a management perspective that the organisation has the responsibility to ensure that employees are aligned to its goals. Positioning this argument to the focus of this study, there is a need to communicate the organisation's sustainability agenda and goal(s) to the employees. Such goals include the effective implementation of SBPs and to ensure that these are achieved, the employees need to understand what their role(s) will be. HR can support through creating awareness and building the knowledge of employees to understand the benefits of SBPs implementation and the importance of employee participation. This would in turn build the desired behaviours and culture which would lead to voluntary actions towards the achievement of SBPs implementation.

Although the definitions discussed so far indicate that one of the reasons for the formation of organisations is the achievement of goals, there are dynamics within the organisation that can either enable the achievement or encourage the non- attainment of said organisational goals. Consequently, there are factors to consider – how does the organisation ensure that individuals align to its set processes and standards to enable goal attainment? How do individuals within the organisation ensure that they are not exploited by the organisation (see section 4.4.1.3)? Actions within the organisation can be determined by both the organisation and the individuals within it. These include actions taken with the view of achieving set objectives.

However, organisations are also structured on principles which include bureaucracy, control, inequality and impersonality (Korten 2001; Scott 2003) and these principles can hinder progress of goal attainment within the organisation – organisational goals. Such hindrances also be said to be more apparent with large corporation as pointed out by Korten (2001) who maintained that there is increasing power of the multinational corporations (MNC) in their pursuit for cheap labour while despoiling the environment, and in so doing disrupt the permanence of stable communities (see section 2.3 and chapter three for examples of these). Despite all of these criticisms, MNCs, and indeed all organisations remain functional due to certain principles put in place within the organisation to ensure that all participants (employees) continuously work towards the same goals by ensuring that their actions remain focused and aligned to the organisational goal. These principles will be discussed in detail in the next section.

4.4.1   Principles of organisational interactions

4.4.1.1   Control
Godwyn and Gittell (2012 p. xx) defined control as "the alignment of behaviour with a particular set of goals or interest". Aligning this to an organisational setting, it can be argued that behaviours of employees can be set to fit the organisation's goals. In line with this, respondents expressed opinions

that controls within the organisation are needed in order to ensure sustainability agenda is achieved. These could be internal and external controls including regulatory bodies, regulations as well as monitoring and evaluation within the organisation. Internal controls could be in the form of control of wages and employee actions within the organisations to maintain uniformity, stability, and constant alignment to goals. For example, employees can also be placed, by management, within positions or functions that are deemed fit to enable the achievement of organisational goals.

The claim that control is used to achieve goals within an organisation is strengthened by the results of the research by Tannenbaum (1968) which showed that organisations with higher total control levels (that is higher levels of mutual influence and interdependence) were seen to be more successful in pursuit of their goals compared to organisations with lower levels of control. It can then be argued that since there is a high level of control in hierarchical authority structures and this leads to achievement of organisational goals, then goals such as SBPs implementation can be achieved in oil and gas organisations which operates on a hierarchical authority structure. Control could be in the form of control of wages and employee actions within the organisations to maintain uniformity, stability and constant alignment to goals. What does this then mean for HR within the organisation? Although individuals can join an organisation out of self-interest as put forward by rationalist theorists (Such as Weber 1962), there needs to be a balance with organisational interest. This is where HR can help ensure that individual self-interests do not take precedence, and this can be done through HR functions such as training and induction, performance evaluation as well as rewards for compliance and performance. These could help in ensuring that employees' interests and actions remain aligned to attainment of the organisation's goal of SBPs implementation.

Another issue that cannot be sidestepped, as argued by Eldridge and Crombie (1974), is that of power and its distribution within the organisation. Weber (1947) maintained that 'power is the possibility that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests' (p. 152). Types of power include normative, remunerative and coercive while types of involvement associated with these types of power include calculative, moral and alienative respectively (Eldridge and Crombie 1974). They posited that 'a certain minimum of assured power to issue commands, thus of 'authority', must be provided for in nearly every conceivable case' (p. 328). From this line of argument, it can be said that some level of power is needed to issue commands to get tasks done. However, according to Flood and Room (2018), processes of power may stop important participation of stakeholders in tasks within the organisation. The literature review conducted on the oil and gas industry (see chapter three) has revealed there is an issue of power distribution within the oil and gas industry. The review showed that the major stakeholders within the industry wielded some level of power and authority in different ways and this affects the possibility for actions to be taken by individuals both within and outside the organisation with regards to sustainability.

The importance of power and authority to carry out tasks within the oil and gas organisations affects the achievement of goals within the organisation including goals such as SBPs implementation where lower-level employees within the organisation cannot take decisions except issued by top management.

It is important that HR ensures that employees are not just submitting to the sustainability rules due to weakness/ helplessness in their position but because they identify with the cause. This can be done through employee engagement and training to understand benefits of SBPs implementation. However, it is also important to highlight that the enforcement of control and power by the organisation ensure achievement of goals and lack of conflict as employees may seek to exercise their freedom to make choices of their own (further discussion in section 4.4.1.3). Also, HR would need to be aware of these challenges and align their functions to address them in order to achieve set goals.

4.4.1.2 **Bureaucracy and Authority as a form of Power**

Crowther and Green (2004) explain that bureaucracy has numerous features including: set rules, specialised functions, salaried staff and presence of authority derived from being in a particular role. However, theories around bureaucracy often overlook the unexpected and unrecognised inadequacies of real bureaucracies. These inefficiencies include the lack of account of inescapability of personal interactions, refusal to follow rules, alienation from work as well as dislike of hierarchy (Kanter 1977).

Another criticism of bureaucracy within the organisation is the issue of slowness in actions and inflexibility which are prevalent in bureaucratic organisations (Weber 1970, Mouzelis 2013). It is important to note that these are some of the challenges that HR deal with on a daily basis in their role of people management and if not properly dealt with, these can hinder the effective implementation of SBPs. To avoid or combat some of these challenges, HR could adopt progressive and noncoercive incorporation of ideas as proposed by Mary Parker Follett (1918 in Godwyn and Gittell 2012). This method could serve to reduce the resentment and rejection of proposed change and enable smooth integration of new processes within the organisation. The implication for HR is that they need to work (using their function) towards ensuring that the employees understand the benefits of SBPs implementation and buy into it without the need for coercion.

Collins (1992 p. 5) states that "bureaucracy consists of a network of specialists who are only concerned with the most efficient means to achieve a particular goal. Just what these goals are is someone else's business not theirs". This bears a resemblance to the arguments of Kanter with regards to the issue of detachment with a feeling of disengagement and lack of responsibility towards the organisation. As a solution to the problem of detachment, Godwyn and Gittell (2012) propose that organisations should aim for 'collective responsibility' where every member of the organisation is linked and interrelated,

working together as a unit and towards a common goal. This can be achieved through recruitment of individuals with the right values and also through employee engagement programs within the organisation which are aligned to sustainability. These actions can be aimed at building the desired organisational culture and behaviours to support engagement with the goal of achieving SBPs implementation within the organisation. The following definitions strengthen this argument. Simpson and Weiner (1989) defined authority as "the power or right to enforce obedience" (p x). In traditional hierarchical organisational models, Kahn and Kram (1994, p.17) defined authority as "the given right to perform roles: such rights are legitimated by consensual decisions codified in constitutions, contracts, charters, rulings, and other accepted institutional sanctions".

Authority has also been defined as power that is accepted as legitimate both by those who hold it and those subject to it (Drislane and Parkinson 2002). Small (2002) described the legitimate exercise of power as being synonymous with authority. The distribution and use of power within the organisation and how this can be aligned to enable the achievement of set goal(s) will now be discussed. Power has been defined as the individuals or institutions' capacity to accomplish goals even when faced with resistance from others (Drislane and Parkinson 2002). One factor that can be argued to have the ability to influence the achievement of SBPs implementation within the organisation is the allocation of power. According to Aldrich (1999), "the concentration of power in organisations contributes not only to the attainment of large-scale goals, but also to some of the most troublesome actions affecting us" (p7)[4]. With this, it can be argued that if the necessary or relevant level of power and authority are given to the relevant employees or departments within the organisation, then set organisational goals such as the effective implementation of SBPs may be achieved. This is strengthened by the argument laid by Keum and See (2017) who maintained that hierarchy of authority is advantageous for the selection of ideas within the organisation. In line with this, HR can be empowered to drive SBPs, but this can only be mandated by the leadership of the organisation.

Nevertheless, hierarchical structure and set rules can hinder innovation and agency within the organisation. In addition, the chain of command to get approval for new ideas can be complex and cumbersome leading to the failure of implementation of such ideas. Further, the separation of work and personal life can be disadvantageous because it could prevent creativity and result in monotonic individuals in the workplace (more discussion on this in section 4.4.1.3). Another disadvantage is the concept of the 'Red tape' – which is an overemphasis on structure and rules which can in turn constrain positive action and stifle creativity.

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[4] As is the case in the Nigerian oil and gas industry and the Niger Delta in particular where the issue of power over resources results in incessant conflicts and unrest.

Fairly recent research (see Webb 2006) shows that participants (employees) within the organisation bring in their personalities and beliefs to the workplace. This is evident in the sustainability discourse where employees who display green behaviours and values are recruited to align with organisational sustainability goals (Muster and Schrader 2011; Renwick et al. 2013). Webb (2006) argued that employee resistance is being eradicated through management practices that aim to align employees' personal identities to that of the organisation. As previously mentioned, this will help HR effectively align the employees to the sustainability agenda of the organisation and achieve effective SBPs implementation. This again, at the risk of belabouring the point, highlights the need for the coordination and control of various participants – abilities and personalities – towards the attainment of organisational goals. However, the preceding discussions have also highlighted the fact that individuals within the organisation sometimes express the need to exercise their power of freewill and have choices.

4.4.1.3　　　Agency

Early scholars such as Gouldner (1954) and Perrow (1986) argued that behaviour of individuals within the organisation is determined mainly by different interests in the organisation. Therefore, interests will invariably determine actions taken by individuals/ employees. Conversely some scholars for example, Bains (2007), have argued that it is essential to allow employees to be themselves at work by expressing their personalities. He maintains that "when people are happy and have the freedom to be themselves, they are more productive and give more of themselves" (p. 241). Fleming and Sturdy (2009) maintained that the ideology of "be yourself" within the organisation is underlined by the belief that employees are no more objects of corporate control but are now free agents.

However, adopting this approach within a bureaucratic organisation such as the oil and gas organisations in this study may prove to be difficult because according to Ingvaldsen and Engesbak (2020), it is right to conclude that a bureaucratic system of organisation is one that does not change its actions or behaviours and remains too inflexible to adapt or change without crisis. For example, the characteristic control of employee actions within a bureaucratic organisation can prevent or limit the freedom given to employees to act based on their interests and 'be themselves' within the organisation.

Webb (2006 p. 27) states that 'agency is exercised both in terms of the active, knowing engagement with goals and in continuing resistance to exploitative or abusive forms of power and authority'. In addition, Merton's (1940 in Webb 2006) work showed that organisations are not 'disembodied machines' rather individuals within these organisations have values loyalties which affects the interpretation and portrayal of rules and regulations. Expected actions within an organisation are, as a rule, aimed at the benefit of the organisation and attainment of its goals. It is therefore important that interests of individuals and organisation are aligned through communication and engagement. This can

be achieved through the use of HR functions such as employee engagement, training and employee communication.

Due to its role of people management within the organisation, HR can then be said to have the task of ensuring that there is a balance between order/control and resource optimisation while avoiding antagonism. Dubois (1977) argued that order can be maintained in the organisation either through integration or repression. Based on this assertion, HR may need to be aware of the possible problems/ concerns that could arise and how to deal with them to ensure employees remain aligned to the sustainability agenda of the organisation. He also argued that the power of the organisation (through the managers) has been reduced due to technological advancement and economic growth. However, it can be argued that the organisation still wields a high level of power over the actions of its employees.

The ability of people in organisations to resist, demonstrate discretion as well as develop own meanings and interpretations of organisational regulations and rules have been shown (See Clegg and Dunkerley 1980; Thompson and McHugh 2002). These studies show that organisations, however informal, depend on their members' informal creative and innovative actions and activities in order to operate. Moreover, others have recently concluded that employee resistance is being eradicated or eliminated through management practices that align personal identity to brand identity of the organisation (see Webb 2006). This view can be argued using recent studies which show that organisations aim to recruit individuals with similar mindsets or goals aligning to organisation's goals to enhance individual effectiveness within the organisation (See Renwick et al. 2013; Dumont et al. 2016; Chams and Garcia-Blandon 2018).

From the preceding discussions, one can infer that in the drive toward SBPs, meaningful employees' interaction and collaboration is required. This paves the way for HR's involvement through recruitment and selection, employee performance management, training and development amongst others. All of these need to be coordinated in order to achieve the organisation's objectives. A review of HR history will now be carried out to allow for a better understanding of HR, to provide context of its current role, and show the part they play within the organisation. This will also help evaluate whether HR does have the required capabilities and authority to use these interactions within the organisation to aid in the attainment of its goal(s) by aligning the aims of the individuals and the organisation for effective implementation of initiatives.

4.5   WHAT IS HRM?

Human Resource Management (HRM) has been defined in different ways over the years to depict its perceived value within the organisation. "Human resource management (HRM, or simply HR) is a

function in organizations designed to maximize employee performance in service of their employer's strategic objectives" (Rihan 1998 p. 1). As a term, HRM is frequently used to define those actions involved in the management of employment relationships (Carbery and Cross 2013). HRM can also be defined as a 'strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organisation's most valued assets – the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives' (Armstrong 2006 p. 3). In essence, HRM is basically about people management to achieve maximum input from each employee within the organisation and reward such contribution (Carbery and Cross 2013). One thing that can be deduced from the definitions above is that the overarching aim of HRM is to guarantee that success is achieved by the organisation through its people (Armstrong 2006).

4.5.1 <u>Historical overview of the field of HR</u>

Over the years, there has been an increase in normative discourse on HR and this emphasises that the route to enhanced status for Human Resource (HR) 'professionals' entails reinvention of their role as `business partners' (Wright 2008). This has led to the involvement of HR professionals in strategic planning within organisations. However, this has not always been the case as both the role and field of HR have evolved over the years. Ruona and Gibson (2004) predicted that the next generation HR is rising as an area that exclusively puts together procedures and actions of three fields: HRM, Human Resource Development (HRD) and Organisational Development (OD) where HRD is defined as "a set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organisation to provide its members with the opportunities to learn necessary skills to meet current and future job demands" (Werner and DeSimone 2011 p. 4) and OD which is focused on the improvement of the lives of employees within organisations by utilising knowledge of the behavioural sciences (Cummings and Worley 2001).

HR practices have been placed in two categories by Brockbank (1999): a) strategic and operational b) proactive and reactive. Ruona and Gibson (2004) describe operational activities as "generally routine and focus on things that must be done for the organisation to operate on a daily basis" (p. 51) while strategic actions focus on planning, comprehensive and integration and are seen to add value to the organisation. Also, according to them "reactive activities are in response to a need of the organisation" (p. 51). Using a continuum of competitive advantage which was slightly adapted from Brockbank (1998), Ruona and Gibson (2004) observed that the history of HRM, HRD and OD fall under four different categories: operationally reactive, operationally proactive, strategically reactive and strategically proactive. It is important to review the journey of the HR profession over the years under two categories – HR operational and HR strategic era – to enable a better understanding of how the role

has evolved to the present-day strategic position within the organisation. A position which helps HR to support in the achievement of organisational goal(s).

HR Operational Era

Since its inception, the personnel function has expanded to include admin actions in relation to people management within organisations (Brockbank 1999). Up until the mid-1980s, HRM focused on transactional aspects of the HR function like recruitment, benefits, training and labour relations. One of the main aims of training during this era was behavioural change as a result of learning (Ruona and Gibson 2004). This highlights organisations' aim to align its human resources to organisational objectives. Meanwhile during this period, OD placed emphasis on "… change managed from the top, a strong emphasis on action research, and a focus on creating change in collaboration with managers" (Ruona and Gibson 2004 p. 53). These bear strong similarity to the current call for top management involvement in the transition towards sustainability where there has been evidence showing that board involvement guarantees success of change management and strategy implementation (Cha et al. 2018). This was a period of constant improvement within all three arms of HR and their operation on a broader scope. Measurement of activities/ processes, cost efficiency of operations and the need to establish their relevance characterised all three fields. Though there was growth within this era, it can be argued that HR functioning at the level within this era cannot support the implementation of sustainability initiatives.

HR Strategic Era

This period was marked by an increased awareness within organisations that the human resources of an organisation played a major part in its competitive advantage (Ruona and Gibson 2004). Characterisation of the era include rapid level of change, a balance of cost and growth and a focus on customer-oriented employee activities (Ulrich 1997). These subsequently led to the strategic management of employees and its link to competitive advantage (Pfeffer 1995).

According to Bates (2002), the HR role is to aid in setting the agenda. From the early 1990s, HRM began to align people strategies to assist organisational strategies and aid the achievement of organisational goals. HR personnel gained increasingly strategic roles and a move towards "a seat at the table" (Ruona and Gibson 2004 p. 55). In addition, Ulrich et al. (1995) posit that business knowledge and change management are important to HR's success. Therefore, a broad knowledge base of the business and of sustainability is needed by HR professionals to enable appropriate contribution to the strategic planning of the organisation.

The preceding review highlights four main themes that show a clear convergence and the emergence of a new 21st century HR as depicted in figure 4.2 below: a) increased centrality of people to organisational success b) focus on whole systems and integrated solutions c) strategic alignment and impact d) capacity

for change (Ruona and Gibson 2004). Of these four major themes, the strategic alignment of HR to aid in the achievement of organisational goals and gaining competitive advantage remains at the forefront of the HR discourse. This point is of importance in this study because the discussion so far has demonstrated that a certain level of power, control and authority is required to ensure tasks are carried out within the organisation. For HR to support in driving SBPs implementation, it is therefore important that they possess the right level of authority and control.
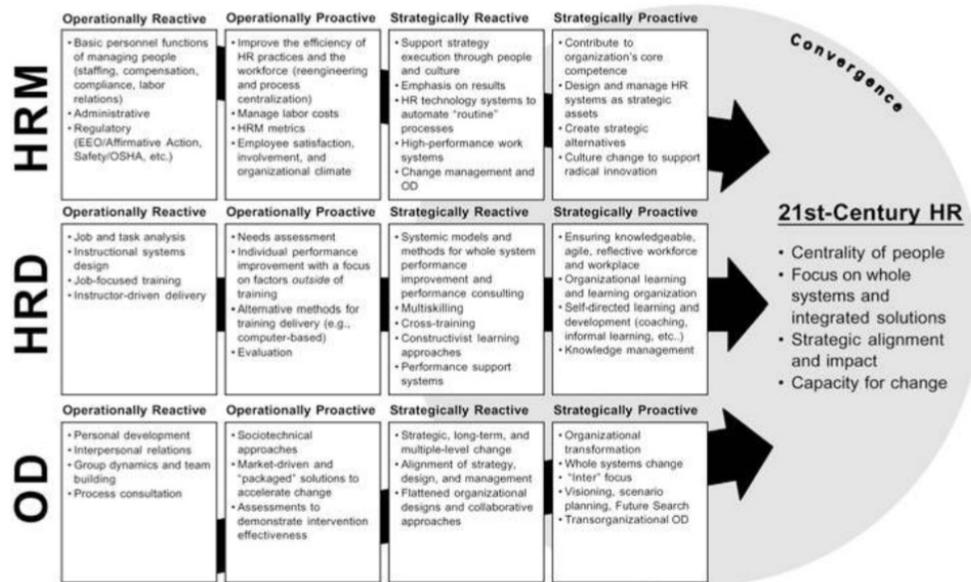
Figure 5: 4.2: Evolution of HRM, HRD and OD to 21st Century HR. Source: Ruona and Gibson (2004 p. 52)

4.6 STRATEGIC ROLE – A CALL FOR HR INVOLVEMENT

Mitchell and Carroll (1995) maintain that it comes as no surprise that there is more push for HR to have a more strategic role in organisations. There is continuous increase in relevance of the role of HR with influence as a strategic partner in organisational decision making (Barney and Wright 1997). This strategic role emphasizes HR's contribution towards attaining organisational strategic goals (Ulrich 1997; Naznin and Hussain 2016). Sheenan (2005) also argues that part of the strategic role of HR is in the participation of strategic planning leading on to the active participation in both the planning and implementation of strategy (DeCieri et al. 2008). Mitchell and Carroll (1995) posit that "by matching HRM with strategy, the critical human resource skills, attitudes, behaviours and performances that are needed to successfully implement strategies can be acquired, developed, motivated and maintained" (p.

253). Mitchell and Carroll (1995) argue that a strategic technique should also be taken in managing HRM programs – for example, aligning the organisation's compensation schemes to reward contributions to strategic objectives. In addition, Cascio and Graham (2016) posit that HR functions can be used to achieve such strategic alignment. This study argues that as such, HR's strategic position within the organisation can be utilised to support in the achievement of SBPs implementation.

Collins and Clark (2003) observe that the focus of strategic HRM lies in HR's contribution to competitive advantage and organisational performance. This can be achieved through aligning the human resources of an organisation to attaining the organisational goal. For example, successful implementation of sustainability initiatives of a company leads to several benefits such as improved brand image and profitability (Dos Santos et al 2014) thereby improving its competitive advantage. In line with this argument, Bennett et al (1998) assert that "… if human resource managers are full partners in strategic decision making, they are in a better position to craft human resource practices that elicit employee behaviour supportive of the organisation's strategy" (p. 4). Such organisational strategies may be aligned to tackling organisational challenges in order to enhance competitive advantage. Therefore, HR assuming a strategic role in organisations can assist in the move towards sustainability (Dixit 2018).

4.7   SUSTAINABILITY – FROM AN HR CONTEXT

As discussed in previous chapters, one current challenge faced by many organisations is the issue of sustainability which according to WCED (1987 p. 8) is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This has led to sustainability being added on their agenda. An international survey of 2800 global companies discovered that 70 per cent of organisations acknowledge sustainability as a major issue in their strategic plans and agendas (Kiron et al. 2012). Reports of this nature are as a result of the rise in sustainability awareness. This has led to both decision makers and employees alike paying attention to sustainability and expressing a need for organisations to lessen the effects of their operations that will be a problem for future generations (Boudreau and Ramstad 2005). Therefore, organisations have sought to embed sustainability in their day-to-day operations. This involves integration of attitudes, values and assumptions – 'the sustainability mindset' directly into the strategy and operations of every unit within the organisation (Savitz and Weber 2013 p. 69) and this can be done using the HR function.

Increased environmental pollution, a decline in natural resources and consumer demands and changing expectations are some of the reasons for an increased focus on sustainability (Laszlo and Zhexembayeva 2011; Savitz and Weber 2013). The perception that businesses are the major cause of many sustainability problems of today is growing and this has led to higher regulation of and distrust in

businesses leading to decrease in competitiveness (Porter and Kramer 2011). Consequently, scholars have put forward that in order to 'counteract' these negative perceptions, organisations can efficiently implement sustainability initiatives and regain competitive advantage (Porter and Kramer 2011; Laszlo and Zhexembayeva 2011).

Buller and Mcevoy (2016) posit that there is still a wide gap in knowledge regarding the best ways for sustainability strategy implementation despite the growing literature showing the need and calling for sustainability. The human element within the sustainability discourse and the focus on organisations (and the people who work within the organisations) to change their ways and implement sustainable business practices, points to a need to explore how HR can help organisations achieve the aim of embedding sustainability. In line with this, Dumont et al. (2016) advocated for a change in employee behaviour to align with organisation's goals in this case sustainability goals. It is important that sustainability is embedded within the ethos of the organisation. Savitz and Weber (2013) maintain that "an organisation that sees sustainability as a separate activity – as an add-on to normal business operations rather than as connected to the 'real work' of the company is unlikely to make significant progress" (p. 69).

Mello (2002) argues that 'success is determined by decisions employees make and behaviours in which they engage' (p. 4) reminding us of sociological studies exploring the relationship between individuals, their agency and the organisation (see section 4.4.1.3). Therefore, the success of sustainability initiatives lies with employees within an organisation as well as requiring appropriate policies and structures to be in place. However, despite the awareness of the human element of the sustainability discourse and the need for HR contribution, Chams and Garcia-Blandon (2018) maintain that research remains scarce on the contribution of HRM to sustainable development. With the increase in awareness and adoption of sustainability in organisations, HR must also align itself to the changes. In line with this, there have been a number of initiatives developed within the HR field to help organisations achieve particular aspects of sustainability. These initiatives have incorporated the idea of HR being a business partner and playing a strategic role within the organisation. Some scholars argue that if HR occupies a strategic role, then they can provide better support for the achievement of the organisation's sustainability agenda through the implementation of sustainability initiatives (Renwick et al 2013; Chams and Garcia-Blandon 2018).

4.7.1   Green HRM

'Green HRM' is an HR sustainability initiative which is seen as "…. those HRM practices aligned with environmental sustainability goals, and which aim at developing employees' abilities, commitment and motivation, and involvement of staff in support of those goals at the firm level" (O'Donohue and

Torugsa 2016 p. 240). Another definition was put forward by Kramar (2014) who defined Green HRM as 'HRM activities, which enhance positive environmental outcomes' (p. 1075). Both of these definitions show that Green HRM activities focus on actions that aid in the attainment of environmental sustainability. However, these can also translate to the attainment of both social and economic sustainability through improved trust, brand image and profitability, amongst others.

Some studies have examined the influence of HRM practices on an organisation's environmental performance (Jabbour and Santos 2008; Jabbour et al. 2008). They posited that HR can indeed influence and support the organisation's sustainability agenda through innovation management. In addition, HR must be involved when these sustainability objectives and agenda are being set. This will enable them to ensure that the human resources of the organisation are equipped and aligned to achieve the sustainability agenda. Other investigations have demonstrated that HRM practices are linked to pro-environmental behaviours at an individual level (Harvey et al. 2013; Paille et al. 2014). Following the development and testing of a conceptual model showing the psychological and behavioural processes by which employee green behaviour[5] can be influenced by HRM, Dumont et al. (2016) posited that employee workplace green behaviour is promoted/ enhanced by HRM. Therefore, with a change in organisations' strategies towards a more environmentally focused agenda, HR must also change and enlarge its scope (Dumont et al. 2016) to accommodate business needs and alter performance of its core HR functions (Angel Del Brio et al. 2018). HR functions need to align to support the organisation to achieve sustainability and SBPs implementation. Tamunomiebi and Mezeh (2022) conducted a study to determine the correlation between green HRM and corporate sustainability in oil and gas companies in Nigeria. They found that there is a significant correlation between green HR functions such as green recruitment, green rewards management, and corporate sustainability. Though this is a recent study of HR and sustainability within the Nigerian oil and gas industry, the study does not address the question of what role HR can play in supporting SBPs implementation. Therefore, there is still no study focused on exploring the role of HR in supporting the oil and gas organisations in achieving SBPs implementation and this study seeks to address this gap.

The 'green movement' marked the beginning of environmental awareness and is seen alongside Sustainable Human Resource Management (SHRM) (Chams and Garcia-Blandon 2018). They argue that SHRM deals with the allocation and operationalisation of this movement into business functions as well as the management of human resources. Consequently, striking a balance between business growth and the preservation of the environment while achieving organisational targets is the aim of SHRM (Jennings and Zandbergen 1995; Starik and Rands 1995). They proposed that SHRM involves

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[5] Green behaviours are actions that the employees engage in that can contribute to environmental sustainability (Dilchert and Ones 2012a)

three key practices: human capital involvement in societal activities, effective and efficient administration of natural resource distribution and consumption, and the encouragement of a certain level of consciousness and obligation among both individuals and organisations. Chams and Garcia-Blandon (2018) maintain that once green behaviours, values and competencies - which are perceived as drivers of sustainable performance – are identified at the micro/ employee level, the organisational transformation in order to achieve SDGs becomes more viable. At the organisational level, the forecasters of sustainability include implementation of green HR functions, and the creation of a supportive and open organisational culture. All of these then lead to positive financial benefits and the attainment of SDGs. The components of this model can be modified to apply to the transition towards sustainable business practices (SBPs) within organisations where the focus of HR functions on aligning the workforce can lead to the effective operationalisation of the organisation's sustainability strategy (Daily and Huang 2001) thereby translating to SBPs.

4.7.2   Green work-life balance and ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO)

Muster and Schrader (2011) raise the idea of a 'green work–life balance' that identifies the mutual relationship between work and non-work-related actions that can enable an employee's environmentally friendly behaviour.

Following the school of thought that performance is best viewed as a function of ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO), Renwick et al. (2013) classified certain HRM practices under one of three wide aims: 'Developing Green abilities' – activities linked with employing and developing the requisite human capital; 'Motivating Green employees' – activities linked with enhancing employee motivation and commitment; and, 'Providing Green opportunities' – practices associated with involving, empowering, and engaging staff. Following a systematic review of contemporary green HRM literature, they listed 35 specific practices which can be adopted by HR in the drive for sustainability. For example, 'Green issues specified in job descriptions' and 'Green performance indicators'. HR is thus shown to play a role in enabling an organisation to adopt and implement sustainable business practices through aligning HR functions to the sustainability agenda of the organisation i.e., green HR – recruiting sustainability-oriented individuals, aligning employees to the organisation's sustainability agenda and ensuring that employees stay focused on goal to be achieved through monitoring and evaluation amongst others.

4.8   ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH SDGs

Another means by which HR can help an organisation achieve its sustainability goal is through attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The twofold part of the human element as both the originator and the beneficiary of SDGs implementation can be recognised (Chams and Garcia-Blandon

2018). They posit that with regards to "prosperity" and "people", the goal of the SDGs is the creation and accommodation of suitable settings and specific conditions that advance the progress of continued economic growth, effective resource distribution, shared prosperity, and decent work environments. On the business side, the definitive goal of the SDGs is to create "sustainable, innovative, and people-oriented" economies (UN 2015). They maintain that organisations should aim to ensure that their workforces are well educated and healthy as well as develop the consciousness and proficiencies needed to produce industrious employees and active citizens that give to society; consistent with studies on the effect of the human aspect on sustainable development and resource conservation (Pfeffer 2010; Speth 2010).

Strategies and policies for SDGs integration into organisational goals from a HR function perspective consists of two critical but interrelated responsibilities to encourage sustainable practices. These are grouped into two types (Janson and Gunderson 1994; Bhushan and MacKenzie 1994; Barnes 1996; Daily and Huang 2001): operational and managerial. Barnes (1996) presents operational responsibility as consisting of a strategic process including policymaking, planning, implementation, auditing, performance assessment and action-correction; while Daily and Huang (2001) suggest that for the managerial role, secure top-level management support, boost of employees' empowerment, provision of continuous training, implementation of an effective system of compensation along with building cross-functional collaboration must be done by HR. These two sets of categories and the role HR should play in supporting SBPs are depicted in table 4.1. Thus, Huselid et al. (2005) summarized the relationship between HR and SDGs as 'means to an end' while Jabbour and Santos (2008) validate HR function as a major influence on sustainability performance for four reasons: "HR is considered as a potential foundation for the advancement of sustainability in the organization; both HR and sustainability need long-term planning and determination to induce economic outcome; to promote sustainable performance is the new paradigm of HR; and to enhance the effectiveness of HR practices by satisfying various shareholders' needs" (p. 2134). This study thus argues that HR's understanding of their role within the strategic and tactical (managerial) as well operational level is vital to ensure appropriate support in achieving the organisation's sustainability agenda is provided by HR.

Achieving clarity on what the HR function is with regards to shaping SBPs faces a number of issues such as: HR sustainability strategies and regulations (if any), employees' behaviors and attitudes in the workplace related to socio-environmental worries and similarities or differences in HR practices that support SBPs as applied in business entities in various countries (Jackson et al. 2011; Taylor et al. 2012). From the business angle, the end goal of the SDGs is to launch sustainable, innovative and people-oriented economies (see section 2.3.2 for discussion on the relationship between SBPs and SDGs). Chams and Garcia-Blandon (2018) argue that HR can play a major role in the achievement of SDGs. HR is believed to be a possible foundation for the adoption of sustainability in an organisation

(Jabbour and Santos 2008). In line with this, Chams and Garcia-Blandon (2018) posit that HR functions can be aligned to manage resource usage, monitor and evaluate the organisation's sustainable business practices, gain top management support on sustainability and deliver appropriate and regular training amongst others. In addition, HR has grown '… increasingly more effective at developing programs and policies that leverage talent to align with organisational competencies and at executing organisational strategy' (Ruona and Gibson (2004 p. 49). This lends strength to the argument that to achieve sustainability goals, human resources of an organisation need to be aligned to said goal.

4.9   CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY

HR has a role to play in incorporating sustainability into the organisation's strategic plans and these can be translated into sustainable business practices implementation (De Stefano et al 2018; Jeronimo et al 2020). Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) state that sustainability related knowledge, behaviours, attitudes and motivation can be measured by HR and argue that there is a vital role for HR to play in sustainability. Based on their corporate experience and case studies of various companies including a leading cosmetic company and a prominent Indian conglomerate group, Ernst and Young (2013) identified critical success factors for the implementation of sustainable business practices (SBPs) within organisations. They include:

- Creation of a sustainable vision and mission
- Building of an aligned leadership pipeline
- Development of key HR capabilities to drive sustainability and create sustainable HR system and processes
- Ability to attract, engage and retain the right set of people and align them to the sustainability agenda

They went on to highlight the role of HR in the adoption of sustainable business practices –

- Develop a compelling business case for incorporating sustainability in the organisation's vision and mission to top leadership. This can be achieved through the improvement of knowledge about sustainability, its impact on the business and possible benefits to be received from sustainability implementation.
- Align core processes such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management and rewards to the organisation's sustainability philosophy. This will not only ensure that the right people are recruited but will also ensure that they are retained, and continuous achievement of set goal is assured.

- Evaluate existing competency framework to check its appropriateness. Monitoring and evaluation of current processes is necessary to ensure they remain appropriate for the attainment of the sustainability goal.

According to Ernst and Young (2013), other roles HR plays in the adoption of SBPs include collaborator, assessor, business partner and communicator. This is important as scholars have suggested that these HR roles are essential in facilitating SBPs implementation (Daily and Huang 2001, Chams and Garcia-Blandon 2018). Accordingly, this study seeks to understand how these can be conceptualised within the organisation.

4.10   LIMITATIONS ON HR INVOLVEMENT - SETBACKS?

Though past studies have shown the importance of finding suitable HR approaches for the implementation of sustainable business practices (Taylor et al. 2012), not much ground has been gained in that respect as demonstrated by the discussions above. In their study, Mitchell and Carroll (1995) reported that more than half of the respondents (General Managers) viewed HR managers as full strategic partners and play a major part/ role in creating plans for implementation of strategic plans and attain goals. The question should then be asked: why is there still limited involvement of HR in the strategic planning of sustainability initiatives in organisations? A possible reason is proffered by Savitz and Weber (2013) following an analysis of several organisations' high-profile sustainability 'scandals'. They argued that "unfortunately in many organisations, HR is expected to simply carry out staffing decisions made at the executive level without raising too many challenging questions" (p. 87). Also, Dumont et al (2016) argue that HRM practices may take some time to achieve complete influence on employee workplace outcomes. Nevertheless, it is important that HR assumes a strategic role within the organisation as they have the potential to positively influence both the strategic internalisation of sustainability within the organisation and the effective operationalisation and implementation of sustainability through sustainable business practices.

CONCLUSION

The oil and gas industry is highly regulated and therefore oil and gas organisations need to abide by strict guidelines as stipulated by regulatory bodies (as demonstrated in chapter three). It is therefore important to understand how HR can support in SBPs implementation within the context of the principles of control and bureaucracy – what is HR's role within the organisation, do they have the right level of authority to support SBPs implementation, how can they support the transition to SBPs implementation? Top management involvement has been highlighted as vital in ensuring that SBPs are effectively implemented within the organisation. This involvement can be through control by putting

relevant policies in place and creating the right organisational culture to support the achievement of this goal as seen in chapter two. We have seen that control can be said to be exerted by top management within the organisation through different means and structures. For example, the use of rewards by HR to control the actions of employees within the organisation.

Based on the discussions so far, it was highlighted that there is an increased awareness of the negative impact of business practices on the environment and the societies within these environments. This is especially true with the oil and gas business operations. Therefore, there has been a call to action to reduce such negative impacts and subsequently, there have been various sustainable initiatives in this regard, among them are CSR and sustainability reporting. However, these initiatives have not successfully combated the environmental and societal concerns resulting from the negative impacts of business practices. Scholars have then proposed the concept of sustainable business practices (SBPs) which focus on the business practices themselves as against focusing on counteracting the impact of these practices. Several factors have been emphasised as important in ensuring the effective implementation of SBPs within the organisations and these include innovation and top management involvement. In addition, some principles have also been highlighted as enablers or detractors to the effective implementation of SBPs. Most importantly, HR role has been shown to have the capability of supporting the organisation in achieving its sustainability agenda, for example SBPs implementation.

Finally, this literature review has pulled together studies from different disciplinary approaches to present an in-depth understanding of sustainability within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria thereby uncovering gaps that could be addressed through the HR function. It was highlighted that sustainability discourse is evident within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria however, the role of HR is predominantly unfocused towards sustainability. From the literature review, it appears that sustainability in oil and gas is being debated from a global context for example IPICEA (see chapter three), but this has not cascaded to the national level, for example Nigeria, through activities to aid in the achievement of the SDGs. This is in spite of the fact that many IOCs operating in the Nigerian oil and gas industry are members of these global sustainability bodies/ associations. Based on this argument, it is apparent that there is a fundamental gap in SBPs implementation and HR support in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria and this thesis helps to address this concern.

It is then important to explore to what role HR can play in supporting and how the challenges (if any) can be navigated by HR to ensure the effective SBPs implementation within the oil and gas organisations in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the methodology and methods adopted in the research. The research paradigm underpinning this study is introduced and a discussion is presented on how this paradigm affects the research method used. The chapter then goes on to evaluate the research methods employed including the tools used for data collection and analysis. Finally, the chapter highlights the issues of credibility, validity and reliability of the data in relation to the method employed.

5.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research philosophy is concerned with the nature of knowledge and development of said knowledge (Bajpai, 2011). According to Grix (2004), a researcher's theoretical assumptions and goals are intricately connected to the research being conducted. He argued that a researcher's view on knowledge and reality influences methods utilised in discovering connections between phenomena. It is therefore crucial to understand the fundamental philosophical assumptions that lead to the selection of research methodologies which are used to respond to the research questions. Bryman (2012) maintains that this is a vital phase in developing a succinct research design.

According to Creswell (1998), the research paradigm has the following components:

- Ontology – how reality is viewed by an individual.
- Epistemology – grasping the nature of knowledge.
- Methodology – process of inquiry i.e., how you go about attaining knowledge.

5.2.1 <u>Ontology</u>

Saunders et al (2009) maintained that with ontology, questions are raised regarding the assumptions that researchers have about the way in which the world works. Lincoln and Guba (2007) highlight two perspectives of ontology. First, the nature of what is being investigated to determine if it exists as objective truths of reality. According to Ryan et al (2002), this is called the objectivist view which argue that social entities are independent of social actors. The second perspective of ontology examines whether the nature of that which is being investigated can be changed due to any number of possible factors including social, economic, or personal. This is called the subjectivist or social ontological view.

Here, Saunders et al (2009) argue that social phenomena are devised from the opinions/ beliefs of social actors and the consequent action(s) based on these opinions and beliefs. They argue that this is a continuous process so long as social interaction among social actors exists. Thus, reality can be generated and influenced by social, economic, cultural, and political structures (Ryan *et al.* 2002).

With this in mind, this study adopts the second perspective of ontology - nominalism. This is because both the researcher's experience and knowledge as well as the nature of the research have influenced the research. Therefore, this study's assumption is that social actors act based on their beliefs, knowledge and opinion.

5.2.2   Epistemology

Saunders et al (2009) described epistemology as what represents knowledge that is acceptable within a field of study. Epistemology shows what it means to know, including how knowledge is produced and transferred (Osobajo 2017). According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), the philosophical assumptions made by the researcher greatly influence the paradigm in which the research is positioned. This is reference to the different beliefs which the researcher has about the world, and this determines the researcher's selection of a 'philosophical stance'. This philosophical stance is centred on the nature of knowledge or the premise of epistemology (Osu 2017). Collis and Hussey (2003) maintain that in a research, epistemology is what represents acceptable knowledge and is focused on the connection between research problem and the researcher. Hence, there are two main philosophical stances namely: interpretivist and positivist.

Bryman and Bell (2004) argue that the interpretivist approach sees people, institutions and the world as fundamentally distinct from science. This school's view is also quite distinct from the positivist view in that it rejects the restrictions laid on observation (Osu 2017). One premise of the interpretivist approach according to Bevir and Rhodes (2002), is that "people act on their beliefs and preference" (p. 4) so it can be inferred that based on a social actor's actions, researchers can have adequate knowledge of social actors' subjective reality (Saunders 2003). Two components of the interpretivist school of thought are observation and interpretation of information acquired from research participants (Saunders et al. 2007). In addition, the proponents of this school of thought adapt to new ideas as they develop (Easterby- Smith et al 2002). All of these make the interpretivist school of thought more appropriate to this study than positivism.

5.2.3   Methodology

Research methodology has been defined by Leedy & Ormrod (2001) as "the general approach the researcher takes in carrying out the research project" (p. 14). Due to the research's philosophical stance

– interpretivist – as highlighted in the discussion in the previous section, qualitative research was adopted. Hennink et al (2020) argue that qualitative research is difficult to define as it covers a broad range of philosophies and techniques. Notwithstanding, there have been various definitions put forward over time. According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research is a complex and rigorous design, with its terms and traditions, and is held together by general frameworks. He defined it as:

> '…. an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting' (p. 15).

Accordingly, there are a number of reasons why the qualitative research approach was chosen in alignment with the advantages of the approach. First, this study sought to explore the knowledge, understanding and opinions of human resource personnel within the oil and gas organisations as well as the current SBPs practices and challenges faced in implementing those practices within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. The problem of environmental degradation and the accompanying impacts on the host communities was to be explored and this made it appropriate to utilise this approach to enable collection of rich data on the research context. Qualitative research is also used in discovering common themes as well trend in opinions and to enable the researcher gain greater insight into an issue. This was important because there was a need to uncover common themes/ patterns in challenges faced in the implementation of SBPs (and the reasons) in order to determine if and how HR can support in transitioning towards effective SBPs implementation. One unique feature of this type of research is that it helps the researcher to identify problems from the research participant's perspective (Hennink et al 2020).

This approach was selected due to the explorative nature of the research questions to be answered by the study because a qualitative approach "focuses on understanding and explaining the beliefs, experience and behaviour of research participants in a particular context" (Osu 2017, p 172). Understanding of the opinions, underlying reasons, and motivations for actions/ behaviours can be gained through qualitative research which is predominantly investigative. Such knowledge gained can lead to the generation of ideas or provision of insight(s) into a problem (Osobajo 2017). In this case, the research sought to discover what the current level of HR involvement in SBPs implementation is, the challenges and subsequently proffer recommendations on how HR can aid in the transition to SBPs in the oil and gas industry.

Another reason for choosing a qualitative approach is that there was the need to put forward a comprehensive view of the topic, where the researcher presents herself as a dynamic learner who can tell a story from the view of the participant as against a view of an expert (Creswell 1998; Bryman and

Bell 2004). This was especially true as through the research process, the researcher was able to learn about sustainability from the viewpoint of all three major stakeholders in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. It helped build a holistic picture of the current situation which ultimately helps in putting forward appropriate recommendations for HR support in effective SBPs implementation. Finally, the qualitative facet of this study includes the investigation into the background of the study, the nature and concept of sustainability and SBPs, case study context of the Niger Delta, and the description of the data collection methods used in the study.

The research adopted an inductive approach where evolving theories are methodically produced from the data which has been collected using qualitative method(s) (Kumar 2005). This means that the theory emerges through the practical and organised collection and analysis of data which differs from theory-led research whereby a hypothesis is generated and tested (Gibbs 2007). Gibbs also maintains that emergent theory is not only generated through collection of data but also within the research context subject and such research can be a case study. A case study is a choice of entity or object to be studied (Stake 1995). In this case, the oil and gas industry in Nigeria was chosen as a case study due to the nature of oil and gas business practices as well as their impact on the environment and the host communities within them. There have been numerous studies on SBPs implementation, but the literature search showed limited study has been carried out on SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria and no study on the role HR can play in supporting SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. Patton (1990) maintains that when there is a need to understand a specific problem in great depth, then a case study is required. Furthermore, it is particularly beneficial to use a case study strategy in situations where there is an exploration of the 'how' and the 'why' within a particular context (Edmonson and McManus 2007). This is applicable here as the study sought to understand what the current sustainability practices are, the challenges and how HR can support in transitioning towards SBPs implementation within the industry.

The problem of generalisation or transferability of a single case study approach was addressed within this study by applying consistency on the research's design and methods through credibility, reliability, and validity (Patton 2002). Another criticism of a case study approach is that it is dependent on a single case, for example this research, and this may cause it to appear inadequate to provide a generalisable result. Moreover, Yin (2003) maintained that a good knowledge of the phenomenon is the main skill needed to utilise a case study approach in research because there are no procedures in the research technique. The phenomenon to be studied is the role of HR in the transition towards SBPs implementation in the Nigerian oil and gas organisation. Therefore, in this instance, the oil and gas industry in Nigeria is seen as a case study. A single case study, such as this research, can still be deemed satisfactory as long as the objective for analytical generalisation is met (Strachan et al. 2015). The

objectives of this study have been met through data collection saturation i.e., a point where no new themes emerged from the data (Braun and Clarke 2019) as well as from research results and findings following data analysis.

A summary of the research design is presented in table 5.1 below.

PARADIGM COMPONENT	RESEARCH POSITION
Ontology	Reality shaped by economic, social and personal factors. The research views employees, including HR personnel as social actors who have (or may not have) knowledge/ understanding of the concept of sustainability and act accordingly. Explores if their social interactions with other actors within the organisation can be used to promote SBPs implementation.
Epistemology	The researcher is linked to the matter being investigated. Knowledge is tied to the interaction between the researcher and the subject being investigated. The researcher's need to understand how HR personnel perceive their role within the organisation and how this can be translated to the research context – oil and gas industry in Nigeria.
Methodology	Knowledge, meaning and ideas emerge through qualitative methods used to collect data from research participants which encourages in depth discussion and participation

Table 6: 5.1: Research position in relation to the research paradigm. Author generated

5.2.4   The researcher's position

Reflexivity is generally considered as a constant self-evaluation of a researcher's positionality and the clear acknowledgement that his or her position may influence the research process and/or outcome and conclusion (Stronach et al. 2007). This is a process of self-appraisal (Berger 2013). Berger described it as "turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting..., questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation" (p 220). A researcher's positioning comprises of personal attributes, such as personal experiences, linguistic tradition, beliefs, biases and preferences (Bradbury-Jones 2007; Hamzeh and Oliver 2010) and emotional responses to participants' responses. Therefore, the idea that production of knowledge is separate from the researcher producing it is challenged by reflexivity. In the case of this study, the researcher had to acknowledge that being an indigene (though not resident) of the Niger Delta region meant that she has previous knowledge and experience of the problems within the region which can create a bias in the course of the study. Awareness of this possible

bias enabled this to be kept in check to ensure that it does not influence the research process and inevitably the research findings and results.

On a broader level, the researcher's interest in the issue of sustainability stems from attention to the global debates on climate change awareness and a keen concern of the impact of the oil and gas business practices on the environment in the Niger Delta and by extension on the Niger Deltans. Due to this interest, the researcher, with a background in Sociology and Anthropology (1st degree) and HRM (master's degree) sought to explore what ways HR can be more engaged in the sustainability/ SBPs discourse within the organisation. She wanted to find a way to apply acquired knowledge of human actions and interaction to support organisations transition to more sustainable business practices. The researcher's previous educational background aided a better understanding of the research findings thereby enabling a more objective discussion as well as recommendation(s) of potential solutions for a smoother transition to SBPs.

In the process of generating knowledge through qualitative research, reflexivity has been more and more recognised as an important strategy (Ahmed Dunya et al. 2011). Consequently, Berger (2013) posits that researchers need to be aware of:

- The need to better recognise the importance of the role of the self in knowledge creation.
- Their prejudices, opinions, and personal experiences on their research and carefully monitor their impact(s).
- The need to preserve the balance between the personal view and the general view.

Reflexivity is vital during the course of the entire phases of the research process (Bradbury-Jones 2007). This includes research question(s) formulation, gathering and analysis of data, as well as reaching conclusions. For example, during an interview process, self-reflectivity aids the researcher to ascertain questions she or he would tend to avoid asking due to preconceived knowledge or experience as well as looking out for his or her own reaction(s) to responses from research participants. This extends to data analysis and reporting of research results. It is important for the researcher to be aware of biases and be conscious of 'unconscious editing' because of the researcher's own feelings about the subject matter thereby enabling a more robust engagement with the research data and more comprehensive analysis of the data (Valentine 2007). These points were particularly true in this study as it was important for the researcher to keep an open mind during the interview exercise while listening to the responses of interviewees due to her preconceived notion of the oil and gas practices within the Niger Delta region. It was also important to avoid ignoring data that the researcher already knows due to being an indigene of the region. The researcher consistently kept up to date with the media coverage on the

issues surrounding oil and gas practices in the region in order to ensure that her knowledge remains current and as objective as possible.

It is not uncommon for a researcher to re-examine interviews previously analysed to look for themes that have appeared during the analysis of later interviews within qualitative research (Padgett 2008). This has been the case in the course of this study where interview transcripts from the first level data collection exercise were re-examined to discover if a number of emergent themes from the data collected in the second level data collection are evident in the first. Sword (1999) posits that no research is completely devoid of assumptions, biases and the personality of the researcher therefore it was important in this study that the researcher was fully aware of these and guard against any instances that would result in the production of biased data.

Finally, the researcher had to reflect on the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on the research. The pandemic which began in March 2020 had devastating effects on the world and not surprisingly on the course of the research. The impacts included the way by which the research respondents were recruited for the second data collection exercise, how the interviews were conducted, the timeline of the research and to some extent, the direction taken for the research's literature review. When it was decided that there was a need to carry out another set of interviews, there came the challenge to recruiting research participants. Due to the issue of proximity, the researcher had to rely on previously established contacts for snowballing technique to recruit research participants. It was made especially challenging due to the pandemic as many people were solely concerned with their wellbeing and not particularly interested in discussing about research. This was evident when the researcher attempted to make contact and was met solely with discussions about the pandemic. In addition, there was no option for travelling due to the pandemic so when the respondents were finally recruited, telephone interviews had to be conducted and this meant that the researcher had to rely solely on listening, to gauge the reactions of the respondents. There was also a possibility that less information was obtained during the interviews (Rahman 2015). Finally, the timeline of the research had to be adjusted a couple of times due to the fact that the data collection exercise took longer than anticipated and the researcher was affected, in some way, by the pandemic (see Appendix 11 for full discussion on the impact of the pandemic on the research/researcher).

5.3 METHODS

Following the discussions around the philosophical assumptions supporting this study, the methods section examines data collection methods as well as the analysis techniques utilised in this study. The methods of qualitative data analysis are intricate (Grbich 2013). Various data collection techniques are

used by researchers in order to obtain results and answers about a subject matter being studied. These can be both primary and secondary means which include questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and literature review. For this research, there were three stages of data collection: pilot questionnaire survey (Nigeria and the UK) and two sets of interviews (Nigeria). Woods and Graber (2016) stated that the duty of selecting those procedures that best meet the philosophic orientation of the study, the methods of data collection and the aim of the investigation rests ultimately on the researcher. This study sought to discover the opinions and perceptions of respondents on the issue of sustainability and SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry. This influenced the selection of the research methods utilised. However, prior to the discussion of the methods used, the process for determining the research scope and sample size will be briefly examined.

5.3.1 Research scope

The sample scope has been narrowed from all oil and gas companies to only oil and gas producing and exploration companies in Nigeria. For the pilot survey, UK HR managers were also included in the sample. This was done due to the ease of obtaining data from respondents and to enable reflection on the responses and use that as a guide for the design of the main data collection. The scope was narrowed to align with the focus of the research which is how HR can support in the transition towards SBPs within the oil and gas industry in order to reduce the negative effects of oil and gas exploration services on the environment and the societies therein. The narrow scope will also ensure that the research questions are answered, and objectives are achieved.

5.3.2 Sample Size

The "entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate" is referred to as the research population (Sekara 1992, p 25). It has been argued by Collis and Hussey (2003) that it is not practical to study a considerably large population of people in the researcher's selected area of interest thereby calling for a smaller population to be studied. Gray et al (1996) describes this as a person, organisation or group that can impact or be impacted by policies or objectives within the phenomenon being investigated.

The arguments above gave the researcher the required understanding to determine what the sample would be both for the pilot questionnaire survey and the interviews conducted. This resulted in utilising purposive sampling technique for the study whereby the researcher selected professionals who were (or should be) directly involved in the implementation of the organisations' sustainability initiatives as well as HR personnel to be involved in the informal conversations, pilot survey and interviews. Though the

purposive sampling technique was initially utilised, it became imperative to employ a snowballing technique due to the difficulties encountered in the course of recruiting respondents for the study (see below). The steps taken are detailed in the next section.

5.3.2.1 Nigeria

Following the scoping of the research focus area to the oil and gas exploration and production companies operating in the Niger Delta, there was then the task of finding the relevant organisations. The governing union, of which these organisations in Nigeria must belong – Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) – was identified. Through a referral, contact was made with the Secretary General of the association who provided the researcher with the list of the organisations registered with the union: a total of 143 oil and gas company names and their contact details. Based on the scope discussed above, using Google, these 143 organisations were researched and information on their services reviewed to ascertain which companies are involved with exploration and production. There were three types of organisations, and these were sorted to identify those producing oil and gas (see Appendix 1).

Based on this review, only 43 of them were oil and gas exploration and production companies. All 43 companies had contact email addresses provided and only 27 had contact numbers provided. Of these 43 companies, only 32 of them had HR personnel contacts and email addresses provided. It was decided that these would form the sample size of the research and a snowballing technique can then be utilised if required.

An initial contact email (see Appendix 2) was sent out in the first quarter of 2019 to all 32 prospective respondents and only one response was received indicating interest in participating in the pilot survey. This contact email was followed by phone calls to the 16 contacts who had phone numbers provided. Initiating these calls brought about the following nil response outcome:

1. Three of those details were invalid – invalid number or missing digits.
2. Nine contacts could not be reached.
3. Three contacts had left the organisation and were retired or no longer within the HR field.
4. One contact did not feel comfortable participating in the survey without the consent of his organisation.

Following these unsuccessful calls, it was discovered that the details received from the contact in PENGASSAN were mostly out of date and could not be totally relied upon. Subsequently, it was

decided that another course of action was required to tackle the problem of data collection at this stage to ensure a higher response rate. Actions taken included:

- Using the organisations' contact details on their websites, a list of contacts was made and 1-2-1 contact of the identified organisations was initiated. The snowballing technique was also used in a bid to acquire more contacts.
- The contact from PENGASSAN who provided the oil and gas contact list was called to inform him of the issue of out-of-date contacts. He was happy to review the list and ascertain if he can obtain more up to date contact details. However, he ceased communication with the researcher.
- The initial list of oil and gas companies was subjected a more detailed review to ensure that only oil and gas operating and producing company contacts were made. This led to the discovery that the sample size is limited to only 17 as against the initially stated 43 companies. One of the reasons for this was that some companies are listed as exploration and production but only provide services to but do not operate in the exploration and production sector.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPM) was also contacted, and a request was made by the researcher for the research questionnaire to be distributed to their members who work in organisations within the research scope. However, the researcher received a response stating that no help could be provided as they 'do not have their database segregated by industry to take care of your sample frame'. In addition, no referrals could be made.

With the realisation that recruiting the relevant respondents for the research was going to be challenging, the decision was made to expand not necessarily the scope for the research but the scope for contact to enable more opportunities for snowballing. The snowballing technique is when the researcher requests for referrals (from the respondent) to more respondents who can participate in the data collection exercise and contribute to the research topic (Carter and Henderson 2005). The dependence on referrals included making the acquaintance of a CSR industry professional who has connections within the oil and gas industry. This led to the researcher attending a conference (see section 5.3.4) hosted by this consultant in Nigeria where oil and gas professionals were in attendance, subsequently leading to the recruitment of two respondents for the research. The mentioned course of events also highlighted the fact that due to the peculiarity of the Nigerian work culture and the poor response to emails and calls, a more traditional approach was needed to enable effective data collection which included a trip to Nigeria to enable face to face meetings. It is noteworthy that using the snowballing technique meant that the data collection exercise/ process was time consuming and gradual (Naderifar et al 2017).

5.3.2.2   UK

An effort was made to recruit as many respondents as possible for the purpose of an explorative survey in the UK (detailed in the next section), but these proved abortive. Subsequently, an oil and gas HR specialist in Oil and Gas UK (OGUK) was introduced to the researcher by a member of the supervisory team. This contact provided a list of all oil and gas exploration and production organisations operating in the UK to the researcher – 21 in total. The contact list provided formed the research sample for the purpose of an explorative questionnaire survey carried out in the UK.

5.3.3   Explorative survey

Informal

The explorative questionnaire survey carried out for the study was in two phases. The first was a set of informal discussions and one email exchange (see appendix 3) carried out with professionals within the oil and gas industry between July and August 2018. These were five CSR/ sustainability/ HR professionals, and they were identified through snowballing (in Nigeria and the UK). Two of these professionals were based in the UK and three in Nigeria. The mode of communication varied from face-to-face meetings to Skype calls. The discussions held were not recorded and this was because during these discussions, the ethical approval for data collection had not been obtained within the school. The aim of the informal discussions with these professionals was to:

- Discover what the general knowledge about SBPs is within the industry.
- Understand the perception of these professionals on SBPs within the industry.
- Gain insight into the contextual nature of SBPs within the industry.

These discussions highlighted the following: these professionals were well aware of the issues of sustainability but had limited knowledge or had not heard of SBPs. Though numerous articles which focused on SBPs and their benefits existed, it is still an area which does not gain the desired practical attention. Following explanation of what SBPs are, these professionals expressed the opinion that these should be implemented within the industry due to the possible benefits associated with their implementation.

Furthermore, one of these informal chats with the industry professional highlighted the complexities of the oil and gas industry (and their practices). This enabled the researcher to think deeply about the research scope and what the study intended to focus on and achieve.

Formal

With the research scope and sample fully determined, the second phase which was a more formal pilot survey was then carried out both in Nigeria and the UK to gain some understanding from HR professionals within the oil and gas industry on what SBPs are currently being implemented and the level of knowledge about SBPs among HR personnel. In addition, there was an aim to evaluate the perceptions and opinions of HR personnel on SBP implementation within the industry. This exploration was done in the form of a pilot survey (a web-based questionnaire) sent out to the identified respondents in Nigeria and the UK. The purpose of the explorative survey was to gain some insights into certain areas which would then be explored further using semi structured interviews in Nigeria. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire to the research participants, the questionnaire was sent to a HR lecturer for completion to help sense check if the questionnaire has been designed to get the relevant data. Feedback was received and incorporated into the questionnaire.

The search for respondents for this explorative survey was carried out between September 2018 – February 2019 and the survey was launched in March 2019 with a 4-week time frame for receipt of responses.

Quantitative pilot survey - Web-based questionnaire

Quantitative research methods in social science mostly consist of surveys where the data is measured, ensuring validity and reliability to permit meaningful interpretation (Creswell 2013). A questionnaire was designed for the purpose of the pilot survey with the main aim of determining the level of awareness and knowledge of HR professionals on sustainable business practices implementation within the oil and gas industry in the UK and Nigeria. According to Mills (2016), quantitative research gathers numerical data by utilizing structured research methods which are decided and completed prior to data collection. The questionnaire, which was designed based on the researcher's interests and following an extensive literature review, contained 21 questions divided into 5 sections and these sections covered broad areas such as:

- Awareness of the existence of SBPs as a concept
- Awareness of SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry
- Opinion on the impact of oil and gas practices on the environment, economy and societies
- What SBPs implementation in the organisation should entail (enabling factors)
- Opinion (and awareness) of current SBPs within the industry and current and potential role of HR in the SBPs implementation.

A web-based Likert scale questionnaire was chosen for a number of reasons: easy for the respondents to understand and respond to the questions; ease of implementation; to enable a simple interpretation of the data collected. According to Campbell and Swinscow (2011), the quantitative data may either be counted or measured. In this study, the data collected was counted and the results and findings are set out in the section below.

5.3.3.1 Explorative survey – UK

In order to recruit respondents for the survey, the option of obtaining contacts from RGU's Oil and Gas Institute was explored. This, however, proved unsuccessful because meaningful contact could not be established with the institute. The UK Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) was also contacted to enquire whether they could assist in the distribution of the questionnaire. However, this was not an option as they did not have a system in place to accommodate such requests. Other options that were considered include the creation of introductory letters and send those out with paper copies of the questionnaire to Heads of HR in the oil and gas exploration and production companies in the UK. While this last option was being considered, the involvement of a member of the researcher's supervisory team resulted in established contact with an OGUK personnel. Following several contacts and a further discussion during a face-to-face meeting, she agreed to assist in sending out the link to the web-based questionnaire to HR contacts in those organisations (21 in total) in her data base (contact information could not be disclosed due to General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR). Below is a list of the organisations (Table 5.2).

BP Exploration Operating Company Ltd
Bumi Armada UK Ltd
Cairn Energy Plc
Chevron Upstream Europe
Chrysaor
CNOOC International
CNR International (U.K) Ltd
ConocoPhillips (UK) Limited
Endeavour Energy UK Ltd
Equinor UK Limited
JX Nippon E&P UK Ltd
Marathon Oil U.K. Ltd
Marubeni North Sea Ltd
Perenco UK Limited
Premier Oil plc
Repsol Sinopec Resources UK Limited
RockRose Energy Plc

Serica Energy
Siccar Point Energy Limited
Tailwind Energy Ltd
TAQA Bratani Ltd
Total E&P North Sea UK Limited

Table 7: 5.2: List of oil and gas exploratory and production organisations UK (2019). Author generated

A total of 21 HR professionals based in these companies received an introductory email alongside the web-based questionnaire (see appendix 3). There was a total of nine responses (43 percent response rate) received after the four-week period given. One possible major contributor to the low response rate could be the fact that follow up reminders could not be sent by the researcher because respondents' contact details could not be shared with the researcher due to GDPR. Though the response rate was low, some insight could be gleaned from the responses. Below is a summary of the findings:

1. **Knowledge about SBPs** - 7 out of 9 (77.8%) respondents agreed that they have heard about SBPs. Though not all respondents have heard of SBPs and their implementation, all claimed to have some sort of knowledge of SBPs. In addition, majority of the respondents (66.7%) have only limited knowledge about the topic of SBPs. All respondents agreed (of which 88.9% strongly agreed) that there should be a good understanding of the concepts of sustainability initiatives and SBPs among oil and gas personnel.

2. **SBPs implementation** - Only one respondent disagreed that SBPs are implemented in the oil and gas industry in which they work. However, this respondent has worked in the oil and gas industry for 20yrs and has limited knowledge of SBPs. This may suggest that SBPs are really not well known or implemented within the industry.

3. **Impact of oil and gas practices** - Almost half of all respondents stated that the impact of the oil and gas industry on the environment in which they work is fairly negative. Only one stated that the impact is very positive. All respondents agreed that the impact of the oil and gas industry on the economy in which they work is positive. More than half (66.7%) were of the opinion that this impact is strongly positive. Also, all respondents agreed that the impact of the oil and gas industry on the society is positive. However, only 3 were of the opinion that this impact is strongly positive.

4. **Strategic alignment** - All respondents agreed that sustainability initiatives should be effectively embedded in the organisation's strategy and operations. 8 out of 9 of the respondents strongly agreed on this point. In addition, all respondents strongly agreed that leadership support is important in the development and implementation of SBPs in organisations. 77.8% of respondents agreed that sustainability initiatives are effectively embedded in their organisation's strategy and operations.

5. **HR involvement** - 88.9% of respondents agreed that HR is involved in the strategic planning within their organisations. Of this number, 66.7% strongly agreed to this fact. However almost half (44.4%) of respondents disagreed that HR currently plays a role in the implementation of SBPs in their organisations. Again, 44.4% disagreed that HR is currently involved in the implementation of SBPs in their organisations. 44.% agreed while 11.1% strongly agreed to this fact. 88.9% of respondents agreed that there is more potential for HR to be involved in the implementation of SBPs in their organisations while one respondent strongly disagreed to this fact.

The results from this survey, outlined in the five categories above, were very insightful and helped shape the questions that were used for the semi structured interviews conducted in Nigeria. These were aimed at achieving the research objectives of understanding the level of HR knowledge about SBPs, current SBPs practices as well as HR involvement in SBPs implementation and thereby responding to the research questions. Another rationale for conducting an explorative survey in the UK was to understand if there is a similarity in practices since most of the IOCs operate both in Nigeria and the UK. The question could then be asked on what similarities will exist if UK operations are offshore and Nigerian operations are mainly onshore? This point was noted by the researcher and the information sought was not on specific practices but on the general opinion of HR practitioners on SBPs are their implementation within the industry. However, it could also be argued that the responses on the impact of oil and gas practices on the environment, economy and society has a bearing on this element. Due to the low number of responses received, it became more apparent that a qualitative approach was required to obtain rich data for the study.

5.3.3.2 <u>Explorative survey – Nigeria</u>

Following the generation of the web-based questionnaire, this was launched to all 32 respondents in Nigeria (described above). Follow up emails were sent as well as emails giving the option for the questions to be sent as an attachment or in the body of an email for 'easier' access. These all yielded no response from Nigeria for the explorative questionnaire survey.

The researcher sought to use the survey to establish contacts that would be useful for the interview data collection exercise, but this proved abortive. In addition, the negative outcome highlighted the need to re-strategize on the process of recruiting respondents for the researcher's interview data collection exercise.

5.3.4   Interviews

Qualitative research allows for the use of a wide range of methods including in-depth interviews, focus groups and content analysis (Hennink et al. 2020). For this study, semi structured interviews were utilised as a data collection method because it is widely used to explore perceptions and experiences of research participants (Harvey-Jordan and Long 2001). They also posit that semi structured interviews "are used to generate ideas in order to develop or change practice" (p. 219) and this aligns to the overall aim of the study which is to explore what role HR can play to support transition of oil and gas organisations to SBPs implementation. As previously discussed, it was critical for the researcher to place aside every prejudice or preconceived notions and opinions during the course of the study. This was even more important during the interview sessions as it was necessary to have an open mind while listening to the research participants expressing their opinions and understanding of the subject matter. This has been argued to be crucial in obtaining required information from the research participants (Hennink et al. 2020).

Interviews have been regarded as an efficient and significant method of data collection (Silverman 2006) and have been defined as "a method of collecting data in which selected participants are asked questions in order to find out what they do, think or feel about a phenomenon" (Collis and Hussey 2003 p 167). According to Bryman and Bell (2004), utilising the same context of questioning for all research participants is the goal of using interviews. This will ensure that all interviewee responses can be consistently grouped and analysed. Collis and Hussey (2003) posited that interviews can be conducted in various ways including face to face, telephone and email correspondence. All of these types of interviews were employed in this study.

There are three different types of interview methods – unstructured, semi structured and structured interviews. The kind of problem or phenomena to be examined determines which interview method should be utilised (Saunders et al 2006). For this study, it was not appropriate to use the unstructured interview where the researcher has no pre-determined questions (Sekaran 1992) set out for the research participants because the set questions allowed the researcher to steer the discussion in the right direction to ensure all critical areas were addressed. While it was important to have set questions, it was even more important to allow for the respondents to express their opinions freely. Therefore, the structured interview method was deemed inappropriate for this study. In light of these considerations, the semi structured interview method was seen as the most appropriate method for the study. This method combines the advantages of both the structured and unstructured methods and has been viewed as the preferred interview type (Collis and Hussey 2003). Though there was a set of questions, the order the questions were asked varied and depended on the flow of conversation between the researcher and respondent. Though some questions were not asked by the researcher (during a few of the interviews) the responses were nevertheless provided by the respondents due to the flow of the conversation.

The interview questions were designed to ensure that the research objectives were met, and the research questions adequately responded to. The aim was to gather empirical evidence to enable the critical evaluation of the potential role of HR in supporting the transition towards SBPs in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. Within this, the study sought to understand the level of knowledge of HR personnel on SBPs as well as HR's current role in the SBPs discourse within the organisation. Data collected served to validate some of the findings from the literature as well as corroborate some opinions gathered in the UK pilot survey. Consequently, an all-inclusive understanding of the required information important to achieving the research's objectives was acquired using the semi structured interview.

Turner (2010) posits that interviews possess numerous advantages in comparison to other means of collecting data especially as compared with the use of questionnaires. These advantages include easy administration, flexibility and a high response rate (Sarantakos 1998). However, Turner (2010) argued that in order to provide robust data for analysis, interviews can be combined with other methods of data collection, for example the questionnaire. This approach was employed by this study as previously described where a web-based questionnaire was used for an explorative survey. This allowed for the analysis and better understanding of the opinions and perceptions of oil and gas professionals especially HR personnel on the issues of sustainability as well as SBPs implementation within the industry. The aim of combining these two methods was to enhance the general research findings. Despite the stated advantages of utilizing the interview method, certain concerns have been raised. One of such concerns was put forward by Smith (2003) who claimed that poorly worded interview questions can result in misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the questions by the respondents. This concern was kept in focus and efforts were made to ensure that the interview questions were appropriately worded to ensure desired responses were received.

The interview questions designed following a critical literature review and the theoretical framework, (see Appendix 4) were a total of 24 divided into eight sections covering: role and organisational structure, understanding sustainability/ SBPs, Nigeria, SBPs implementation, challenges and HR involvement, HR, authority and power and finally, identity - behaviours and interests. The interview questions were set with the aim of exploring the opinions and experiences of the research participants with regards to sustainability awareness, SBPs implementation (as well as challenges encountered in SBPs implementation) and HR involvement – actual and potential. The role and organisational structure section was set to understand the role of the research participant and how it fits into the organisational structure in terms of the reporting structure and level of authority needed to carry out required tasks in relation to SBPs implementation which feeds into the authority and power section of the questions. It was also important to get a sense of understanding of the level of awareness of these personnel on sustainability and SBPs as this will inform their level of interests as well as actions taken in that regard. In addition, the challenges faced in the implementation of SBPs will help gauge what role HR can play

to support SBPs implementation within the organisation while trying to align with their current involvement given the peculiarity of the Nigerian cultural and political clime.

In October 2019 prior to the start of the data collection exercise, three participants - the researcher's primary supervisor, an industry expert as well as a doctoral researcher - were engaged in a mock interview session to gauge the appropriateness, flow and clarity of the interview questions. This exercise revealed minor concerns with the arrangement of the questions as well as the need for follow-up questions based on responses. These findings helped the researcher to review and modify the questions and sequence to achieve maximum effectiveness and be aware of the need for attentiveness during interview sessions. The exercise also confirmed the reliability and validity of the interview questions. Finally, an interview guide was drafted, ethical approval obtained from the school (see Appendix 4) and this guide was then sent to identified respondents prior to the interview day.

With the completion and approval of the interview questions, the search for research participants began in earnest. The challenges described in section 5.3.2.1 persisted and resulted in great difficulties recruiting respondents. A decision was then made to expand the sample to include other oil and gas professionals that are involved in the implementation of sustainability initiatives within the organisation and not just HR personnel. This was believed would help improve chances of getting respondents for the research and also obtain rich data of other perspectives on the subject matter other than that of HR personnel. Several options were considered by the researcher including visiting the organisations and requesting for a meeting. However, this idea was quickly discarded when it was realised that these oil and gas organisations are heavily guarded, and access is not allowed into the premises except by invitation of a company personnel. Following the exploration of many failed options including contacting the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management Nigeria (CIPM) for referral of HR professionals within the industry, the researcher then resorted to seeking personal contacts. Interviewees were contacted based on personal referrals made by family and friends who had contacts within the Nigerian oil and gas industry. This was a tedious process as in some cases, it took several snowballing contacts to get one relevant contact/ potential respondent. After a potential respondent was identified, it was then a process of sending emails, subsequent follow-up emails (It was observed that emails were rarely responded to so the researcher had to rely heavily on phone calls) and numerous phone calls and text messaging before appointment dates and times could be secured.

In spite of all of these efforts, only two appointments could be secured prior to the researcher's trip to Nigeria for the data collection exercise. While in the country, more efforts had to be put into getting respondents through constant phone calls. In addition, the researcher attended a conference in Lagos Nigeria, November 2019 – 'Sustainability in Extractive Industries' (SITEI) hosted by *CSR in Action* in a bid to secure more appointments. This conference was attended by oil and gas professionals as well

as representatives of host communities. The talks held during the conference allowed the researcher to gain more insight into the nature of the relationship between these major stakeholders – the oil and gas organisations and the host communities. There was also an attempt made by the researcher to make a presentation on the research during the conference to generate interest and attract respondents. However, the request was not granted by the conference organisers but attendance at this conference allowed the researcher secure appointments for two telephone interviews.

In all, there were a total number of 12 respondents for the interview exercise conducted in Nigeria between November 2019 – January 2020. To keep to the confidentiality assurance given to the respondents, code names were given to each respondent using SBP and a three-digit code. These have been used in place of their names when reference is made to responses provided by them. There were eight organisations in total – six IOCs and two locally owned organisations resulting in six face to face interviews and six telephone interviews. These are detailed in the table 5.2 (See appendix 5) in the order they were interviewed.

5.3.4.1 <u>Administering the semi-structured interview</u>

All necessary paperwork and ethical approval were completed prior to the commencement of the interviews. An information sheet and consent form debrief (see Appendix 4) were sent to the respondents via email. The info sheet provided necessary information about the research while the consent debrief form explained how the research participant's personal details will be used and stored as well as confidentiality considerations.

Prior to the interviews (after contact was established with the respondent), an attempt was made by the researcher to establish a relationship with them through regular contact. It was believed that this would result in a more relaxed atmosphere during the interview and feel less like an interrogation. Establishing such relationship was not always possible due to some respondents demanding a quick interview right away due to lack of availability in the near future. In such situations, the researcher had to ensure that a relaxed environment is created while attempting to get rich information despite the time constraint. Some respondents also requested for the interview questions to be sent to them prior to the scheduled interview date. The researcher believes that this helped the respondents feel a little more relaxed knowing what questions were going to be asked and feeling prepared. The period of recruiting respondents – respondent identification, contact made, setting up appointments – was from August 2019 – January 2020. This extended period was because respondents were still being sought long before and also after the researcher returned from Nigeria. All the face-face interviews were conducted in Lagos, Nigeria. This is because most of the oil and gas organisations have their head offices in Lagos which is a commercial and industrial state and also a former capital of the country.

It is important to highlight that the researcher perceived that some participants may not have provided objective responses due to several reasons (Creswell 2009). This is especially the case in this instance where the issue of environmental degradation and community concerns due to oil and gas business practices is a sensitive and complex issue. The respondents may also have been reluctant to go on record making statements that contradict the position of their organisations or be seen clearly saying that the organisation is not engaging in sustainable or ethical practices. Great care was taken to assure the respondents of their anonymity and put them at ease to provide responses which were as objective as possible. In addition, indications of such reluctance to provide objective responses were noted throughout the interviews.

Consent to audio record the interview was obtained from all respondents and this allowed the researcher to focus on the respondents, their responses to the questions asked and non-verbal reactions (Bryman 2008). This enabled follow on questions to get more information out of what had been said. These recorded interviews varied in length, ranging from 15mins to 1hr 45mins with an average of 1hr. The recordings were transcribed as soon as possible by the researcher, listened to again to ensure all data had been captured and recordings deleted immediately afterwards (as stated in the info and consent forms). Immediate transcription helped the researcher to remember the expressions of the respondents and make notes which then enabled a better analysis of the data collected. The transcription of data was done verbatim and all the pauses, voice inflection, laughter as well as hesitations were all captured. These were used to emphasise some points and findings. For example, pauses were used to highlight areas where the respondents were hesitant to voice their opinions and voice inflections were used to emphasise a respondent's frustration with a particular topic. This added to the rich data and provided a more robust and comprehensive data analysis.

5.4   DATA ANALYSIS

A researcher makes use of qualitative data analysis to "make sense out of their data" (Williamson et al 2018, p 453). Lofland et al. (2006) set out four defining characteristics of analysis of qualitative data:

- The results or findings arise through an analysis process that is skewed in the direction of induction rather than deduction.
- The primary analytic agents are the researchers themselves.
- Because of the inductive and agent-driven character of qualitative analysis, it is a highly interactive process between the researcher and the data.
- It follows that the process is labour intensive and time consuming (p 195 – 196).

One of such methods of qualitative data analysis is the thematic coding. The thematic coding analysis method which has been described by Vaimoradi (2013) as "a systematic coding and categorising approach used for exploring large amounts of textual information unobtrusively to determine trends and patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationships and the structures and discourses of communicating" (p 401) was employed in the analysis of the data collected in this study. The aim of using this method was to identify important themes and concepts through continuous comparison of all data collected to create a rich description of the phenomena being investigated. This method has been argued to be highly inductive (Dawson 2009) where new theories emerge out of data collected in the study. This method has also allowed for a rich description of data.

Various relevant perceptions were identified and then categorised into concepts also known as axial codes (Marshall and Rossman 1999). These codes were then developed into categories/ themes – first broad themes and then narrowed down (see appendix 9). These formed the basis of the research discussion where research findings, literature as well as the researcher's interpretation of the data collected all came together to provide a holistic view of the topic of SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria and give insight(s) on how HR can support in this regard.

5.4.1   Coding Method

The first step was to highlight the research objectives as a reminder of what should be in focus. Thus, the focus was to i) critically discuss the contextual nature of SBPs within sustainability and sustainable development (SD) viewpoint. ii) examine current SBPs and/or sustainability initiatives in the oil and gas industry and the challenges involved in their implementation within the Niger Delta. iii) assess the level of knowledge of SBPs among HR personnel within the oil and gas industry, as well as HR's current involvement in its implementation. iv) based on 2 and 3, evaluate how HR can be integrated to help address the identified challenges and proffer recommendations to enhance HR participation in facilitating the transition to SBPs. The reflection upon these objectives then allowed the researcher to properly determine what data collected should be classed as relevant and non-relevant.

The interview transcripts were read many times and at the same time reflecting on the data to understand the information provided by the respondents and become familiar with it. Certain points of interest emerged with this process, and these include the relationship between the three major stakeholders in the oil and gas industry and how this has an impact on SBPs implementation within the industry, the current 'SBPs' practices employed, ongoing challenges of implementing SBPs as well as HR role, perceived and actual, in supporting the implementation of SBPs within the oil and gas industry.

With each transcript, different quotes from responses were highlighted as important and this enabled the generation of ideas on what the data means and what conclusions can be drawn, all the while keeping the research aim and objectives in focus. These quotes were collated based on responses of each question asked and answered during the interview sessions. These quotes were then transferred to a Word document and colour coded to represent different themes. Themes and sub themes were generated alongside the quotes from which these themes emerged. Therefore, a table was generated with the following tabs: themes, sub themes and data extracts (see appendix 7). The researcher did not include demographic criteria - age, gender, ethnicity - in the data analysis, partly because there was never an intention to base the analysis on these criteria, in particular ethnicity profiling, due to the sensitivity of these subjects in Nigeria. A decision was made to avoid segregating responses based on these to evade backlash following publishing results and preserve the opportunity for future collaboration with the O&G industry in Nigeria. Such demographics should be taken into consideration during sample selection if they will form a part of the analysis (Bartlett 2001). However due to the decision not to analyse the data using these demographics (appendix 5 shows the demographic breakdown), they were not considered as important factors and did not influence the study's sample selection. The respondents' extracts are coded differently – HR prefix to indicate a respondent who is a HR personnel and SBP prefix to indicate a respondent who is in a sustainability role within the organisation. The differentiation was to allow analysis of data to see whether there were significant differences in opinions of respondents in responses though none was found as evidenced in the research results and findings chapters (Chapters 6 and 7). This provided a clear picture of the data collected.

Subsequently, each transcript was annotated using the review function on Word document. This enabled the researcher to read each sentence and put down thoughts and interpretation of these responses rather than focusing on the responses based on questions asked. These notes of interpretation of the data as well as the summaries made of each interview were then collated in a separate document. This process highlighted the emergent patterns in the responses received. These patterns were then subjected to critical evaluation and grouped together, and this resulted in three broad themes within which there were other themes discussed. A summary of the findings was also developed from this process.

After the findings had been summarised, the researcher revisited the transcripts again to ensure that no vital information had been missed or any emergent theme omitted. This process showed that data saturation (Braun and Clarke 2019) had been achieved and no new information could be obtained from the collected data.

5.5   SECOND DATA COLLECTION EXERCISE

After the analysis and collation of findings of the data collected from the 12 respondents, it was observed that some areas required further exploration due to insufficient data collected in these areas. These were surrounding the issue of employee voice, organisational culture, strategic and tactical role of HR and finally monitoring and evaluation of SBPs implementation. Therefore, the researcher began the process of collating these areas of concern, drafting interview questions to address these concerns (see Appendix 8) and obtaining ethics approval for a second data collection exercise. Utmost care was taken to guarantee that the same methodology was followed as with the first set of data collection.

The sample composition and size for this data collection was strictly HR professionals in Nigeria-based oil and gas exploration and production companies. All six of the HR respondents from the first set of interviews were contacted to request for their participation in another interview. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the inability to travel for the second data collection exercise, it was decided that telephone interviews would be carried out. After numerous email/ text exchanges as well as phone calls, appointments could only be fixed with two of the six (HR014 and HR015). Personal referrals as well as snowballing approach were utilised which resulted in two HR professionals plus a sustainability respondent (see below) contact made and interviews secured bringing the total to five respondents and telephone interviews were conducted (see table 5.3 in appendix 5). The duration of these interviews ranged from 30 – 75 minutes. Again, utmost care was taken to ensure that the same process of transcription, coding and analysis was carried out as per the first data collection exercise (see Appendix 9). The results and findings of this second set of data were presented separately in chapter eight along with the discussion of these findings while highlighting the links to the first set of data.

In total, there were four organisations – three IOCs and one locally owned oil and gas organisation in Nigeria all of which meet the criterium of the research scope which is exploration and production organisations. During the snowball sampling, the researcher was introduced to an NGO volunteer with company I. An NGO that interfaces with the host communities, government and the oil and gas organisations in their work of supporting those who have been affected by the impacts of oil and gas business practices within the Niger Delta region. Though not an HR professional, the researcher believed it was beneficial to have a discussion with this person who may have valuable insights on the relationship between the three major stakeholders. These views and opinions gave insights into the situation in the Niger Delta and can be corroborated by literature findings on the matter. The findings from the second data collection exercise revealed that many responses were similar to responses from the first exercise especially with regards to the level of government involvement in SBPs implementation, the challenges encountered as well as HR involvement. Though there were similar responses in some instances, there were three emergent themes: top management involvement crucial for effective SBPs implementation, factors within the organisation needed to enable SBPs

implementation, HR business partnering, and functions aligned to SBPs implementation. The exercise was successful as the aim, which was to explore certain areas further, was achieved and the details of these emergent themes are discussed in chapter eight.

5.6   RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE RESEARCH

It was important to maintain quality within this qualitative study as seen in the detailed discussion in earlier in section 5.2.3. Guba and Lincoln (1985) proposed four ways through which a qualitative study can be tested: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. These criteria will be discussed in addition to the measures of reliability and validity. Gibbs (2007) posited that for research to be reliable, it should have the ability to be repeated by any researcher in different circumstances. The research methods and techniques employed in this study and their description ensures that the study has reliability/ dependability. The processes followed were clear and well defined so that it can be replicated and be transferable - transferability which can be aided by thick descriptions (Guba and Lincoln 1985). In this study, thick description has been utilised in the analysis and discussion of the data.

According to Gibbs (2007, p 152) the validity of a research study is "the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena in which it refers". The researcher ensured that the research participants from within the research scope were professionals within their fields and knowledgeable on the subject matter being investigated. Data collected has been compared with literature findings to guarantee validity.

There are three major concerns when considering the credibility of the research and its methods and they are: the philosophical underpinnings of the research, the credibility of the researcher and the rigour of data collection and analysis. Within this study, the clear definition of the sample scope and size gives the research credibility. This selection of the scope and sample was carried out following an extensive literature review. The oil and gas exploration and producing organisations were selected based on the impact of their business practices on the environment and the host communities. In addition, professionals within certain positions directly related to sustainability and SBPs implementation were selected to give their opinions and experiences which can in turn lead to the provision of relevant recommendations. It was also important to obtain information from the perspective of other professionals asides from HR professionals to ensure objectivity of responses with regards to the current and potential role of HR in supporting in the implementation of SBPs in the oil and gas industry.

Furthermore, a critical literature review was carried out to gain a holistic understanding of the relationship between the three major stakeholders within the industry and how that impacts SBPs implementation. As earlier stated, a respondent who works with an NGO was interviewed in a bid to

get the perspective of an individual who deals with all three stakeholders on some level. The responses received from him aligned with findings from the literature as well as some other respondents. However, some of his responses also negated responses provided from the perspective of efforts made by the oil and gas organisations to ensure that SBPs are implemented within the industry.

The researcher carried out extensive study of the subject matter to increase knowledge. In addition, there was considerable effort undertaken to prepare the researcher prior to carrying out the data collection exercise to ensure that relevant interviewing techniques were learnt and utilised. The lessons learnt during the first data collection exercise were put to use during the second data collection exercise and this resulted in more refined interviewing skills. In addition, it was imperative that bias was reduced, the data interpreted objectively, and the emergent themes interpreted and recorded as seen. The results were reviewed both by the researcher and the supervisory team to confirm that the findings reported do not appear biased but objectively reported.

CONCLUSION

The research assumes an interpretivist philosophical stance and employs a qualitative approach in the investigation of the subject matter – the role of HR towards SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry. The study focuses on the oil and gas industry in Nigeria as a case study. Based on discussions with industry experts and an extensive literature review, the scope was narrowed down to the exploration and production organisations. The study utilises both primary and secondary methods of data collection. Though primarily a qualitative study, a pilot survey was carried out prior to the interviews to discover the level of knowledge about sustainability/ SBPs of HR personnel within the industry in the UK and Nigeria. Subsequently, HR and sustainability experts were interviewed to gain their views and opinions on SBPs current practices, challenges and the current and potential role of HR in the sustainability discourse within the oil and gas industry. A second level of data collection exercise was carried out to address gaps from the first data collection exercise. The data collected was analysed using a thematic coding analysis method to discover emergent themes and concepts within the data. The research results and findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERVIEW RESULTS AND FINDINGS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The data collected through the semi structured interview of 12 respondents are analysed and presented in this chapter. The aim of the interviews was to explore the experiences and views of respondents on the issues concerning sustainable business practices (SBPs) implementation, HR's current involvement in this regard and their potential role in the transition towards SBPs' implementation within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. It should be noted that large quotes are used in the reporting and analysis of the research findings. It was felt to be important to have the voices of the respondents heard and enable them to be clearly represented with minimum distortion (Detert et al 2010, Morrison 2014) which was at times only possible with the use of large quotes.

In line with the aim of this research, this chapter focuses on six main emerging themes from the analysis of the interview transcripts. These include respondents' knowledge and perspectives on SBPs and their view on the role of HR and how HR functions can be used in the drive towards SBPs' implementation within the organisation. There is also a focus on oil and gas organisations and their role (actual and perceived) in the SBPs implementation discourse as well as the dynamics within the organisation which may influence SBPs implementation. Finally, the views on the oil and gas industry dynamics are presented, focusing on the various actors within the industry and their role in the sustainability discourse especially the Nigerian government as a player within the oil and gas industry.

The interviews were conducted to achieve four aims:

1. To discover the level of knowledge about sustainability and SBPs among HR personnel in oil and gas companies.
2. To understand what SBPs are currently being implemented by business entities with emphasis in the oil and gas industry.
3. To determine the current challenges involved in the implementation of SBPs in the oil and gas companies in the Niger Delta.
4. To explore and understand what role(s) HR personnel play, if any, in the context of facilitating the transition towards SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry.

The findings from the interviews are now presented in the next six sections with the following thematic headings:

- Respondents' knowledge and perspectives of SBPs

- Oil and gas industry dynamics

- Nigerian government as a player within the oil and gas industry

- Oil and gas organisations and their role in the SBPs implementation discourse

- Dynamics within the organisation which may influence SBPs implementation

- HR and HR's role in driving SBPs implementation

These themes emerged from literature review and a critical analysis of the responses from the interview transcripts. Similar responses were grouped into broad themes and further regrouped to narrow down those mentioned above. These will now be discussed in detail below.

6.2   RESPONDENTS' KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVES OF SBPs

This section explores the opinions of respondents with regards to sustainable business practices (SBPs). Based on responses, research participants are of the opinion that sustainability and SBPs can mean different things to different people. This study argues that actions towards sustainability would differ based on understanding and perception. In addition, research participants' views reveal that increased knowledge and awareness of sustainability and SBPs are needed to enable adoption of or participation in sustainable practices.

6.2.1   Different perspectives of sustainability/ SBPs

SBPs were viewed as ethical business practices and as a means of achieving business sustainability and continuity[6]. The research respondents were asked questions to determine their understanding of sustainability such as 'what do you understand by sustainable business practices?' (see appendix 4 for the full interview schedule).

Sustainable business practices as a concept is viewed differently by different individuals. This can be demonstrated in two ways: the responses given by respondents when talking about their understanding of SBPs and respondents expressly highlighted that the concepts of SBPs and sustainability can be subjective i.e., understood differently:

> "What I understand that to be, when you say sustainable business practices it depends on your own interpretation of it…" (SBP009).

> "Again, it is contextual the issue of sustainability. Even the eerrmm… it will mean different things to different people." (HR007).

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[6] Table 6.1 (see appendix six) gives full account of all responses.

It should be noted that though the respondents are coded differently (see section 5.4.1 for reasoning), it was observed that the understanding of sustainability appears to be shared by all respondents and therefore the differences in responses based on roles in this regard was not significant.

SBPs are seen as ways to ensure business sustainability:

"…In the sense that whatever it is you are doing, what will give you longevity and have something to continue tomorrow. What would you do in your business today that definitely will make you last long beyond your own time in the company?" (SBP012).

"So it is essentially how does eerrm… what should we be doing to make sure this business doesn't die tomorrow?" (HR010).

"Sustainability is all about how you carry out your business activities in such a way that the business itself is run for a very long time" (HR011).

In addition to business sustainability, respondents believe that proper controls within the organisation will guarantee business sustainability and continuity:

"What comes to my mind when they talk about sustainable business practices is something like controls, having proper internal controls within your company..." (HR005).

"… eeerrmm care or caution will be laid in place to ensure that the right practices are cultivated and it becomes a culture too." (HR007).

These quotes indicate that SBPs are perceived as controls or practices that ensure business activities are regulated to prevent environmental degradation. It is therefore important that stakeholders are aware of the issue of sustainability and the benefits of taking necessary actions such as SBPs implementation to prevent environmental degradation.

6.2.2   Knowledge and awareness of sustainability

Knowledge and awareness of the issue of sustainability are needed to generate interest on the subject matter, resulting in the development of desired behaviours. These behaviours lead to desired actions or activities in order to achieve sustainability as well as build a culture of sustainability. These arguments are reflected in research participants' responses in the table 6.2 (see appendix six).

Responses reveal that awareness and education are important factors in ensuring sustainable actions:

"…People now know that there is something called… something is happening I mean people have always known that when there is too much rain, too much heat they say our sins are too much but right now they are getting aware that bush burning is not good so when you are doing bush burning people have an idea

that… so you don't see that done commonly unlike when I was growing up woah bush burning was rampant but now you don't see that happening anymore" (HR002).

The argument is that when individuals are aware of the negative impacts of their actions, there would be a change in behaviour resulting in more sustainable practices. Additionally, consistent participation in sustainable actions and behaviours then lead to a creation of a culture of sustainability. A culture of sustainability when created should be imbibed by all employees within the organisation:

"You need to build the culture of sustainability as part of your business and is gonna cut across whether if you are from the boardroom… from the gateman to the boardroom … it's a culture that we've built. So, when there's a culture on sustainability it affects all of us" (SBP001).

"So there is a collective effort to ensure that things are done right, in the right way... Now of course when you are coming into the company, it is the culture of the company so it is easy for you to follow" (HR005).

The creation of this culture of sustainability and employee engagement supports the achievement of organisations' sustainability agenda. Achieving a culture of sustainability would ensure that every employee function and behaviour within the organisation would be aligned to sustainability and the implementation or adoption of sustainable business practices. In addition, there should be voluntary buy-in of employees as explained by HR011 when speaking about the process of changing the organisational culture: "the intent of every change program is that we do have as an organisation is that we intend for it to be what we call a hearts and mind thing and not just someone wielding the big stick over you". The use of the phrase hearts and mind indicates that it needs to be embedded within the employees and not forced upon them thereby building a culture that encourages imbibing desired behaviours. These employees and oil and gas organisations do not operate in silo and are influenced by factors within the industry in which they operate. The findings in regard to this will be discussed below.

6.3   THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY DYNAMICS

This section attempts to capture the complex dynamics within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria as well as highlight how these different actors and factors can affect the implementation of SBPs within organisations in the industry.

In summary, table 6.3 (see appendix six) reveals that there are several actors within the industry and according to the respondents, they all have a role to play in driving SBPs implementation. These are the organisation, host communities and the government. In addition, respondents have argued that actors can also be hindrances to the effective implementation of SBPs. For example,

"even some will now channel that oil spillage to their farm so that they can claim compensation! Some will deliberately channel it to their river to pollute the river and they will now ask for compensation you understand"? (SBP008)

This respondent believes that host communities cause environmental degradation for monetary gains. In addition, host communities are also viewed by some respondents as obstacles to SBPs implementation. On the other hand, the importance of community engagement is also highlighted. Alongside the host communities, the Nigerian government is viewed as having a huge part to play in the sustainability discourse. The government is represented by numerous regulatory bodies that are tasked with setting oil and gas regulations and enforcing them within the oil and gas industry.

6.4   NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT AS A PLAYER WITHIN THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

The Nigerian government has been mentioned by all respondents as a major player within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. This is evident as the government's role as a major partner in the joint venture (JV), a major source of funds for ensuring smooth oil and gas operations as well as their perceived role in enforcing regulations guiding sustainable operations within the industry. Table 6.4 (see appendix six) sets out respondents' view on these roles of the government.

The issue of the government being both a major player and a source of challenge to SBPs' implementation has been articulated by the response below:

"Nevertheless, two years ago there was a project initiated by the federal government… the government gave all the oil companies including Shell, Chevron a timeline to close out the flare. Don't forget there is funding constraint. Of course, many of the oil companies could not close out all the flare but they closed out as many as they could through gas gathering projects" (SBP001)

It should be noted that it appears to be no surprise to the respondent that the task could not be completed by the set deadline. This could indicate that the issue of funding is an ongoing one and has now been accepted as a norm by organisations. In addition, from the responses above, the Nigerian government is viewed as not enforcing set regulations, breaking the set rules and also fail to provide guidance needed for SBPs implementation both in the oil and gas industry and in the country as a whole. This then has a further knock-on effect on actions of other actors within the industry.

6.4.1   <u>**The Nigerian context as a factor in the SBPs discourse**</u>

A number of issues have been shown to be challenges with regards to SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. These include politics, corruption as well as the lack of focus on sustainability due to the focus being on daily survival of citizens within the country. These have an overarching effect on sustainability discourse. The findings indicate that there appears to be complex issues within the industry. Respondents were hesitant to discuss these but rather provided responses which they may have believed the researcher wanted to hear. This argument is based on the observation of contradictory statements as well as long pauses during the interviews.

The Nigerian government is viewed by the respondents as a major player within the oil and gas industry – as a source of funds to enable SBPs implementation and as an obstacle/ challenge to SBPs implementation. The Nigerian context is seen as an issue/ challenge to SBPs implementation – politics, corruption and poor governance. For example, HR010 stated that:

> "There is a lot of potential we are bugged down by the same things that we have been bugged down with in the longest of time. You have… The asset has the potential to do so much more but because of the type of government that we have and the practices, the policies and the agreements and all of the things that they get into, you're unable to drive the people to do what they are supposed to do because there is an agenda and the agenda is personal interest. So there is personal interest every step of the way".

The respondent highlights that there are many challenges within the oil and gas industry which hinder SBPs implementation. A reference to the government and the role they play in hindering these practices is made. It was also noted that when discussing the challenges of SBPs implementation, the focus of this respondent was on external factors as against when discussing factors that enhance SBPs implementation which respondent only mentioned factors internal to the organisation. This was observed across all respondents as shown in quotes throughout this chapter. Furthermore, knowledge about sustainability in Nigeria is not put into practice for several reasons including government corruption, lack of government intervention and citizens' focus on daily survival.

> "…you don't see the need for sustainability if you feel you can bribe your way to get what you want instead of doing the right thing…" (SBP001).

> "So, all these are levels of monitoring and appraisal that are there to help you fill gaps. If there are gaps, it can easily tell you and for you to easily work on. So, there are monitoring but how effective are these is what I don't know because if you go to NDDC in Nigeria – Niger Delta Development Commission – you will see the corruption that is taking place there... That is why I say that that effectiveness is what I can't say but if it is coming as a jamboree we are going there, everybody is coming with camera, they will go to do that but how effective is that eerrmm monitoring is what I can't say. It is a Nigerian factor" (SBP008).

The importance of including long quotes is highlighted here where this respondent appeared reluctant to voice his opinion and skirted around the subject. It was observed in many of the research interviews that there were contradictory statements especially when the respondents spoke about the benefits of SBPs implementation within their organisations and the challenges faced. This could be an indication that responses given for current practices and benefits of SBPs implementation may be theoretical rather than actually experienced. Another reason could be that respondents were reluctant to explicitly discuss the issue of corruption which is prevalent and affects SBPs implementation as indicated by the respondents. One example was when a respondent was asked a question about what benefits his organisation has gained following the implementation of SBPs he had previously mentioned, his response was:

> "…to be honest with you, I am not talking specifically about what my company does, I was just talking generally about the benefits of sustainable business practices" (HR011).

This response highlights the fact that there is awareness of what actions need to be taken but minimum level of practice. Another respondent speaking of the benefits gained by his organisation stated that:

> "Having the community that work with directly or indirectly sufficiently caring for your activities and your stake in the community is helpful because at the end of the day, they take care of… they don't vandalise your equipment. They don't hurt your people, they are friendly. They give you a license to operate. Company image, friendliness with your stakeholders and of course because we are there, we are being socially responsible to do business there…" (HR006).

These benefits listed by the respondent are all in line with literature findings. For example, based on their study, Dos Santos et al (2014) argue that the benefits of sustainability initiatives include strengthened brand image, enabling the company to become an investment choice, drive innovation and operational efficiencies thereby saving costs, enhanced relationships and partnerships with suppliers, NGOs and other corporates. They conclude that these show the benefits of implementation of sustainable business practices. However, while responding to the question of what challenges are faced by the organisation in the implementation of SBPs, the same respondent stated:

> "At times you see communities because of peculiar reasons actually will vandalise the pipes asked to be compensated. Getting the right of way for some of the new pipes you are going to lay for instance, change that you want to make because some of these pipes have been put there for a long time so getting the right of way to make some changes, that could be challenging" (HR006).

This contradicts an initial comment by this respondent that the organisation has the licence to operate within the communities and there is no vandalism of the organisation's infrastructure. This point is also plainly stated by SBP008 who says "you know there are some things you have on paper and some things that are practical... And again, this also boils down to what is happening in the country". Again, a

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difference between theory and practice, between policy and practice/ implementation. There also appears to be a reference of the Nigerian context or issues surrounding sustainability/ SBPs implementation. Another example is given by respondent SBP008 where he speaks about government involvement in driving SBPs implementation:

> "For projects, federal government department of petroleum resources, federal ministry of environment, NPA, NIMASA, all of them carry out oversight function to see if you are really doing… even Lagos state government in my own place where I work now, Lagos state government is also a stakeholder. They want to see what you are doing. So from time to time, they come for meetings, they also come for site visits to see if actually you are doing what you say you are doing. So, all these are levels of monitoring and appraisal that are there to help you fill gaps. If there are gaps, it can easily tell you and for you to easily work on".

This admission of support from, and involvement of the government through monitoring and evaluation is ironic as his previous comments portrayed the government as shunning their responsibilities within the host communities and leaving it all to the oil and gas organisations to handle. Also, in the same breath, the respondent reiterates the problem of corruption with the government and their ineffectiveness with regards to driving SBPs' implementation through monitoring and evaluation by stating that:

> "So, there are monitoring but how effective are these is what I don't know because if you go to NDDC in Nigeria – Niger Delta Development Commission – you will see the corruption that is taking place there... That is why I say that that effectiveness is what I can't say... It is a Nigerian factor" (SBP008).

Though these statements are contradictory, these could indicate the view of the government that their support is for the oil and gas organisations while the oil and gas organisations have the responsibility of addressing the needs of host communities where they operate. This perception could then have an influence on the actions engaged in by the government within the oil and gas industry. It can then be surmised that the contradictory statements by respondents could be indicative that responses given could be theoretical and probably the responses they believe is expected by the interviewer and not the reality within the oil and gas organisations.

6.5 OIL AND GAS ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE SBPS IMPLEMENTATION DISCOURSE

Oil and gas organisations are major actors in the sustainability discourse within the oil and gas industry. Respondents' opinions about the role of the oil and gas organisations with regards to driving SBPs implementation range from acceptance of the negative impacts of oil and gas practices to the fact that

the organisations are doing all they can to implement SBPs and be sustainable. These are shown in table 6.6 (see appendix six).

From the table, it can be seen that respondents are of the opinion that oil and gas organisations are doing all they can to be compliant and protect the environment and host communities. In addition, there appears to be a transference of blame of environmental degradation to other actors within the industry by research participants:

> "In situation where for instance there are usually occasional sabotages even from the host communities probably for reasons... either to attract attention, to make some claims and possibly to attract resources to themselves. So, there are sabotage of pipelines and those are some of the isolated issues and incidences that could also jeopardise laid systems and processes for ensuring that the right thing is done" (SBP003).

> "The oil industry are probably not the major polluters of the environment because there are other activities that pollute even more than the oil industry" (HR006).

> "For example, spillage, no organisation really wants to have oil spillage but things happen of course. In Nigeria for example, spillage is a complex issue… in Nigeria you have to add the sabotage to most spillages that happen in Nigeria. They happen because somebody went and tampered with some of the infrastructure... So, there is not much the companies could do in terms of…. It is not that there is not much they could do. There is a lot they can do but the effort does not really guarantee whether they are going to be a sabotage or not. Sometimes they do everything they can to engage, collaborate but what will happen, still happens" (HR011).

> "Who are the big violators? The Chinese. I don't think Chinese companies are going to respect your green rules because they can get money from China… if you check the biggest violators it's probably going to be the Chinese. They are looking for the shortest, the fastest way and somewhere that can give them the fastest return" (SBP001).

Oil spill has been a major issue and cause of significant environmental degradation in Nigeria as discussed in chapter three. It is noteworthy that there is no difference in opinion between HR and SBP respondents and they all appear to suggest that the organisations work to prevent oil spills, but they still happen thereby transferring the blame on to the host communities for the spills and subsequent environmental degradation. However, evidence in literature (For example, see Okpanachi 2011; Murphy et al 2016) highlights the complexity of the situation and underlying causes of such sabotages involving the oil and gas organisations. These will be discussed further in chapter seven.

The responses above highlight the perception of respondents that other actors have as much or even more responsibility in ensuring that sustainability is achieved, and the environment protected. This is in addition to bearing the burden of handling the responsibilities of other actors. For example, SBP004 claims that:

"As international oil companies, the government of Nigeria at different times and in different ways has requested international oil companies to get involved in what is important to them. It has been important to this country for a long time the problem of power… for us is not only being sustainable in the way we do the work, our main business in that country but is also making sure we have sustainable relationships with important stakeholders. Stakeholders being people who can have an impact on what we do and who what we do can also have an impact on"

There is a reference to the shortcomings of the government in providing basic infrastructure in the country therefore requiring assistance from the IOCs operating in the country. The respondent opines that there is government reliance on oil and gas organisations to address these gaps within the country for example, the issue of limited power supply. This has been mentioned by another respondent that the government places a lot of burden on the oil and gas organisations by asking them to perform duties that the government should all in the name of CSR.

In addition to transference of blame of environmental degradation to other actors within the oil and gas industry, there is a perception that oil and gas organisations are burdened with the responsibility of catering for the communities and ensuring that basic needs are met. Based on all of these facts above, it is not surprising that respondents view the organisations as the only actors within the industry doing the right thing. This is despite the presence of numerous data/ evidence suggesting that they (the oil and gas organisations) play a huge part in environmental degradation within the Niger Delta region. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

6.6   DYNAMICS WITHIN THE ORGANISATION WHICH MAY INFLUEMCE SBPs IMPLEMENTATION

Findings have shown that there are certain factors within the organisation which may influence the implementation of SBPs. These include controls such as monitoring and evaluation, top management buy-in and the view on cost of implementing SBPs. These will now be discussed in more detail.

6.6.1   Controls within the organisation including monitoring and evaluation

Respondents expressed opinions that controls within the organisation are needed to ensure sustainability agenda is achieved. These could be internal and external controls including regulatory bodies, regulations as well as monitoring and evaluation within the organisation as shown in table 6.7 (see appendix six).

There appears to be numerous controls which have been set up to ensure oil and gas organisations implement sustainable business practices and subsequently prevent environmental degradation for

example monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation processes can serve as controls to ensure that sustainable business practices are maintained in order to achieve set organisational sustainability agenda:

> "Sometimes they do everything they can to engage, collaborate but what will happen, still happens. So, in terms of that, the situation is always that they have all kinds of surveillance mechanisms to make sure that some of these key infrastructures are monitored. Some of the monitoring process, some of them is to prevent the sabotage and the spillage before it happens." (HR011).

One of the issues highlighted is of sabotage of organisations' infrastructures resulting in oil spillage and environmental degradation. Respondents reveal that they view the oil and gas organisations as ensuring sustainability through monitoring processes put in place to prevent such sabotage and the negative impacts.

6.6.2   Cost of sustainability versus profits

The issue of the cost of implementing SBPs was discussed by many of the respondents. This is in addition to respondents highlighting the need to justify the extra expense of being sustainable as well as the need to avoid reducing the organisation's bottom line due to implementing SBPs. Some of these points are shown in table 6.8 (see appendix six).

Respondents' answers highlight the importance placed on the cost of implementing SBPs and these are also weighed against the organisation's profits. These align to literature findings on the barriers to SBPs implementation as set out in chapter two. Financial considerations appear to be a major determining factor in decision making with regards to SBPs implementation.

> "I'm part of the committee to see how we can execute these projects in line with the budget that we have on ground" (SBP008).

> "…well on the whole I would say sustainable business practices can be likened to safety features – they are not cheap! …So, look at the cost of that and that is the same thing with the cost of sustainable practices. We have to put a lot of new infrastructure which necessarily are not compulsory for you to achieve your primary objective. So one big challenge which we all have agreed that we don't have a choice and it may be more expensive in the long run is that it doesn't come cheap" (SBP012).

It is important to be committed to being involved in sustainable business practices, because adopting unsustainable practices can be expensive with regards to the cost to the environment and the society:

> "…you know how much it costs to clean oil spillage. You know that apart from sustainability that it is a big business plan to avoid it from happening in the first place" (HR011).

While talking about implementing SBPs, respondents believed that costs for sustainability within the organisation need to be justified:

> "The thing is that you just need to justify and that is where… the management they are there to support operations, but they will not support the operation blindly. You need to bring your justification; you need to also balance it with costs – effective costing. You are now bringing unreliable cost, cost that cannot you know nobody can I mean… the cost that has even gone above the roof. No management will approve that so you need justification" (SBP008).

> "…some amount of money is made available every year by the company to these communities via a properly legally government supported community development board" (SBP009).

Respondents' opinions indicate that there is a need for a sustainability budget within the organisation to help drive SBPs implementation and this can be set by the top management of the organisation.

6.6.3   Top management involvement and control of employees in the organisation

Table 6.9 (see appendix six) shows that top management involvement and buy-in has been highlighted by respondents as crucial to the achievement of the sustainability agenda of an organisation. Ways this can be shown includes incorporating SBPs/ sustainability into the organisation's strategy as well as giving the right level of authority to employees to carry out relevant tasks to ensure the sustainability agenda is achieved.

The table reveals the respondents' views with regards to control of employees and their actions versus agency to achieve the organisation's goals. This reflects strongly the arguments set out in chapter four about agency and control within the organisation (see also Scott 2003). A number of respondents are of the opinion that HR can be used to control the behaviours of employees within the organisation:

> "How the employees can be better managed in terms of their compensation, in terms of their welfare and everything?" (HR011).

> "HR can run through their files and run through their CVs and look for who has the strength to support the company in this area and put them in the right boxes" (SBP012).

It can be argued that this position of control could be used by HR through their function to build the required sustainability culture within the organisation. Such control could be exercised through HR functions such as performance appraisals and rewards and compensations to enable the achievement of the organisation's sustainability agenda. In addition, respondents are of the opinion that employee voice (Donaghey et al. 2011) is important within the organisation to support in achievement of organisational goals. This argument will be explored further in the next chapter.

Top management buy-in is believed to be effective in driving SBPs implementation through building the desired culture within the organisation as argued by SBP012: "So, organisational culture is driven primarily by top management that is my opinion and from my organisation from what I see". Top management involvement important for driving necessary or required organisational culture. This would be through making strategic decisions aligned to said desired culture. If there is top management buy-in within the organisation, then it can be argued that this will be reflected in the strategic decisions as well as mandates within the organisation which would ensure that all employees align to the set agenda. As stated previously, HR can be empowered to drive SBPs, but this can only be mandated by the leadership of the organisation. When talking about the involvement of HR within the organisation to support SBPs implementation and obtaining the authority to carry out tasks as argued by respondent HR002 (see table 6.9 appendix 6). The importance of the buy-in of leaders to ensure that they carry other employees along in the process of embedding new culture or practices/ processes is further emphasised below. However, in this case, if the mandate is from the leadership team, why do they need to be convinced of the change?

> "So, with that in mind, we try to ensure that leaders understand why we are doing the change and why the change is important. So the why is very key because when they have bought into the why, it is then easy for them to get on with the what and eerrmm helping of course cascade to their team members and ensuring that their team members are on board" (SBP001).

Respondents are also of the opinion that with the involvement and support of leadership or top management on a particular subject matter, such a matter is taken as crucially important by all employees within the organisation:

> "So, when things come from the executive committee like that, it comes with a lot of weight and so it is quite easy to disseminate it down in the organisation. And it is easy at that level to see how it links to the overall business outcomes so when you are cascading it down it is quite clear that it is serious business" (HR007).

In line with this is the issue of the level of authority and control being given to employees by top management to enable them drive SBPs implementation within the organisation. Most respondents believed they have the right level of authority to drive SBPs implementation within the organisation. However, one respondent paints a different picture:

> "(laughs) authority is another bam boozed word… it means nothing. Even in a house may be you have three kids and the first one decides that OK today we are going to eat burgers for dinner, it is only as far as mum allows it, that is authority as it appears but when the first child was talking to his/ her siblings, it would look like authority at that time right? So, authority is another bam boozed word" (SBP012).

This response reflects the respondent's view on the issue of control and agency within the organisation. The organisation would only give so much control as it deems fit and only aligned to the goal of the organisation. Based on example given, employees can have ideas or initiatives, but these can only materialise when the organisation/ management approves them, and this brings the conversation back to the buy-in of top management of the organisation and the allocation of authority to relevant employees or departments for example, HR.

6.7   HR, HR FUNCTIONS AND THE DRIVE TOWARDS SBPS IMPLEMENTATION

HR has been argued to have a role to play in driving SBPs implementation within organisations. The table below highlights the research participants' views on HR's current role in driving SBPs implementation within the organisations and what their potential roles could be in this regard. The general view is that HR functions can be used to support the organisation in achieving its sustainability agenda.

From the table above, responses suggest that HR has a role to play in enhancing the implementation of SBPs within the organisation:

> "…So, I think that there is really a very good role HR can play in ensuring sustainable business practices…" (SBP009)

> "Well, I think HR plays a huge role in driving sustainability in the business because at the end of the day it is the people that do the work" (HR006).

> "So, if you are looking at sustainability with respect to human beings, people, employees then I will say yes HR has a very important role to play" (HR005).

In speaking about the role of HR as well as the efficient collaboration between HR and the sustainability department within the organisation, respondents state that HR provides support in driving SBPs' implementation through their (HR) functions:

> "I think for any activity that you require human beings to implement for you, you will need HR" (SBP012).

> "Does HR have a role to play in making the business greener? Yes, they do. They're part of a team. So, when the team says we're gonna go in this direction, we all go in that direction. Yes, HR can bring in sustainability people if there's vacancy for sustainability" (SBP001).

> "…they have their targets and objectives. In having their targets and objectives, they could have gaps that warrant closing so HR will help them close those gaps in providing training or manpower. If they require manpower. We do just a bit but do we have a day to day input?" (HR006).

Responses highlight varying opinions about the level of authority that HR with regards to having a role to play in driving SBPs implementation within the organisation:

> "In my company, HR is sitting at the right level to be able to drive sustainability" (HR010).

> "To me I think human resources is to source for competent hands, to fill vacant positions in a company and eerrmm I am not sure human resources will look for solution to problems that companies are facing… Fine they can look for competent hands… So those are the roles I think HR, from my own opinion, can play. Not that they will now sit down and start solving individual problems that companies have" (SBP008).

Oil and gas employee remuneration is a huge factor in retention and building relevant cultures. In addition, HR can use this to build employee motivation and engagement to help drive SBPs' implementation within the organisation:

> "We had to eerrmm participate in a compensation survey to see how we even rank in the market and then try to rejig certain things that we do to make sure that we can attract the right talent as well and so on for the future" (HR010).

> "We try to be quite competitive with our renumeration. I guess that is working well because our labour turnover is very low. Just to make sure that employees… we get the best of our employees, there is job security and they are happy coming to work…" (HR005).

> "So, if you are hired in Shell, in fact your family will go to church and do thanksgiving because they know they are already made you understand? (laughs) Because your salary alone, in terms of motivation every of these things is taken care of…" (SBP008).

Findings also indicate that there appear to be no HR sustainability initiatives. In addition, HR tasks are not carried out with sustainability in mind and there seems to be an absence of a collaboration between HR and the relevant sustainability departments within the oil and gas organisations: "So basically, we may not be talking about sustainability but definitely what we do has an impact on the environment… So basically, that is where my role… but it is not as if anybody comes to tell you that this is sustainability but that is what it is" (HR002). The importance of proper planning of tasks with HR involvement is highlighted by this respondent:

> "every change that we implement across the organisation always come with what we call a change management architecture... what that does is that it helps in setting the tone of not just the change that is being proposed but how is that change now going to be managed across board" (SBP001).

From this response, it appears that change within the organisation is planned and organised to guarantee maximum success and effective implementation. In addition, planning of changes helps not only in

ensuring effective implementation of changes but also making certain that it is maintained within the organisation.

HR obtains the buy-in of all employees and drives the change to ensure that it is effective: "we typically would make sure that the change and engage team cuts across different team even though HR is typically at the driver's seat" (SBP001). One observation throughout the data collection exercise was that HR employs the HR partnering model to ensure that they are embedded in every department within the organisation in order to provide the required support. Table 6.11 (see appendix six) shows responses indicating this is a process already in place within the organisations.

The HR business partner function can be utilised to provide the necessary or required guidance to employees at all levels for the effective implementation of SBPs.

CONCLUSION

The chapter has analysed findings from research interviews carried out with 12 respondents with findings derived from responses received based on 23 interview questions. These findings were then divided into six emergent themes with some themes further divided into sub-themes. These themes are aligned to the aims of the research as set out at the beginning of the chapter.

The first theme highlights the respondents' knowledge about sustainability/ SBPs. This section showed the different perspectives of sustainability as portrayed by the respondents which included SBPs as ethical business practices, as a way of having controls in the business, widely acceptable business practices and sustainable business. In addition, results showed that there are different views on sustainability/ SBPs, and respondents believe that interpretation of the concept of sustainability can be subjective which the study argued can have further impact on the actions of these actors based on understanding. It was highlighted that knowledge and awareness of sustainability/ SBPs are important in the generation of the desired behaviours and actions aimed at creating a culture of sustainability and subsequently SBPs implementation. Therefore, it is important for all employees to have not only the knowledge and awareness of SBPs but also the same understanding of sustainability and SBPs to ensure that actions are all aligned to the same goal. There is a potential here for HR to play a role through their function of training and development as well as performance management. Finally, respondents also believe that education of the younger generation on sustainability will be key in ensuring that a culture of sustainability is built.

The findings of the research also show that the dynamics within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria is a complex one. There are different factors that affect the implementation of SBPs. These either aid or hinder SBPs implementation including numerous regulatory policies, laws and regulatory bodies,

corruption of regulatory officials, the need for all the major stakeholders to work together to achieve the desired goal. Another noteworthy factor that affects SBPs implementation, according to the respondents, is the incessant conflicts within the Niger Delta region and lack of cooperation of all major stakeholders which results in agreed commitments being breached. Respondents argue that the Nigerian government should have the responsibility of ensuring that these regulations are adhered to and commitments met.

The Nigerian government has been described by the respondents as being a major stakeholder in the Nigerian oil and gas industry. Extensive literature review conducted by the researcher revealed that the host communities were portrayed as being a hindrance to sustainability attainment in the region due to incessant conflicts. It was therefore surprising to observe that the respondents laid more emphasis on the role of the Nigerian government in driving (and obstructing) SBPs implementation. The role of the government includes funding of the joint venture with the oil and gas organisations, setting policies and ensuring strict adherence to them as well as monitoring and evaluation of oil and gas business practices. However, respondents also highlighted some factors that they believe prevents the government from playing its part effectively and these include lack of government's awareness of the issues of sustainability, no clear plan or strategy for tackling such issues, politics, corruption and the issues of personal gain and agenda which are not aligned to achieving the goal of achieving sustainability through SBPs implementation. According to the respondents, the Nigerian government's actions are said to be counterproductive as government officials break the same laws they are meant to uphold. These shortcomings of the government with regards to SBPs implementation has placed, according to the respondents, the weight of ensuring SBPs implementation on the oil and gas organisations.

The respondents' views with regards to the role of the oil and gas organisations in the sustainability discourse ranged from acceptance of negative impacts of the oil and gas business practices as a given and unavoidable to the declaration that these organisations are doing all that they can to ensure that the environment is not degraded. Most respondents believe that more is being done by the oil and gas organisations to protect the environment and cater for the host communities. There also appears to be blame shifting to other major stakeholders within the oil and gas industry for the negative impacts of oil and gas practices and environmental degradation. The majority of respondents are of the opinion that actions of other stakeholders lead to more environmental degradation than that caused by oil and gas business practices.

The oil and gas organisations are portrayed by the respondents as having a major role in ensuring that SBPs are implemented. It was therefore important to explore those dynamics within the organisation that affect this as highlighted by the respondents. Top management awareness and involvement were shown as vital in the effective implementation of SBPs. Others are controls including monitoring and

evaluation and the cost of SBPs implementation versus profit margins consideration. All of these have been highlighted as having an influence on the decision or process of SBPs implementation by oil and gas organisations. To have effective implementation of SBPs, HR needs to consider these factors in carrying out their functions to improve the chances of success of SBPs implementation.

HR has been described by the research respondents as having an important role to play in ensuring the effective implementation of SBPs. The HR functions such as recruiting the right people with the right mindset, training on sustainability, performance appraisal to ensure roles and tasks are aligned to achieving the sustainability agenda of the organisation, raising awareness thereby developing the desired behaviours, as well as building a culture of sustainability within the organisation. In addition, HR is seen to be sitting at the right level of authority to drive SBPs implementation.

Based on the findings, these aims have been achieved as follows:

The current SBPs implemented within the industry have been highlighted as well as the challenges which hinders the effective implementation of these SBPs. In addition, the knowledge and perceptions about SBPs of oil and gas personnel including HR have been revealed. Finally, the current and potential role of HR, as expressed by the respondents, have been shown. Based on this, there is a strong indication that HR has a role to play in supporting the organisation in the implementation of SBPs and the achievement of its sustainability agenda.

The six themes from the research findings presented here were further consolidated into three major themes for a more robust discussion. This synthesis of these findings interwoven with literature findings and the researcher's interpretation of these is presented in the next chapter to show how these all come together to paint a picture of the current situation and possible factors that can enhance SBPs implementation by oil and gas organisations. Even though respondents have different skill sets, are employed by different companies and have a variety of personal and social backgrounds, they were all agreed on key points which feed into these themes. For instance, all respondents agree that HR has a role to play in supporting the organisation to achieve SBPs implementation and all agree that top management involvement is crucial to achieving the organisation's sustainability agenda. Finally, despite the small sample size, the research findings reflect numerous findings in literature based on this, an in-depth data analysis and discussion of research findings was carried out.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND A SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

7.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to undertake a critical discussion of the findings mentioned in the previous chapter. This discussion will be interwoven with findings from the pilot study, informal chats with industry experts and an incorporation of the literature findings in chapters 2 – 4 and show how they link to the arguments set out here in relation to the research study's aim.

7.2   DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS/ THEMES

The discussion is presented under the following three key themes. The first theme identifies the <u>nature of the Oil and Gas Industry dynamics in Nigeria</u> detailing the industry's involvement in creating a strategic focus on SBPs, individual oil and gas personnel's perceptions and understanding of what the term SBPs mean and how they apply this knowledge to their organisations' activities and operations while considering its impact on cost/profit and finally, community and government relations. With regards to government relations, a key focus will be to evaluate the extent of government's involvement towards influencing SBPs implementation in the industry and their potential role towards regulating its implementation. The second and third themes discuss, in turn, <u>the factors within the organisations that can aid or hinder SBPs implementation</u> and the <u>perceived critical factors considered for HR to be able to enhance SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry.</u>

7.2.1   <u>The nature of the oil and gas industry dynamics as it relates to SBPs implementation in Nigeria</u>

The analysis conducted in Chapter six suggests that a strong collaboration among major stakeholders within the oil and gas industry will be significantly useful towards facilitating SBPs integration in oil and gas business activities and operations (See section 7.6). Major studies (Svensson and Wagner 2012, Cha et al. 2018) on SBPs practices have indicated that in order to effectively manage its impact on the environment and the entire business network, different actors would need to work together. Aligning this argument to the study, the oil and gas organisation would need to work with, interface and sometimes rely on other stakeholders within the oil and gas ecosystem. Therefore, the buy-in of different actors within the organisation and the industry is needed to enable the successful implementation of SBPs. Based on the literature review conducted on the oil and gas industry (see Chapter three), there

appears to be three major stakeholders within the Nigerian oil and gas industry – the oil and gas organisations, the host communities and the Nigerian government. These three stakeholders all have major roles to play and work together to ensure that sustainable oil and gas business practices are implemented and maintained within the industry. This is evidenced in this respondent's response:

> "there's been a whole lot of agreements and frameworks that are being put in place to eliminate gas flaring. Some of them require a number of commitments on the part of the different stakeholders…" "So, some of the communities obviously they haven't worked according to plan so you still have gas here and there…" (HR011).

The quote above emphasises the importance of all stakeholders' understanding of the goal of achieving sustainability through SBPs implementation and their buy-in. However, there is a current challenge in obtaining this crucial buy-in of all stakeholders as there appears to be a lack of collaboration among them as well as a lack of commitment. The importance of the acceptance and involvement of all relevant actors and the current challenge of achieving this necessary acceptance and involvement is clearly explained by this respondent:

> "You have to wait for other people to buy into the plan. You can't just run amok no matter how grand the plan is… There is no acceptance worldwide… We have all these bumps of convincing people in different areas and we also have to keep reminding ourselves that that is not our primary business. Our primary business is not to be sustainable. The primary business of every company is to make money!" (SBP012).

This challenge of getting the crucial buy-in of all stakeholders in driving SBPs implementation can be due to a number of factors such as lack of commitment, funding and knowledge of all relevant stakeholders. These will become evident as the discussion on all major stakeholders within the industry progresses in the discussion below.

7.2.2 <u>Relevant stakeholders within the oil and gas industry</u>

As mentioned in the previous sections, three major stakeholders – the Nigerian government, oil and gas organisations and the host communities – have been identified within the Nigerian oil and gas industry. These stakeholders will now be discussed in relation to their role, perceived and actual, within the industry and the context of sustainable business practices implementation.

7.2.2.1 <u>The Nigerian Government</u>

Following the call for more awareness of climate change and the need for targeted actions towards ensuring that effects of human practices on the environment are minimised, there have been goals set at the international level – sustainable development goals (SDG). These goals were approved by the

governments of various countries including Nigeria (detailed discussion on this in chapter two section 2.2.3). This could be said to imply that the Nigerian Government is committed to ensuring that practices which result in environmental degradation are reduced and monitored at different levels within the country to achieve the overall aim of sustainability. Based on the data collected, the role of the Nigerian Government within the oil and gas industry can be seen as threefold:

1. As a funding partner in a joint venture (JV) with oil and gas organisations.
2. Setting sustainable oil and gas policies and regulations for petroleum production and ensuring SBPs and minimal damage to the environment and communities.
3. Monitoring and evaluation of the oil and gas practices to ensure compliance.

According to Obi (2014), the Nigerian Government set up the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in 1977 to manage the oil and gas business on behalf of the government. This is achieved through the acquisition of controlling shares in an oil and gas organisation (JV). In addition to the NNPC, other bodies have been set up by the Nigerian Government to regulate and monitor the activities of the oil and gas industry (Oguagha 2017). These have been discussed in detail in chapter three section 3.3.2. Though the data from the interviews indicate that the Nigerian government is perceived to be an important player in the sustainability discourse within the Niger Delta region, its actual role in protecting the environment has been highlighted by respondents as lacking.

7.2.2.1.1   Nigerian Government as a source of funding for production and sustainability

The Nigerian government's role as a source of funds to enable SBPs implementation appears to be a challenge, based on data collected. One of the problems highlighted by the respondents is the joint venture (JV) with the government which hinders sustainable business practices to be carried out due to lack of funds from the government. Therefore, the government is portrayed by some respondents as an obstacle to SBPs implementation due to lack of funding through the JV. An example is given of a gas flaring project initiated by the government in 2017 but not funded and regulations not enforced:

> "…So for you to stop flaring, you need to put in some things in place to turn the gas that would have been wasted into creative use but the government has not been able to fund the joint venture (JV) to do that" (SBP001).

Gas flaring has been argued to be one of the main causes of pollution from the oil and gas industry resulting in climate change (Ismail and Umukoro, 2012) and attracting international attention (Yunusa et al 2016). It is therefore interesting to note that, though the Nigerian Government was among the countries who approved the SDG goals to tackle climate change, funding has not been made available to ensure that these goals are achieved within the country. Additionally, funding requested by the oil

and gas organisations from the JV (Nigerian government) for implementation of other sustainability initiatives appears to be a lengthy and cumbersome process:

> "So, whatever it is you are doing has to be in tandem with… you can't just wake up and say you want to… you can't sponsor it. 50 percent of the money comes from the government… or 40 percent as the case may be depending on which IOC you are. So whatever idea it is and no matter how fab it is, you still have to take it through the budget norm, you have to get approval and wait for the money to come" (SBP012).

The respondent's comment of 'wait for the money to come' could imply that the process of getting the money to be approved and released by government agencies is bureaucratic and involves a lot of politicking even though the funds have been assigned for such projects or sustainability practices implementation. This suggests that potential personal gains are placed above anything else. In addition, this respondent (SBP012) works in an IOC which has been described by her earlier, as highly bureaucratic. This can be said to be reflected in the cumbersome process for obtaining funds for SBPs implementation as described above. Consistently encountering the problem of funding can then lead to inability of oil and gas organisations to successfully carry out or complete sustainability projects as highlighted by the respondent (see table 6.4 appendix 6). It also appears that the lack of government commitment in funding has given rise to other issues and the associated problems have been accepted as the norm as depicted by the respondent's certainty and lack of surprise that the oil and gas organisations could not close out the flare sites before the set deadline. In addition, this sustainability project – the Nigerian Gas Flare Commercialisation Project –was initiated in 2017 to promote gas utilisation, domestic consumption and exports of gas (Derefaka 2020) and still uncompleted could be said to highlight the presence of other challenges in project completion and ending gas flaring in the oil and gas industry – a key SBP activity. Other challenges that may be present include a possible lack of awareness of the benefits of SBPs resulting in a lack of commitment as well as politics and corruption as asserted by HR010 in table 6.4 (see appendix 6).

This further emphasizes the need to show how institutions can enable sustainable practices implementation including consideration for the role of culture - the ideas and behaviours of a particular entity (in this case, the Government) for sustainability (Foxon *et al.* 2005). Despite the possible benefits of harnessing flared gas as well as the disadvantages of gas flaring, practice to harness the gas is yet to be put in place. One of such benefit is highlighted by the respondent:

> "I was part of the team working on the concession to take off the flare and use it to generate power. Feed it to a micro turbine and if you pull it up to a group micro turbine, you'll get power from there. So, you can sell the power to stakeholders but just before we could bid, the government said thank you very much your time is up" (SBP001).

This respondent's company had an initiative for SBPs implementation which would have had significant benefits including the solution to the major power problem in the country. However, government involvement led to the project being stopped. Though the respondent did not explicitly state the reason why the project was stopped, further probing and discussion suggested that the reason for the termination of the project may be due to monetary gains to be made if 'they' (the government) take control of the project:

> "…the government kind of embargoed all the flare sites... So, there's a federal govt flare down team led by a guy called Mr X so that team have kind of taken those sites and they've advertised the potentials and how much volume of gas there, what are the composition of the gas external to the global awards. At the moment they are reviewing submissions and proposals from people who feel they can make money from the gas flare" (SBP001).

According to the 2020 report by the Nigerian gas flare commercialisation project (NGFCP) set up by the Nigerian government to harness flared gas, the amount of gas flared in Nigeria in 2017 alone amounts to approximately $1billion lost (Derefaka 2020). However, despite taking over the project and flare sites from oil and gas organisations and setting up a governmental agency (NGFCP) to handle the project, gas flaring still persists. In addition to the problem of 'personal gains' and of lack of funding from the government (JV) partnership with International Oil Companies (IOCs), there also appears to be lack of drive from the government and this has been highlighted by respondents as a challenge to SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry.

> "Lack of government effort/ drive. Sincerely you need a driver in every activity. If there is nobody driving any singular motion and like I said sustainable practice is not really the reason for anybody's business…" (SBP012).

Furthermore, despite these apparent challenges posed by the government through lack of accountability and funding, there still appears to be a reliance of oil and gas organisations on the actions of the government to drive SBPs implementation through enforcement of oil and gas regulations and so on. There seems to be a need to have an effective working relationship with the government to ensure that the sustainability agenda is achieved. There is also a perception that the government shuns their national and sustainability responsibilities and move these responsibilities to the oil and gas organisations:

> "…You know most of the things that ordinarily Federal Government, you know when I say Federal Government that is in Nigeria now supposed to be in charge when you talk of security, when you talk about infrastructure, they are supposed to do all these things. But you now see that they are now transferring it as a form of corporate social responsibility to companies, especially to oil and gas companies" (SBP008).

In addition to the lack of accountability of the Nigerian Government through shunning their responsibilities as stated by the respondent above, there is also a reference to the need for the involvement of the government in ensuring sustainability practices are carried out by the oil and gas organisations and the regulations are adhered to. For example, the fact that the government instituted a gas plan to stop gas flaring (Derefaka 2020) – it can be expected that all oil and gas organisations are to have the necessary infrastructure to harness gas, and this entails having it in the budget. However, from responses, the oil and gas organisations do not appear to have the necessary infrastructure that would have enabled a close out of the flare sites as mandated by the Federal Government. The government regulatory bodies do not also appear to be effective in carrying out their tasks and this may be due to factors mentioned by respondents such as corruption and personal interests:

> "There's the bit of you making the law and there's the bit of also backing up because if the govt makes the law on one side and they are also the senior partner in the JV, they are also breaking it on one side, it is counterproductive" (SBP001).

This point is emphasised by another respondent who clearly stated that personal interests of government officials are placed above implementing efficient and sustainable business practices within the industry (see table 6.4 appendix 6).

The second responsibility of the Nigerian Government is in the creation and enforcement of policies and regulations within the oil and gas industry. The Nigerian Government's actual role with regards to the creation and enforcement of oil and gas policies and regulations aligned to sustainability is seen as an obstacle/ challenge to SBPs implementation as emphasized in the quote above. The problems with regards to the government and its involvement in this regard have sometimes been highlighted by respondents as a 'Nigerian context issue/ challenge to SBPs implementation'. These issues as indicated by the respondents are politics, corruption and poor governance including lack of adequate power supply in the country. Onyekpere (2020) argued that corruption in Nigeria is a reality not a perception with numerous instances given including reports of poor enabling environment in Nigeria (Asu 2021). This is point is reiterated by this respondent: "but in this African (sic) where money can change hands and the rules can change." (SBP001). "There are a lot of challenges in Africa, in Nigeria, in our host communities, failure of governance and the rest of it. Yes, deep rooted poverty, underdevelopment, dearth of infrastructure…" (SBP003).

7.2.2.1.2   Nigerian Government interest and involvement through the setup of sustainability policies, regulations and monitoring and evaluation

It is ironic that the governmental agencies which have been set up to enforce the oil and gas regulations do not adhere strictly to set regulations nor do they enforce them. One such governmental body is the Ministry of Petroleum - the administrative arm of the government which handles policy regulation, administers license bidding rounds, exploration and production (Huem et al. 2003). The Ministry of Petroleum has within it a key regulatory body – the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) – whose main obligation is to set standards to supervise and control oil and gas operations in the industry (Playfoot et al. 2013). The regulatory bodies have been viewed by respondents to be inefficient in carrying out their duties within the oil and gas industry (as discussed in chapter 7 and highlighted in table 7.6). Furthermore, there is an indication of whitewash as highlighted by SBP008 (See section 7.8) and he sums up all of the challenges as a 'Nigerian factor'[7].

All arguments presented so far portray a significant reliance of oil and gas organisations on the Nigerian government to set regulations aligned to sustainability, drive them and ensure that they are adhered to within the industry. A probable reason for this perception that the Nigerian government has a major role to play is because oil revenue has occupied a leading position in the Nigerian economy (Ariweriokuma 2009) which is governed by the Nigerian government through JV and its regulatory bodies as previously discussed. This is also highlighted in the response below by SBP001:

> "So, if you Shell SPDC in Nigeria is 55% govt. many people don't know that. 55% of my salary is paid by the Nigerian govt. so while you say Shell is not doing this, you need to help them to do this by funding your part"

While the respondent has made it clear that the government is a major stakeholder in the organisation and needs to play its part through funding, it is curious that he felt the need to mention that more than half of his salary is paid by the government. This could be a way of reiterating that the government is involved and has more control over oil and gas organisations' activities more than people realise so should be held more accountable. This could further influence the stance of oil and gas organisations with regards to ensuring that SBPs are implemented within the organisation and industry as there may be a belief that more of the responsibility should lie with the government. It can also be argued that the 55% stake has not been properly defined and does not entail the government's involvement in the operations of the business but is rather limited to fund provision and profit sharing therefore the government should not be held totally accountable for the inadequacy or ineffective implementation of sustainable business practices within the industry. Having said that, the government (regardless of the number of stakes owned in the oil and gas organisations) has been seen as being negligent of the role

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[7] Nigerian factor is typically used by Nigerians to explain issues faced in Nigeria such as corruption.

of regulation within the oil and gas industry. This is also seen in the argument made by Vertigans (2012) who posited that CSR takes place where practices of IOCs are largely unregulated and characterised by failed or abandoned projects as seen in the Niger Delta region (Idemudia 2009). See section 2.3 for further discussion.

The discussion on government as a major player within the oil and gas industry can then be generalised as government commitment to the issue of sustainability which can give rise to direct and indirect involvement, provision (or lack) of funding and finally (in)effective enforcement of oil and gas regulations which have been set to ensure SBPs implementation. The achievement of sustainability is dependent on the interest or level of commitment in attaining that goal. Axelsson et al. (2011) therefore argued that sustainability can be implemented with varying levels of ambition depending on interest and commitment.

In line with this argument, there is a perception that if the government is interested in the issue of sustainability and the oil and gas industry, then that would be a focus or goal for said government and there would be sustainability initiatives created to achieve this goal:

> "So, constrain number 1 - the joint JV and the funding has been a bottleneck which is much more improved under this new government, under the new political clime is much better so your JV is dependent on who is in power at the centre. If oil is his priority, his disposition towards the policies and co will differ" (SBP001).

This point is buttressed by another respondent through their perception that the current government have sustainability as one of their major goals therefore they are taking necessary actions to ensure that the overall goal of attaining sustainability is achieved within the country:

> "I believe at least from this present government that it is one of their major goals that this country… they are going the extra mile to make sure that there is sustainability in this country…" (HR005).

Two points can be raised from the quote above: it can be said that awareness and interest in a particular topic or issue would generally result in desired or relevant actions. This point will be explored further in section 8.2.1.3. Secondly, it can then be argued that politics could be a factor that influences SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry. It can also be inferred that creation and implementation of policies may be influenced by the government. In line with this perception that the Nigerian government has a crucial role in the sustainability discourse to guarantee achievement of sustainability goal, there are different ways this role can be played. Although, this currently appears to be only in theory (see chapter three for discussion) as there are numerous challenges to the implementation of SBPs and the achievement of sustainability goal. According to Geels (2012), institutions (for example the government and organisations) play a vital role in enabling and shaping behaviours and practices to facilitate

achievement of sustainability goals. Aligning this to the transition to SBPs implementation, it may be said that several limitations of integrating SBPs as seen in the literature review and interview responses may be due to lack of meaningful analysis of the institutional environment in which business and policy decisions are taken (Foxon *et al.* 2005). For example, numerous studies on the issues within the Niger Delta region have mainly focused on the communities and their relationship with the oil and gas organisations (See Idemudia 2009, Ajide 2017, Osibajo 2017). However, the government is strongly believed to have the responsibility of developing sustainability initiatives (and oil and gas regulations aimed at sustainability), executing them as well as ensuring that citizens adhere strictly to such guidelines (monitoring and evaluation):

> "From what I can see, other than trying to power more stations with gas, I really can't see any direct effort to do anything to protect the environment because even our waste… there should be a national programme to recycle waste or collect waste even if it is only paper and cardboard, but we have different people doing pockets of self-help here and there" (SBP012).

> "…if the government can make the legislation to say there should be zero flare and they put the money behind it, you need to subscribe to the EIA principle[8] and if you breach it there's this punishment and co. so if they make the laws, be sure that most companies will be forced to obey them" (SBP001).

Highlighted here is a lack of communication from the government on set plans. The question can then be asked: is it a possibility that there is no communication because there is no plan to communicate? A significant feature within organisations is the interactivity among different actors and feedbacks between different functions (Crowther and Green 2004), which appears to be lacking in the industry as shown in this respondent's statement: "if the government is doing anything, they have not told us" (SBP012). On the other hand, there may be other reasons why the involvement of the government is not visible or present. These are presented by respondents as challenges posed by the government in the achievement of SBPs implementation as previously discussed.

In summary, all arguments laid out in this section appear to point to a negative perception of the actual role played by the Nigerian Government in driving the effective implementation of sustainable business practices in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. The data also suggests that commitment of the government with regards to committing to the SDGs has only been in theory and not practice. An important fact relating to this is that though the respondents have stated in several ways that there is lack of or inadequate funds from the government, it is a known fact in Nigeria (Asu 2021) that this lack of funding does not inhibit the oil and gas organisations from remitting the profit due to the government as the senior partner in the JV. This highlights the issue of power which has been described by Weber

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[8] Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) principle is used to determine the potential impact(s) of proposed projects on the environment and aids in decision making.

(1947) as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (p 152). In the relationship between the major stakeholders within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria, power is wielded over other stakeholders by the government. This is displayed in the host communities where despite conflicts, protests and sabotages to gain the attention of the government (and the oil and gas organisations), little or nothing is done to solve the ongoing problem of environmental degradation and subsequent negative social impacts. When action in a relationship is aimed intentionally at achieving an actor's personal will through the exercise of agency (see section 4.4.1.3) and contrary to other parties, this leads to conflict (Weber 1947). This has been shown to be the case in the Niger Delta as discussed in chapter three as well as data from the respondents of this study (see section 7.2.2.2 and 7.3). Though Weber (1947) claimed that "conflict is empirically inevitable" (p 134), it can be argued that if the conditions within the Niger Delta are improved through sustainable actions by the government and the oil and gas organisations, the conflict will be abated as reasons given for the conflict include the deplorable conditions in the region and lack of attention paid to the problems at hand.

With all these arguments in mind, the question can then be asked: is there a supporting role for the oil and gas companies to play while interfacing with the government to enable achievement of SBPs implementation? Bearing in mind that the actions or inactions of the government have a knock-on effect on the activities or practices of these organisations i.e., external factors affecting internal factors within the organisation. Lounsbury and Beckman (2015) posit that new theories have been formed which attempt to argue on how organisations have been penetrated by broader societal forces, in this case the government and the host communities. In addition to the perception that the Nigerian Government has a major role to play, oil and gas experts also argue that the host communities are (or should be) major stakeholders in the successful implementation of SBPs within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. This is discussed in detail below.

7.2.2.2   <u>**The communities as major stakeholders within the oil and gas industry**</u>

There is a plethora of information on both the effect of oil and gas practices on the host communities and the role they play within the industry in driving sustainability. The literature review and data collected show that the role the host communities play is viewed differently by different parties. From a community perspective, literature shows that the host communities in the Niger Delta region feel marginalised, neglected and are reaping none of the profits being made by the government and oil and gas organisations. This fact is aggravated by the belief that the oil is found on their land and therefore belongs to them. To reverse this claim, the government has put laws in place which reverts ownership of oil lands to the Federal Government to prevent the indigenes from laying claim to the lands. This is

seen, for example, in the Land Use Act of 1978 which Ojakorotu and Gilbert (2010) maintained that this Act disempowered and disinherited the people of the Niger Delta. This again brings into play the issue of power and authority among the major stakeholders within the region and used to achieve goals and interests. Power, which has been defined as the "the capacity of individuals or institutions to achieve goals even when opposed by others" (Drislane and Parkinson 2002) appears to be wielded in the instance of the enactment of the Land Use Act (See section 8.3 for more discussion on power and authority). Idemudia (2017) summarises the problems within the region as issues arising from land dispossession and marginalisation. Despite the problems mentioned here, data also shows that communities can indeed play a positive role in ensuring that SBPs are implemented through monitoring and evaluation of oil and gas practices:

> "… Monitoring with the full participation of the communities and then the external stakeholders such as the regulators also getting involved." (SBP003).

Though SBP003, who is a sustainability development coordinator within his organisation, maintained that the host communities can play a role in the successful implementation of SBPs through monitoring and evaluation, another respondent, an HR manager, argued that the host communities can be an obstacle to the effective implementation of SBPs within the Niger Delta region:

> "Getting the right of way for some of the new pipes you are going to lay for instance, change that you want to make because some of these pipes have been put there for a long time so getting the right of way to make some changes, that could be challenging" (HR006).

This reaction points to the fact that the respondent believes the communities act as an obstacle because they prevent the organisation from laying new pipes to prevent oil spills which in turn results in environmental degradation. This is in response to the question about what challenges the organisation faces in the implementation of SBPs. It is interesting to note that though both respondents work in IOCs, SBP003's organisation can be considered to be smaller with less public scrutiny compared to HR006's organisation. This may account for the different view of the role of the host communities in the sustainability discourse within the industry.

The respondents appeared to suggest that other associated parties both within and outside the oil and gas industry (for example the communities, Federal Government and other countries) were more to blame for the environmental degradation and consequent social problems. This phenomenon will be referred to as blame shifting. An example of the blame shifting which was noticed throughout the interviews is highlighted by HR002:

> "so there is a temptation for people who are in the oil communities to desert the environment… of them probably causing more damages to the environment. So, I see oil companies actively engage or

deliberately engage in agricultural businesses just to ensure that… in a way by extension, you are protecting the climate when you encourage natural vegetation".

There is a perception that other actors (for example, communities and more developed countries) cause more environmental degradation than the O&G organisations through abandonment of the environment in search of other means of livelihood. It is interesting that one respondent views the host communities as not actively taking care of the environment and abandoning it thereby resulting in more damages while another respondent highlights the reasons why the environment has been 'abandoned' by these host communities:

> "there is a well-documented impact analysis that it has on the environment. So, our activities impact the environment, impacts the way they live… restitution or restoration activities go on to make sure that both the communities and the environment are well taken care of… programmes that would help the communities find alternative means of livelihood where the exploration and production activities have impacted on their livelihood" (HR011).[9]

This response shows that there is a clear awareness of the negative impacts of O&G practices on the environment and host communities and the need to find potential solutions to the problems caused. The point raised about awareness of the problems associated with oil and gas practices in the region is similar to the response given by a respondent when talking about the organisation's activities: "it needs to start from the growth because whatever we've done in the past has been done" (SBP001). This statement implies that the magnitude of the problem is known but the issue should not be the current focus. This also aligns to findings in literature. Eweje (2006) who conducted an empirical study in the region noted that the host communities cited oil spills as one of the reasons for environmental degradation and loss of livelihood. This is noteworthy because it has also been claimed by the oil and gas organisations that the host communities account for majority of the oil spills recorded in the region. According to an oil spill data report from Shell, they report that "from observation and experience we have found that illegal refining activities cause the most environmental damage in the Niger Delta, whilst at SPDC-JV facilities, crude oil theft and sabotage cause the majority of oil spills" (Shell 2021). Oil bunkering and illegal refining have been seen as solutions to the problem of poverty caused by environmental degradation from the perspective of the communities as well as other assumed reasons for such vandalism and spills:

> "In situation where for instance there are usually occasional sabotages even from the host communities probably for reasons... either to attract attention, to make some claims and possibly to attract resources

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[9] It is local knowledge of the author who is an indigene of the Niger Delta, that the alternative means of livelihood as stated by HR011 does not involve a relocation of the communities. Communities remain in oil-soaked environments and attempt to cater for themselves resulting in oil bunkering and illegal refineries.

to themselves. So, there are sabotage of pipelines and those are some of the isolated issues and incidences that could also jeopardise laid systems and processes for ensuring that the right thing is done" (SBP003).

"I know outside when pipelines are vandalised because we have issues of vandalization." (HR006).

Evidence in the literature (for example, see Okpanachi 2011; Murphy et al 2016) highlights the complexity of the situation and underlying causes of such sabotages involving both the oil and gas organisations and the host communities. These underlying causes are numerous including lack of fulfilment of Federal Government promises with regards to the development of the host communities (Osobajo 2017), poor relationship between these three major stakeholders within the industry (Ajide 2017) and the need to attract attention to the deplorable living conditions of these communities. Other reasons include the need to engage in oil bunkering as a source of income for the communities following the destruction of their source of livelihood including fishing and farming due to oil spills as well as neglect from the government and the oil and gas organisations of their social responsibilities:

"there are a lot of challenges in Africa, in Nigeria, in our host communities, failure of governance and the rest of it. Yes, deep rooted poverty, underdevelopment, dearth of infrastructure…" (SBP003).

The situation is ironic as this appears to be a vicious cycle with no end in sight: oil spill → environmental degradation → loss of livelihood → poverty → source for alternative ways to feed → oil bunkering → oil spill. A lasting solution is yet to be found or put in place by key stakeholders especially the Federal Government through key agencies such as Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) (See chapter three) responsible for ensuring the socio-economic development of the Niger Delta. Despite the complexity of the situation of oil spills, sabotage and oil bunkering in Nigeria, the recently signed Petroleum Industrial Act (PIA) 2021 has been long awaited and is welcomed by many in the country. However, one noteworthy point within the act is that the burden of facility security has been placed on the host communities (Reed 2021). This appears to disregard the reasons for which the sabotages occur in the first place. The Act stipulates that any restorations to oil and gas infrastructure as a result of theft or damage will be taken from that fund (Reed 2021). This fund is the host community fund which is set aside for the development of the Niger Delta region. This has been instituted in an attempt for the law to act as a mechanism to prevent vandalism and also remove the burden of repairs from the oil and gas organisations and responsibility of intervention from the Government (Reed 2021). Whether this law would deter the communities and solve the problem of vandalism will be determined in future. Currently however, there are different initiatives implemented in a bid to bring an end to the problem.

The oil and gas organisations have instituted ways to get the host communities involved and at the same time obtain the license to operate and reduce vandalism. One of this is through dialogue and involvement of the communities. There are two ways as seen in the data collected. One of the ways is

by giving the community a voice at the table. This gives them the opportunity to present their needs to the oil and gas organisations in anticipation that these will be met:

> "… they already have community rep (inaudible) you know but come to that group also bring a lot of knowledge that I have acquired all these while so you need to … We have what they call basket needs, basket of needs which is kind of a community driven. That is what they need. It is the community that tells what they need" (SBP008).

It must be pointed out that though these needs are presented, there is no guarantee that they will be met. The same respondent whose role is to align sustainability within the organisation and community engagement goes on to say:

> "So based on it, you now look at it and think ok how do we incorporate it to our budget, annual budget stuff even though we need to go through lines of approval and stuff… I'm part of the committee to see how we can execute these projects in line with the budget that we have on ground".

A potential funds constraint has been highlighted twice both in terms of bureaucracy and approval of required funds as well as these costs versus bottom line. This could be a major problem if the top management of the organisation have not bought into the idea and so do not see the need to spend these funds for SBPs implementation and community needs. Cha et al (2018) argue that top management buy-in is crucial to implementation of SBPs. Also, as earlier noted, it appears that there is a possibility that oil and gas organisations view the government as pushing their responsibilities to the communities to the organisations. This can then affect the decision to invest more funds within these communities which in turn leads to the communities remaining in deplorable conditions if the decision made is to invest less rather than more funds into the communities. Such deplorable conditions could be argued to force the communities to take part in illegal oil bunkering and vandalism just to survive and be heard by the government and the oil and gas organisations alike.

A solution set up by oil and gas organisations to ensure peace is maintained with the host communities and license to operate is obtained is by allocating funds to these communities to cater for their needs:

> "…some amount of money is made available every year by the company to these communities via a properly legally government supported community development board" (SBP009).

These funds, it is believed, are used for CSR initiatives. However, as previously highlighted (see section 7.2.2.1.1), these are often subject to approval and budget allocation which may never happen. This can possibly then lead to resentment on the part of the communities as their needs remain unmet. For example, the basket of needs stated by SBP008 earlier can very well remain needs if funds are not allocated to cater for these needs. The literature review reveals that one of the reasons for the conflict in the region, as well as a breakdown of trust and relationship between the communities and the

government and organisations, is the fact that promises made to the communities with regards to their welfare are not kept (Igoni 2020). The government body that was set up to ensure the welfare of the Niger Delta people are maintained, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), is riddled with corruption and mismanagement of funds. For example, the management of the commission have recently come under scrutiny again due to the mismanagement of ₦6.25bn funds allocated for palliative for the Niger Delta. A newspaper article is quoted saying "The Senate panel is acting on a petition which alleged that the management staff of the agency spent the money on palliatives, which they could not account for" (Aborisade 2021, p1). Also, the government has been seen not to fulfil their promises with regards to payments of allowances promised to former militants within the Niger Delta (Akasike 2019) in exchange for peace and a stop to vandalism of oil and gas infrastructure. These non-payments have resulted in militants returning to former 'crimes' and continuous conflict within the region/ host communities.

The second method of getting the host communities involved in ensuring sustainability within the region, as observed from data collected, appears to be by getting the communities involved in the monitoring and evaluation exercises conducted by the organisations.

> "we embark on what we call participatory monitoring and evaluation processes which involves active participation of the communities themselves… Monitoring with the full participation of the communities and then the external stakeholders such as the regulators also getting involved." (SBP003).

The idea of going into agreements with the host communities may have seemed to be a good idea due to the fact that these communities have previously being ignored or left out of the decision-making process concerning their welfare (Osobajo 2017). However, this simple act of including the communities in the monitoring and evaluation exercises by the organisations to enable peaceful environment for the oil and gas organisations to function appears to be ineffective as emphasized by this respondent:

> "Although some of these companies have some kind of agreement with the communities, sometimes the communities could just come up and go on strike, prevent them from carrying out the operations and sometimes accuse them of all sorts of things" (HR011).

The ineffectiveness of these agreements could be because the relationship between the oil and gas organisations and the host communities is broken down (Okonta and Douglas 2003) and this can be seen from the response above "accuse them". The situation and the relationship between all actors in the region are quite complex as demonstrated in the discussions in chapter three. It can then be argued that it will take much more than the initiatives currently implemented to resolve the present problems. This study argues that the effective implementation of SBPs will help in the reduction of environmental degradation and its negative impacts on the host communities.

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It has become apparent from the discussions above that the process of getting the communities involved is currently ineffective. However, there are several benefits of dialoguing with the host communities and the implementation of SBPs including having a peaceful working environment as well as a good company image for the oil and gas organisations:

> "They (communities) give you a license to operate. Company image, friendliness with your stakeholders and of course because we are there, we are being socially responsible to do business there…" "If there are issues… if we have issues with our stakeholders because we are not having sound business practices, economically it will hurt us…" (HR006).

The implementation of SBPs have been argued by scholars to have such benefits as mentioned by the respondents above (see Mandosela et al 2017, Cha et al 2018). Organisations therefore aim to implement practices that seek to limit the impact of their practices on the environment and societies where they operate. The current practices of the oil and gas organisations as well as the roles they play within the oil and gas industry will now be discussed in the next section. Dynamics that can promote or hinder these SBPs implementation will also be examined.

Discussions so far have shown that based on data collected both through extensive literature review and data collection exercise, communities are a key stakeholder in the Nigerian oil and gas industry. Environmental and economic situations within the Niger Delta region have been argued to be deplorable and several factors have led to continuous state of the region including corruption and inadequate allocation of funds to cater for the region's needs. Therefore, this has led to ongoing issues such as illegal oil bunkering and oil installations vandalisms which has in turn led respondents to claim that the communities are an obstacle to SBPs implementation. The relationship between the communities, government and the oil and gas organisations can thus be considered as volatile characterised by lack of trust. Finally, lasting solution is yet to be found for the issue within the region including vandalism within the region. However, several initiatives have been tried by oil and gas organisations as solutions including monitoring and evaluation as well as dialogue.

7.2.2.3 Oil and gas organisations: their role and the dynamics affecting this role

Oil and gas have been a major source of income for Nigeria since the 1960s due to the vast oil resources in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Idemudia and Ite 2006). Despite the wealth that has been generated within this industry, oil and gas organisations have come under fire for two reasons – environmental degradation caused by the oil and gas practices and the neglect of the host communities in which these oil and gas organisations operate in Nigeria. There are numerous studies that have been conducted to understand these problems as well as to proffer solutions (See Watts 2006, Idemudia 2009, Ross 2013, Ajide 2017, Oguagha 2017 and Akasike 2019). Among the root causes of these cases of violence and

environmental issues are lack of trust of the government and of the oil and gas organisations by the host communities (Ibeanu 2006), underdevelopment of the communities due to unfulfillment of promises by the government (Igoni 2020) as well as a poor relationship between the oil and gas organisations and the host communities (Ajide 2017). Numerous scholars have also evaluated the solutions that have been put in place to address these issues especially CSR (see Idemudia and Ite 2006, Vertigans 2012, Oguagha 2017). However, this has been found to be inadequate (see chapter two for detailed discussion). Due to the argued inadequacy of the current solutions put in place and the subsequent persistent problems within the region, this study has sought to understand the problems from the perspective of the oil and gas organisation and subsequently evaluate what kind of support HR can offer (from within the organisation) in the effective transition towards SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry.

Several findings can be seen from the data collected:

- Oil and gas organisations appear to believe that other actors within and outside the industry are more responsible for environmental degradation than can be attributed to their oil and gas practices. There appears to be 'blame shifting'.
- Oil and gas organisations appear to carry the burden of ensuring that the host communities are catered for and this responsibility, they believe, should be the government's. The companies claim that they do all they can to ensure that the environment is repaired.
- There appears to a 'resignation of fate' by some respondents that there will always be negative impacts associated with oil and gas practices.

The last point appears to contradict the first as there is an awareness of the negative impacts of oil and gas practices on the environment and the host communities. Therefore, it is interesting to note that though this awareness exists, responses from this study suggest that the organisations would rather focus on other actors' (in)activities rather than on what actions can be taken by the organisations to prevent these negative impacts. This is not to say that there have not been activities by the organisations aimed at the host communities to ensure licence to operate is obtained and also activities aimed at maintaining a peaceful environment for business activities to be carried out. For example, as stated by this respondent:

> "Then they (O&G organisations) also have additional non-obligatory activities that they have initiated on their own to make sure that the impact of their activities are managed as much as possible. Restitution or restoration activities go on to make sure that both the communities and the environment are well taken care of" (HR011).

The quote above suggests that the organisations are aware of the impacts on the host communities and attempt to repair the damage – i.e., restitution activities by the oil and gas organisations. It is also

thought-provoking that the respondent uses the words 'non-obligatory activities' which indicates that there may be a belief that the oil and gas organisations do not have the responsibility of taking care of the host communities, despite the fact that the oil and gas practices are causing harm to the environment and the host communities who live in them with devastating consequences as shown by scholars (See Watt 2004, Ross 2013). Linking this to factors within the organisation which can affect this commitment would be the allocation of funds to such 'non obligatory activities'. In addition, the use of the phrase 'non obligatory activities' may imply that the organisation does not view these activities as crucial to the business and therefore will not place much importance on them. This fact may account for unfinished projects in the Niger Delta initiated by oil and gas organisations (Vertigans 2012) or their failed promises to the communities (Idemudia 2009) as well as the need to defend the requirement for a budget for such projects as seen in the responses. For example, "…So whatever idea it is and no matter how fab it is, you still have to take it through the budget norm, you have to get approval and wait for the money to come" (SBP012). Again, even though there is evidence showing the extent of damage: "there is a well-documented impact analysis that it has on the environment. So, our activities impact the environment, impacts the way they live… programmes that would help the communities find alternative means of livelihood where the exploration and production activities have impacted on their livelihood" (HR011). It is obvious that there is an awareness of the negative impacts so where does the blame shifting fit in? This also aligns to the argument in the previous section where respondents believe that the government leaves their responsibility to the host communities to the oil and gas organisation; despite government formed institutions such as NDDC and the Federal Ministry of Niger Delta which are responsible for ensuring the development of the host communities.

Based on the data collected, several instances have been observed where oil and gas organisations have shifted the blame from themselves to other stakeholders. Therefore, numerous questions can be asked with regards to the issue of blame shifting: is it not big enough of an impact to the environment and the host communities? Who believes that it is their responsibility to clean up and sort out the problems? Is this a case of denial of the extent of the problems within the region? Money being paid to government as part of the contribution to the JV for this but misappropriated due to corruption? These questions highlight the complexity of the issues within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria as well as the need for continuous effort in both awareness and implementation of SBPs through the joint efforts of all key stakeholders within the oil and gas industry.

The second point noted from the data can be observed throughout the interviews where respondents directly state or imply that they are the only actors within the industry taking necessary actions to tackle the problems of the region, including ensuring that the welfare of the host communities are met: "…but you now see that they (the government) are now transferring it as a form of corporate social responsibility to companies, especially to oil and gas companies" (SBP008). Again, evaluating this from

the perspective of whose responsibility this is, it can be argued that this will have an effect on the decision of the release of funds if they feel that the responsibility is the government's and the organisations are already "doing their bit" through CSR.

From the discussions so far, it appears as though many respondents believe that the government should support the oil and gas organisations in ensuring that SBPs are effectively implemented within the industry. However, one respondent is of the opinion that organisations should support the government:

> "companies need to really support the government and, you know get on with some of the initiatives that could help to promote sustainable living and business" (HR011).

With this, it can be argued that the oil and gas organisations also have a role to play in supporting the government to ensure that SBPs are effectively implemented. An inside out approach can be taken where organisations can work with external parties to ensure that the organisation's initiatives are effectively implemented. HR can be argued to have a role to play here through stakeholder engagement and relations. This will be further discussed in the next section.

As previously stated, the respondents claim that the Nigerian Government is not carrying their share of the burden within the oil and gas industry with regards to funding for sustainability practices as well as for the welfare of the host communities. However, the 'blame shifting' does not only apply to the government and the host communities, but it also extends to other parties as indicated by this respondent:

> "And then the western world must provide leadership because they decimate the environment. They do, they decimate the environment more because they have got more of the appliances and then really… they own the global IOCs that come to the poor countries to drill oil and not only IOCs including other extractive merchants." (HR002).

The respondent here is alleging that through the actions of developed countries (through IOCs and other ways), more harm is done to the environment. Putting this in context, the statement is ironic as the same respondent works in an IOC which he has previously stated does all that it can to prevent environmental degradation. Some of the reasons for the backlash on the IOCs for lack of adherence to sustainability guidelines can be ascribed to lack of government awareness and accountability as well as other factors as discussed earlier in this section indicated in this response: "Everything I am talking about is in the law by regulation, by DPR. So, on paper, every company has this, and you must submit it and DPR must vet it but if it happens, do we go through all these routes"? (SBP008). The actions engaged in by the oil and gas organisations to prevent environmental degradation include agricultural businesses to restore the environment as highlighted below:

"so there is a temptation for people who are in the oil communities to desert the environment… of them probably causing more damages to the environment. So, I see oil companies actively engage or deliberately engage in agricultural businesses just to ensure that…" (HR002).

It is curious to see that in this response, both the western world and the host communities cause more harm to the environment but fortunately, the oil and gas organisations actively initiate actions that would repair these damages caused. This line of thought is echoed by another respondent who stated that:

"the oil industry are probably not the major polluters of the environment because there are other activities that pollute even more than the oil industry." (HR006).

In addition, there seems to be a belief that not only are the oil and gas organisations not the worst offenders and doing all they can to make things better, they also do not have total control of the situation within the industry. This is pointed out by respondent HR011:

"So there is not much the companies could do in terms of…. It is not that there is not much they could do. There is a lot they can do but the effort does not really guarantee whether they are going to be a sabotage or not. Sometimes they do everything they can to engage, collaborate but what will happen, still happens.".

It is noteworthy that the respondent started off by saying that there is not much the organisations can do but quickly retracts that statement as it may not tell well of the organisation. Every effort is taken by the oil and gas organisations to preserve the environment by preventing a spill, but it still happens. It is not explicitly stated but the engagement and collaboration mentioned here is between the organisations and the host communities to prevent the host communities from vandalising the oil and gas infrastructure for oil bunkering and illegal refineries. If the efforts by the organisations are proving ineffective as seen from the response above, it can be postulated that new initiatives are needed to support in the resolution of the current problems within the industry. However, the persistence of the problems faced despite efforts have led to one of the main negative consequences of oil and gas operations to be seen as normal:

"Well… what I would say talking about oil spillage is that it is part of the business." (HR006).

"For example, spillage, no organisation really wants to have oil spillage but things happen of course." "We understand that you cannot eliminate the impact completely…" (HR011).

In addition to the fact that not only is oil spill considered to be a part of the business, despite the fact that it results in environmental degradation and loss of livelihood and other negative impacts for the host communities, the respondent further maintains that the focus should not be on the negative impacts but on the benefits of oil:

"they say that because we are the oil producers, we are the major people that hurt the environment, but
they don't look at the general benefits that producing gives the general population." (HR006).

Speaking on the negative impacts of oil and gas practices on the host communities, the respondent
initially stated that the oil and gas organisations provide health care services for the communities but
quickly added that "…some of those health care whatever is not necessarily as a result of the impact of
the exploration…" (HR011). This again downplays the part played by the oil and gas organisations with
regards to the problems within the region. This directly contradicts the findings from the literature which
shows that there are numerous health problems within the Niger Delta region as a consequence of oil
and gas exploration (See Yunusa et al 2016, Okotie 2018 and Derefaka 2020). In addition, according to
the study conducted by the Nigerian Gas Flare Commercialisation Project (NGFCP) in 2020, 17 onshore
gas flare points in Bayelsa state are estimated to cause 120,000 asthma attacks, 4,960 respiratory
illnesses among children within the region.

So far, the government, host communities as well as the western world have been said to play major
parts in causing the problems within the region. However, one respondent goes further to state that 'the
Chinese' also have a part to play in environmental degradation and climate change by ignoring
sustainability guidelines. See table 6.6 appendix 6 for respondent view on this. This is another example
of blame-shifting which has been observed from previous discussions. The respondent is of the opinion
that the Chinese would always seek to make profits through whatever means necessary including within
the sustainability discourse. Though this statement does not directly refer to the environmental
degradation problems within the Niger Delta, the respondent is also attempting to point out that
compromises can be made to ensure that profit levels are maintained. Can this be said to be the case
with the oil and gas organisations as well? Previous discussions have highlighted the need for the
organisation to make profit as that is the primary goal of any organisation as pointed out by this
respondent:

"We have all these bumps of convincing people in different areas and we also have to keep reminding
ourselves that that is not our primary business. Our primary business is not to be sustainable. The primary
business of every company is to make money!" (SBP012).

The point is made that the organisations need to keep in focus the goal of profit making and make that
a priority regardless of other concerns or external pressures. This is shown clearly in the responses from
HR002 and HR011 respectively:

"So, for instance, if there is oil spillage and they ask the company to go and clean up and they engage
consultants to clean up and then there is another spillage and they come again, and then they are wearied
out, the company is wearied out. At some point in time, they spend 50 million dollars to do the clean-up

and you look at it that ok this is eating into the profit of the company and then tell government that you are gonna drive away investors".

"you know how much it costs to clean oil spillage. You know that apart from sustainability that it is a big business plan to avoid it from happening in the first place".

It is obvious from the statements above that though there is a clear awareness of the negative impacts of oil spill on the environment and the host communities as previously highlighted, it is not as much of a priority as ensuring that the business level of profitability is maintained. This is also bearing in mind the pressure from the communities due to loss of livelihood and resulting health problems. The second statement appears to imply that leaving sustainability aside, it is important to prevent oil spill so that there would not be a problem of incurring costs to clean it up and this appears to be more important than the negative impacts of the spill itself. It is also noteworthy that the risk of losing investors is reported to the government which appears to imply that the oil and gas organisations need the backing of the government to stop investing more funds in ensuring that sustainable practices or activities are carried on. Based on this larger focus on profits and investments over the care and protection of the environment, there is no surprise then that the organisations and government have come under fire for neglect of the environment and the host communities and for their inability to enforce relevant policies and regulations respectively. Following this line of argument, it is ironic that the oil and gas organisations have previously appeared to accuse the government of neglecting their duties in the drive towards achieving sustainability within the oil and gas industry.

In addition to the need to minimise funds allocated to the implementation of SBPs acting as a challenge, there is also the problem of the lack of interest in investing in SBPs:

"maybe you need a billion USD to do that and the penalty for waste evacuation let's say in a month is 5million dollars and maybe your revenue is let's say 100 million dollars. You would rather pay 5mil dollars out of 100 mil dollars than go and look for a billion dollars to invest." "Locally, it is a mixed bag – the seriousness is not there, and the fund is not there." (HR002).

The first respondent asserts that there should be some level of interest in a subject matter or issue to enable appropriate action to be taken towards it. The creation of required interest to produce relevant behaviours and actions is a role which may be played by HR through HR functions such as recruitment and selection of employees with right skills and behaviour as well as employee training. Detailed discussion on this in section 8.4. Prior to the discussion on how HR can support in the transition towards SBPs implementation, it is important to evaluate the prospect of a transition to SBPs through the lens of HR which is the aim of this study.

7.3   KEY FACTORS WITHIN THE ORGANISATION THAT COULD SUPPORT OR HINDER GOAL ATTAINMENT – SBPS IMPLEMENTATION

According to Besio et al. (2020, p. 412) organisations "remain a critical feature of modern (and post-modern) societies" and they are set up by individuals to achieve certain goals (Scott and Davis 2007). For many organisations, including the oil and gas organisations, this includes profit making as well as business sustainability. A business can only be sustained if it achieves its goal of profit making. It is therefore no surprise then that all efforts from within the organisation, as seen in the previous section (section 8.2), are aimed at ensuring that profit levels are maintained. This notwithstanding, does not mean that no effort should be made to align business practices to achieve sustainability through the implementation of sustainable business practices within the industry especially given the commitment of the Nigerian Government towards achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Data collected (see chapter six) has shown that several departments have been set up to handle sustainability matters within the oil and gas organisations including CSR, community relations, health and safety and environment as well as sustainability departments. Despite the existence of these departments, previous discussions have indicated that the problems associated with unsustainable business practices within the industry persists (see section 3.2 for detailed discussion). It can therefore be argued that more needs to be done or a different perspective taken in a bid to proffer ways of ensuring the effective implementation of SBPs in the industry. This study puts forward the argument that there may be a role for HR to play in supporting the transition to SBPs implementation within the industry. In this section, an attempt will be made to evaluate the prospects of effective SBPs implementation by highlighting possible enablers as well as challenges to the achievement of this goal within the organisation.

Three questions have been asked by Clegg and Hardy (1996) from prevailing literature concerning organisations. They are: "what are the different kinds of organisational forms (analytical description)? How do these various forms arise (casual models)? How do these organisational forms work (dynamics and processes)?" (Hinings and Greenwood 2002, p. 414). The focus here will be on the third question which is a critical evaluation of how organisations work. That is, the dynamics and processes that enable or hinder goal achievement within the organisation in this case, the implementation of SBPs. According to Du Gay and Vikkelso (2016), the early classical organisational theorists have often been termed as naïve in their keenness to create the common principles of interactions within the organisation. These are mainly focused on how they bring about organisational effectiveness. The principles of organisational interaction as earlier discussed in chapter four include:

1. Authority
2. Control and Bureaucracy as a form of control
3. Power – normative, remunerative, and coercive power.

These three principles, according to Crowther and Green (2004), can be used to align employee behaviours within the organisation through interaction of different actors leading to occurrence of business practices and achievement of organisational goals. Bearing in mind previous discussions on these principles, these will now be aligned to the data collected as well as findings from literature to demonstrate how they can play a role in the achievement of a goal or otherwise thereby highlighting how HR can align their functions to use these to support in SBPs implementation within the oil and gas organisations.

The data collected shows that the oil and gas organisations are set up as bureaucratic and complex consisting of numerous units and departments to ensure that the organisation runs smoothly, and goals are achieved. The complexity and the presence of specialists within the organisations is highlighted in the response below:

> "So, we have… we are structured in departments... We have the board, we have the CEO and then we have GMS, and we have senior managers, managers. So, for every department, there's a GMs and then there's the senior manager and then a manager. Then what you would call supervisors and officers. So, we have the corporate services function which has HR, admin, IT, immigration, and protocols, then you have legal and external relations which also have community relations under it." (SBBP010).

This bureaucratic organisation appears to be well structured, but this structure could also hamper the flow of information and ideas within the organisation as there could be numerous barriers and chains of command before information is received:

> "We operate a vertical structure. We have the leadership team… headed by the managing director… below that directorate is the business operations management in which you have everyone the directors and the heads of departments… below you have the heads of... as I mentioned heads of departments then you have heads of units and then you have people who work for the heads of units (HR002).

In addition, such complex settings consist of a formal reporting structure: "very regular formal corporate organisation… The foot soldiers in each department managed by somebody who has a formal structure to report to the top" (SBP012). This formality highlighted could be argued to indicate control of top management within the organisation through the dissemination of rules and codes of conduct to the 'foot soldiers'. With such level of authority, top management buy-in has been highlighted by scholars (See Cha et al 2018) as important in the achievement of a goal within the organisation. This line of argument has also been set out by respondents as seen from the responses where one states that: "More awareness at the top, very important." (SBP003). In line with the stance of this study, a case can be put forward stating that if there is top management buy-in for sustainability through sustainable business practices, this mandate can then be cascaded to all employees of the organisation and compliance monitored. With regards to HR involvement in supporting SBPs implementation drive, another

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respondent believes that though HR has a voice and have the agency to operate within their role, it is crucial that the leadership of the organisation gives support to the department/ employees: "We have a voice but… If we have the leadership that provides… it is the leadership at the very top." (HR002). From the preceding statement by an HR professional, it is evident that top management involvement is needed to give HR the required 'voice' and authority within the organisation to support SBPs implementation. It can also be argued that this need to obtain top management support will be accessible within all areas/ departments within the organisation. Daily and Huang (2001) argue that support from top management can impact success of sustainability goals. This can be through empowering employees to implement changes that can aid the attainment of the organisational sustainability goal(s), changing the organisational culture to align to goals, encourage desired behaviours through incentives, enabling a 2-way communication within the organisation and providing required training in sustainability for employees. They posit that employees and management should have a constant flow of information among them. Respondents throughout the interview exercise expressed the opinion that top management have the overall control and authority within the organisation and should be dealt with the required level of gravity as indicated by this response: "Yes, to an extent the department has some form of autonomy. Though probably there may be need for its presence to be felt more at the company leadership level but eerrmm… that should be the response for that" (SBP003). Again, a mention of the need for sustainability drive from the leadership level in order to achieve SBPs implementation. In addition, the response highlights the fact that though some form of authority and agency is given to departments to function, such authority is not absolute and there is still a (heavy) reliance on top management/ leadership. Another example is given below:

> "So, when things come from the executive committee like that, it comes with a lot of weight and so it is quite easy to disseminate it down in the organisation. And it is easy at that level to see how it links to the overall business outcomes so when you are cascading it down it is quite clear that it is serious business" (HR007).

Another point that has been emphasised with regards to the organisational structure of oil and gas organisations is the nature of communication within these organisations – vertical. Information flow is observed to be downward and little evidence in the data collected to support unhindered upward flow of information. This is no surprise as the data collected shows that all respondents described their organisations as complex with a vertical reporting structure as earlier mentioned by SBP012. There is no indication of a two-way flow of information or flow of information among departments within the organisation. This could act as a challenge in driving SBPs implementation if innovative sustainable business practices ideas and suggestions are not being transmitted from the employees to management for approval and implementation. For example, employees who work in the field or interact with the communities may have innovative ideas to aid effective implementation of SBPs but may not have the

agency to communicate these ideas to the relevant authorities. In addition, there is an indication of the respondent's opinion of the position of employees within the organisation - employees receiving orders and carrying them out without objection. It can also be argued that such communication flow may affect the interests and motivation of employees. If employees within the organisation are unable to communicate their interests and act on them, this may lead to stagnation and lack of innovation. As Geels (2012) maintained, innovation is a shared activity, and such activity requires communication without which innovation will be hindered.

Individual interests in sustainability can lead to the development of relevant sustainable behaviours SBPs implementation (see section 4.4.1.3). Following this argument, it is therefore important to ensure that there is a two-way flow of information within the organisation and encourage communication of innovative ideas. What role can HR play to ensure that agency is maintained, and employee voice is heard? HR functions such as employee engagement and feedback, can be utilized to ensure communication channel is two-ways within the organisation and encourage employee agency through the involvement of HR Directors and Managers in top management decision-making process.

Some of the presumed rigidities of bureaucracy include hierarchical control, formalisation, centralization, standardization, and functional differentiation (see section 4.4.1). An example of such rigidity is seen in the process of authorization for the release of funds for implementation of ideas and projects within the organisation: "So we use those surveys to track how we are doing in terms of those things and now we go back to the board and try to get approval for certain things we were never doing" (HR010). The need for top management approval of every cost involved in driving sustainability is highlighted also and it is noteworthy that the word 'try' is used as this could indicate that approvals are not guaranteed. Bureaucracy could hinder or slow down approval for sustainability projects or practices. Another example is given by SBP009 who laments: "so based on it, you now look at it and think ok how do we incorporate it to our budget, annual budget stuff even though we need to go through lines of approval and stuff"? This statement suggests that there is bureaucracy within the organisation, and this can hinder smooth implementation of SBPs due to set processes and multiple chains of command.

One respondent stated that: "…people should be meant to fit in in the template that would be able to bring in the best out of them." (SBP003) suggesting that the employee should fit into a template, a response which appears to imply that employees within an organisation can be controlled to fit into the organisation's agenda – there is already a set way that an employee should behave or act to enable the achievement of the agenda or goal. This can also suggest that there is an awareness that employees need to be placed in the right positions for the agenda to be achieved.

It can be argued that this level of control of employees' actions can be used to ensure that the sustainability agenda of the organisation remains in focus for every employee action and function to

help achieve effective SBPs implementation. This control is demonstrated through constant monitoring and evaluation of employees' work and actions to ensure that they are aligned to the organisation's agenda. This is highlighted by this response: "we monitor, we track, we report. We follow up to make sure that everybody is in alignment" (HR007). As noted in section 4.4.1.1, it appears that "control in organisations is achieved through what may be termed by rules" (Clegg 1981 p. 545), rules on the ways employees should carry out their tasks amongst others. Such control described ensures that order is maintained within the organisation. Based on the responses discussed so far in relation to control, there appears to be little, or no form of agency allowed within these organisations. Furthermore, employees are assigned to roles regardless of skills and qualifications as portrayed by this respondent who is an engineer:

> "I was in infrastructure (IMA)[10] that is a department that handles a lot of community construction but was pushed into the sustainability role, so I had to find my feet. You don't get to decide everything that happens to you… People are forced into certain situations not because of choice" (SBP012).

Based on this response, the respondent may have been unhappy about the reshuffling using the phrase 'pushed into' to describe a relocation to the sustainability department. The mindset described is that 'you asked for a job so don't complain and just get on with it'. This response contradicts the argument set out in section 4.4.1.2 that the organisation now wields little authority over the employees. This implies that the organisation still has heavy control of employee actions and behaviour within the organisation. For example, employees are placed in positions within the organisation that management believe will enable the achievement of set organisational goals and this indicates an almost non-existent level of agency within the organisations. This point is also reiterated by other respondents. For example, SBP003 stated that "people should be meant to fit in in the template that would be able to bring in the best out of them". This statement gives no indication that there is agency with regards to employee tasks and work behaviour within the organisation. Speaking about the issue of control and agency within an organisation, Dubois (1977) also argued that "the fact is that each side has enough power now to challenge the other's right to impose its will on its counterpart" (p 8). However, from the discussions so far, it has become apparent that this is not the case within the oil and gas organisations in Nigeria. Within the Nigerian context, emphasis is usually placed on respect of, and control by superiors within (and outside) the organisation. Responses further indicate that employees are still expected to follow stipulated rules and regulations, and this can be said to be especially true within the oil and gas industry due to the nature of its high-risk operations and the impression is given that decisions on employee actions within the organisation are taken by top management on their behalf.

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[10] Infrastructure Mapping Application (IMA)

The move of employees from one department to another does not appear to put into consideration the skills, expertise and interests of the employee and this may hinder their productivity within the context of facilitating SBPs implementation. The question can be asked: what is the role of HR in the allocation of employee roles and responsibilities? It also seems that the strategic management of the organisation (of which HR should be a part of based on discussion in section 4.4) does not perceive SBPs as important as they do not put into consideration the skills of the employee to ensure success in the sustainability department which brings into focus the whitewash as argued by CSR scholars such as Vertigans (2012) in chapter two. Further indication of this is in the response of HR002, a HR personnel, when asked about the link between sustainability and the organisation's recruitment and selection process he has this to say: "so when I am asked to for instance, recruit people into that function... It (sustainability) is not what I think about everyday". The language used by the respondent also portrays resentment of the situation. It is important to keep in mind that the oil and gas organisations' remuneration rates are very competitive as shown by this response: "So, if you are hired in Shell, in fact your family will go to church and do thanksgiving because they know they are already made, you understand? (laughs) Because your salary alone, in terms of motivation every of these things is taken care of…" (SBP008) and this may be the reason why there appears to be little or no push backs from employees despite the resentment. It can then be argued that remuneration can be used as a form of control and in this study, employees appear to be controlled using compensation: "How the employees can be better managed in terms of their compensation, in terms of their welfare and everything?" (HR011). The word managed could be said to indicate that employee actions can be controlled through their compensation. One can argue that there is a possibility that because of the attractive remuneration, employees within these organisations become content in simply following instructions. Similarly, it appears that rather than exercise some agency, employees simply perform the tasks given to them: "if they have decided this is the role you will perform, you just have to get up and do it" (SBP012). Hinings and Greenwood (2002) termed it as "unanticipated consequences of bureaucratic functioning…" (p. 412).

Though it is important to have structure and some level of control within the organisation, these kinds of situations described above may stifle creativity and innovation within the organisation. In addition, the examples give the impression of a top to bottom communication rather than a two-way communication channel and such lack of agency, communication and innovation could hinder SBPs implementation. Thus, these present a gap and an opportunity for HR support in the effective implementation of SBPs within the organisation. This can be achieved by using the current controls within the organisation as discussed above to ensure alignment to the sustainability agenda of the organisation. For example, compensation can be utilised to elicit positive behaviours and generate interest in sustainability for employees. HR can use its function of employee relations and engagement

to ensure that employees are heard and given the necessary tools and avenue to work to the required level of innovation to bring about SBPs implementation. More discussion on this in section 7.4.

7.3.2 Authority distribution (or lack of) and its consequences on efficiency and innovation within the organisation

Data collected within this study has shown that despite the level of authority possessed by an individual within an organisation, decisions on the investment in and implementation of SBPs are made by top management as a centralised body. It is also evident that in order to implement ideas effectively, the right level of authority is required for both the idea selection and the approval of funds for implementation of such ideas (see section 4.4.1).

According to Hong (2020), the distribution of decision-making authority is believed to be a vital aspect of organisational structure as seen in organisation theory literature (See discussion in section 4.4.1.2). However, he argued that though formal arrangements are illuminating, they do not essentially indicate where authority actually lies within the organisation. Within this study, it appears that authority is perceived and not actual in some instances as shown in this response:

> "(laughs) authority is another bamboozled word… it means nothing. Even in a house maybe you have three kids and the first one decides that OK today we are going to eat burgers for dinner, it is only as far as mum allows it, that is authority as it appears but when the first child was talking to his/ her siblings, it would look like authority at that time right? So, authority is another bamboozled word" (SBP012).

This is a thought-provoking perspective as it appears to throw more light on the issue of control and agency within the organisation. The organisation may only give so much control as it deems fit and only aligned to the goal of the organisation. Based on example given, employees can have ideas or initiatives, but these can only materialise when the organisation, through the top management, approves them. This situation can hinder employees' actions and innovation and is in contrast to the assertion by Aghion and Tirole (1997) who argue that theoretical perspectives should in any case include an implied argument that, when presented with greater decision authority, knowledge of employees can be exploited through their choices and activities and behaviours, thereby influencing the organisation and its outcomes. It can then be said the response implies that employees' knowledge are not adequately exploited as appropriate level of authority is not given to enable agency and innovation. This is shown by this response and a possible indication of the lack of agency and exploitation of employee funds especially through constraint of funds: "it is OK to make a proposal, it is OK to bring in the request but not everything makes it to the other side" (SBP012). This can also affect the implementation of SBPs within the organisation and industry as SBPs are currently not business as usual (BAU). This is depicted

by this respondent's comment: "Our primary business is not to be sustainable. The primary business of every company is to make money." (SBP012).

Discussions so far have shown that Dubois' (1977, p. 8) claim that "as far as the employer's authority to make decisions is concerned, research and experience have revealed that it is a myth" can be debunked. From this study, it is apparent that the organisation/ top management's authority in achieving goals, as well as controlling employees' actions and behaviours in order to achieve said goals is vital. According to Wilms et al (1994) argues that "people will follow management's direction. Whatever management (of which HR is a part of) does, and in what direction they push, and how hard they push dictates where this company eventually goes" (p 108). The view of respondents that top management authority is ultimate in enabling decision making and implementation of initiatives indicates that it is therefore important for HR (as a part of top management) to drive the creation, across all employees within the organisation, of a culture of sustainability as well as sensitisation of the importance of SBPs through training, employee engagement and so on. It is also important to be aware of the organisational culture as researchers have observed that management's ignorance of the strength and importance of culture has led to failed organisational change efforts (Harris and Ogbonna 1998). Ultimately, it can be argued that HR may utilise their position and authority within the top management to support in creating the enabling culture and behaviours through different ways. Some of the ways which can be used to exact authority and control within the organisation (as highlighted in the findings) will now be outlined.

7.3.3   Means of control

Control of employees' actions and behaviours can be asserted through certain mechanisms including monitoring and evaluation and performance management or assessment: "we monitor, we track, we report. We follow up to make sure that everybody is in alignment." (HR007). This statement indicates that there is a need for the control of employee behaviours and actions within the organisation for goals to be achieved. In addition, some respondents equate SBPs to practices which an organisation puts in place to ensure that it is sustained through time, therefore, they see these controls as necessary for the survival of the organisation: "what comes to my mind when they talk about sustainable business practices is something like controls, having proper internal controls within your company..." (HR005). These controls then ensure that necessary actions are taken, or relevant activities engaged in within the organisation to achieve set organisational goals. The respondent is of the opinion that organisations set up internal monitoring controls to ensure processes within the organisation remain effective and organisational goals are achieved and in the long term, ensure the organisation is sustained.

In addition to the control of employee actions within the organisation, there is also an attempt to control the external activities of the organisation alongside external stakeholders to ensure goals are achieved: "we embark on what we call participatory monitoring and evaluation processes which involves active participation of the communities themselves… Monitoring with the full participation of the communities and then the external stakeholders such as the regulators also getting involved." (SBP003). This response is an indication that there are numerous controls and monitoring and evaluation processes within the oil and gas industry. Not just monitoring activities within the organisation, but also conducted alongside external stakeholders within the oil and gas industry to ensure the organisation's activities remain sustainable. How does such external influence affect the effective implementation of SBPs within the organisation? Through the managerial and operational functions, Daily and Huang (2001) argue that HR should comply with civic protocols regarding sustainability as well as facilitate the association and harmonisation of different departments in achieving sustainability/ sustainability goals within the organisation. This can then be extended to external parties that play a role in the achievement of said goal(s) ensuring that employees who liaise with these external parties have clear understanding of stipulated requirements and are trained and equipped to carry out the required duties to maintain compliance.

A different way that employee actions within an organisation is perceived to be controlled is through their compensation: "How the employees can be better managed in terms of their compensation, in terms of their welfare and everything?" (HR011). Another example of this is seen in this response: "The antic we attempted was to see how HR could speak with employees – encourage or mandate them. The plan was for HR to directly impact the employees to use this allowance on a solar based product" (SBP012). It is interesting that the respondent has directly used the words encourage or mandate – which indicates agency versus control. The respondent portrays HR as having the ability to control or motivate employees with the use of their allowances to align their actions to set goals. However, this respondent posits that the drive for sustainability or the power to bring change, so to speak, can mainly come from the source of funds – in this case, the top management. The respondent also highlights that there were problems encountered in implementing this initiative indicating that such means of control was either ineffective or not effectively implemented.

The data collected shows that respondents view HR as being in a position to be able to control the actions of employees: "HR can run through their files and run through their CVs and look for who has the strength to support the company in this area and put them in the right boxes" (SBP012). It is noteworthy that the respondent has made use of the phrase 'put them in their right boxes'. Not only does it connote control of employee behaviour and actions within the organisation, but it also suggests that employees can only act within certain sphere or confinement as dictated by the organisation. There is a perceived need to keep employees aligned to organisational needs or goals: "How do you keep them

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doing the right thing at the right time - culturally, ethically?" (HR006). There is a need to create an engaged workforce and a relevant culture of sustainability within the organisation – a sense of uniformity – all aligned to the organisational goals. In their review of the current arguments in the area of control and agency within organisations, Fleming and Sturdy (2009) stated that scholars and management gurus are beginning to advocate for employees to be encouraged to be more of themselves at work. Some experts go as far as arguing that employees should also challenge and oppose existing bureaucratic norms within their organisations. Fleming and Sturdy (2009) however argued for the adoption of 'neo-normative control' which aims to use the personalities of employees as tactical resources within the organisation. It also does not advocate for uniformity but supports diversity and individuality.

Data gathered in the study by Fleming and Sturdy (2009) contradicts suggestions that employees are free agents (see section 4.4.1.4). which indicates that employees are still under corporate control in different ways including through bureaucracy and remuneration as shown in the preceding discussions. For example, "Yeah, ensuring that personnel responsible for ensuring business sustainability… that everyone does their bit… HR should be able to instill order and if need be, ensure consequence." (SBP003). This respondent stated that all employees should conform to the organisation's mandate and tasks allocated and further stated that if an employee does not conform, there should be consequences and argued that HR can handle this task. Though there is ample evidence that agency is not generally encouraged within the oil and gas organisations however, only one respondent claimed that employees are encouraged to act freely within the organisation: "so, it is an open-door policy. From day one we even let employees know to feel free" (HR005). According to Fleming and Sturdy (2009, p 569), normative control has been seen to "… operate internally by moulding common attitudes, beliefs and values among employees" and it appears that respondents believe that HR has the capacity to achieve this. This position of control and authority can be used by HR through their function to build the required sustainability culture within the organisation. This argument will be explored further in section 8.4.

When talking about the involvement of HR within the organisation to support SBPs implementation and obtaining the authority to carry out tasks, this respondent stated:

> "We (HR) have a voice but… If we have the leadership that provides… it is the leadership at the very top" (SBP 002).

A concern can be raised as there is an indication of a higher authority than HR as having the power to effect necessary changes with regards to SBPs implementation thereby highlighting the need for more autonomy of employees or departments within the organisation. Gioia and Sims (1983) maintain that the acquisition and preservation of power is one of the most socially appealing practices that occurs in organisations. A social actor's highest possible capability is to influence another actor or individual in

any situation (Treadway 2012). He contended that the more the dependency of B on A, the greater the power A has on B. Power can come from a control of resources and rewards as demonstrated in the previous sections. Finally, power can be legitimate when it is inherent within an individual's position or title.

In addition to the distribution of power within the organisation, there is also a need to recognise that there are power plays outside of the organisation that may influence the achievement of organisational goals:

> "So, you lose 10 days of production because you are going back and forth on something that you can understand that it is someone's personal interest. That is what I am talking about, they (regulatory bodies) don't care about the future, they care about now. *It is absolutely frustrating* (respondent's voice raised) you don't want to know. You want to raise your voice and you will be called to order from even your office to say the GED and something and something called and mentioned your name, you don't want them to be mentioning your name so in that meeting where you, just keep quiet" (HR010).

The statements above were the respondent's view of the understanding of SBPs and their implementation in Nigeria. She explains the obstacles the organisation must deal with in a bid to implement SBPs and highlights the regulatory bodies' ability and power to stall projects if their demands are not met. The frustration of the respondent is evident as the organisation is literally at the mercy of these regulatory officials and the fact that she is not allowed to speak up concerning the situation. It can be surmised that the culture within the organisation may not encourage employees to speak up. This is ironic as this respondent, who is a HR manager, earlier stated that employee surveys are carried out to encourage employees to speak up within the organisation. It could then be argued that though there are acts carried out by HR to ensure that employee voice is heard and encourage engagement and inclusivity, the goal has not been achieved within this organisation.

7.4   HR

Evidence from this study shows that there appears to be no HR targeted sustainability agenda within these oil and gas organisations. This could be said to be a result of the inadequate level of knowledge about sustainability/ SBPs implementation which has been evident in the data collected. When directly asked what the sustainability agenda of the organisation is, HR010, a HR manager, has this to say: "so we don't have an agenda per se but we pay attention to what's happening around us". The question can then be asked – why is there no sustainability agenda or there is an agenda, but HR is unaware? What role can HR play in this regard to ensure sustainability becomes a part of the organisation's agenda? in addition, from the preceding discussions, several challenges have been highlighted with regards to the

implementation of SBPs within the organisation. The prospects for HR support in addressing these gaps and ensuring the effective implementation of SBPs will now be explored and discussed.

HR has been described as "a function in organizations designed to maximize employee performance in service of their employer's strategic objectives" (Rihan 1998 p. 1). This definition still holds true and implies that HR has been positioned within the organisation to align employees' actions and behaviours towards the achievement of the organisational goal(s) which further indicates that HR should have (or develop) a strategy to achieve this. According to Ghinea and Moronianu (2016), HR strategy should be an integral part of the organisation's business strategy. This would help ensure that the most important assets of the organisation – the people – are truly aligned to achieve organisational goal(s) and this in turn can be achieved through the alignment of HR functions to the attainment of said goal(s). In the case of this research study, the role of HR in supporting the attainment of effective SBPs implementation and sustainability is explored. Findings have shown that it is important to have the sustainability agenda driven strategically from the top management and tactically from a HR context with defined roles and responsibilities in order to implement people-based initiatives and practices effectively and successfully.

In line with practice, and based on their experience through consulting in SBPs, Ernst and Young (2013), argued that HR has a role to play within the organisation in supporting the drive towards SBPs implementation using their functions. For example, Daily and Huang (2001) posit that "a well-designed reward system can be helpful in promoting employees to perform sound environmental practices" (p. 1547) and this is a HR function which can be used to support the transition to SBPs implementation. Through this study, HR has been portrayed, by respondents, as an important player in the sustainability discourse within the organisation as shown by these statements: "HR have a role to play in making the business greener? Yes, they do" (SBP001) and "…So, I think that there is really a very good role HR can play in ensuring sustainable business practices…" (SBP009). Armstrong (2013) posited that HR's role is important as they have the crucial task of management of employees to ensure they work both individually and collectively, through business activities and operations, to contribute to organisational goals and objectives. Daily and Huang (2001, p. 1550) maintain that "managers must remember that beyond paperwork, documentation and procedures; organisational HR conditions may be significant predictors of success or failure in environmental improvement efforts". Data collected within this study aligns to this argument and shows that not only do the respondents posit that HR has a role to play, but they also state the reason why they are of the opinion that HR is better placed to support in driving implementation of SBPs which is due to their function of people management within the organisation. For example, HR005 suggests that if sustainability is in anyway linked to human/ human actions, then HR is needed: "if you are looking at sustainability with respect to human beings, people, employees

then I will say yes HR has a very important role to play". This view is echoed by SBP012 who stated that "I think for any activity that you require human beings to implement for you, you will need HR".

Thus, different ways by which HR can play a role in supporting the organisation in driving effective SBPs implementation were highlighted by the respondents. For instance, HR006 who is a HR manager in an IOC stated that "HR plays a huge role in driving sustainability in the business..." and confirms that HR is part of the top management which offers a strategic position to enhance their support in this regard: "Basically yes. Which means they are involved in the strategy and planning within the organisation". This aligns to the argument laid by Wright (2008) where HR has had to reinvent their role to become 'business partners' which enables them to play a strategic role within the organisation. From the data collected, it is apparent that some organisations indeed have HR sitting at the top management level: "well… our director is at the executive committee. So, I mean right there at the top we have a representation" (HR007) and SBP001 also affirmed "… I see them move from HR-to-HR business partners… so we have HR business partners, each one sitting in a function. So, at the leadership team level you get an HR person with your function as a HR business partner". This can be said to highlight HR as part of the strategic decision making as well as having the necessary authority to support in SBPs implementation however, to what extent is this position being utilised to drive SBPs implementation? It is important for HR to be aware of the role they play (or can play) in this discourse. As HR006 argued, the role of HR is crucial because it is the people within the organisation that implement any proposed or approved initiative: "Well, I think HR plays a huge role in driving sustainability in the business because at the end of the day it is the people that do the work… at the end of the day, sustainability drive is the people - it is people that implement it…". In essence, employees are crucial in the sustainability discourse, and this is because they are tasked with the implementation of the sustainability strategy. Therefore, HR needs to ensure they are well equipped to complete their tasks effectively. It can be argued that the HR function of training employees can be used to equip employees to carry out tasks effectively and achieve the organisation's sustainability agenda: "We need to keep eerrmm… equipping our people with the right skills and competencies so that they can deliver on all these KPIs" (HR007).

Additionally, HR, through the use of their strategic position within the organisation, can interface with other departments and units within the organisation to support effective SBPs implementation. HR should have the responsibility of ensuring that all departments are aligned to achieve whatever sustainability agenda being set by the organisation. This could be done in one of two ways – working with these departments or associates independently as demonstrated by this respondent: "yeah so what we do is to drive our joint partners to do those things. So, we have what we call governance meetings throughout the year... I have to interface with their HR for whatever they are doing – recruitment, payroll, compensation…" (HR010). Here the respondent highlights the importance of HR interfacing

with other actors or associates of the organisation to ensure tasks are performed and completed as agreed. Also working with their HR department to confirm all of their functions align. The second is by working within them as HR business partners. Ruona and Gibson (2004) put forward the argument that HR has reinvented themselves and are now strategically proactive within the organisation through their role and business partners and this enables them to work with different departments within the organisation.

Data collected reveals that within the oil and gas organisations in Nigeria, that HR function has indeed begun the transition to (or achieved) business partners status. This is highlighted by these responses by HR011 and HR002 who stated that "… we run what we call the HR business partner structure here. So, we have embedded HR professional that sit with the business" and "we have got a business partnering model now" respectively. This indication of a transition further aligns to findings from literature where according to Wright (2008), enhanced status for Human Resource (HR) 'professionals' entails reinvention of their role as `business partners'. The transition to this business partner status has led to the involvement of HR professionals in the leadership role which should in turn afford them the opportunity to be involved in strategic planning within organisations: "That's actually what we call them, so we have HR business partners, each one sitting in a function. So, at the leadership team level you get an HR person with your function as a HR business partner…" (SBP001). Here, this response highlights that the business partnering model has the potential to provide HR representatives in each department with the opportunity to support the drive for SBPs implementation.

This position may also be used as a means of communication between management and employees within the organisation. Interestingly, HR011 who stated that HR operates a business partner model also views HR as a go between: "HR is like an arbiter, an ombudsman between the management and the workforce". Therefore, HR is seen as a link between the top management and the employees within the organisation. This position can be used to ensure that management goals are communicated as well as any possible concerns from the employees being heard by management and dealt with to avoid push backs or conflict. This should help in aiding employee engagement thereby increasing the chances of the sustainability goal achievement without setbacks. Employee engagement can also be seen as a benefit of SBPs implementation within the organisation: "So, when they see that your practices make the company stable, they are more motivated to work…" (HR006). This finding is strengthened by literature where scholars such as Mandosela et al. (2017) have argued that SBPs implementation produces numerous benefits for the organisation such as improved company image and increased innovation (see chapter two, section 2.4.2 for detailed discussion).

Another means by which HR can support in the implementation of SBPs in the organisation is by acting as an agent of change within the organisation as explained by some of the respondents. This could be a

change in the culture of the organisation to a more sustainability focused culture. In addition, there could be a change in the behaviours and mindset of employees to align to the sustainability agenda of the organisation. As Dumont et al. (2016) posited, employee workplace green behaviour is promoted and enhanced by HR. Data collected reveals that HR are already currently seen as an agent of change within the organisation: "The case for change is usually championed by HR… I feel if you want to change the culture, you need HR" (SBP001). Scholars such as Ruona and Gibson (2004) have posited that the new 21st century HR possess the capacity for change. They argued that this change can be initiated and achieved by HR through their functions within the organisation. This is corroborated by the findings of this study which shows that respondents believe that HR functions can be used to support the organisation in achieving its sustainability agenda through working with other departments/ units:

> "So, what HR should and could do to support the company is to make sure that HR is working with these functions to make sure that resourcing, compensation and other support are provided to make sure that the activities go on well and that the employees that are involved in those activities are properly motivated to do their work well" (HR011).

In addition to ensuring that the employees within the organisation are well equipped to carry out their tasks, the response above shows that HR have been viewed by respondents as having the capacity to control employee actions, on some level, and ensure tasks are carried out effectively. While speaking on the role of HR in supporting SBPs implementation within the organisation, SBP003 expressed this opinion: "Yeah, ensuring that personnel responsible for ensuring business sustainability… that everyone does their bit… HR should be able to instil order and if need be, ensure consequence". Here, HR has been portrayed as having the authority to control the actions and behaviours of employees to ensure alignment to the organisation's sustainability agenda. Similar to the respondents' view of the possible role of HR within the sustainability discourse, it can be appreciated that these are supported by both theoretical (see Mandosela et al 2017; Cham and Garcia-Blandon 2018) and empirical (see Ernst and Young 2013) evidence that show that HR is well positioned to support the transition to SBPs implementation within the organisation and the argument that HR should ensure that employee behaviours are aligned in order to achieve the organisation's sustainability agenda.

Based on the analysis of the data collected, it has been highlighted that HR has the capacity and capability to support the organisation in the transition towards SBPs implementation. For example, HR002 strongly believes that HR can go as far as being fully involved in SBPs implementation: "So, for instance, if we are told to set up a sustainability team… a full-blown sustainability team, we have the competence to do that". Also, when asked about HR's current and potential role in supporting the transition towards SBPs implementation, HR010 has this to say: "it is HR really that deals with it - any atom of sustainability going is HR. We are a small company… so we don't have a sustainability department, it's all HR. It is kind of embedded in HR and corporate services". Aligned to this, is the

view that HR has the authority to support in driving SBPs implementation. Responses indicate that there is a belief that HR can fully support SBPs implementation if equipped with the right level of authority while other respondents claim that HR within their organisation already possesses appropriate authority from top management to achieve this: "We have what we call the leadership team and HR is part of the leadership team… Yes, HR is empowered right from the top" (HR005). In speaking about the role of HR as well as the handshake between HR and the sustainability department within the organisation, respondents state how HR can provide support in driving SBPs' implementation through their (HR) functions. This support should begin right from the recruitment and selection of employees to ensure that they have the right skills as well as ideologies aligned to the organisation's sustainability agenda. this view is expressed clearly in the response below:

> "I think we need to make sustainability a part of our recruitment and onboarding process. In terms of cultural fit from the beginning just to find someone… make sure this person even fits with the culture of what we are doing, not necessarily where we are. Do they have the open mindedness to be able to imbibe the kind of culture we are trying to build and the environment? I think we can provide training as well. We can provide training. We can drive engagement and retention of the right people" (HR010).

From the response above, the importance of recruitment of employees that possess the same mindset aligned to sustainability and are able to fit into the organisational culture of sustainability is highlighted. In addition, there should be HR sustainability initiatives to support the organisation through which HR can support in building the right culture of sustainability through recruiting and retaining the right people with the right attitude, training and creating employee engagement.

> "Yes, HR can bring in sustainability people if there's vacancy for sustainability" (SBP001).

> "…they have their targets and objectives. In having their targets and objectives, they could have gaps that warrant closing so HR will help them close those gaps in providing training or manpower. If they require manpower. We do just a bit, but do we have a day-to-day input" (HR006).

These respondents have expressed the belief that HR through recruitment and selection can play a vital role in SBPs implementation: "HR can run through their files and run through their CVs and look for who has the strength to support the company in this area and put them in the right boxes" (SBP012). However, it is apparent from the language in the quotes above (and others throughout the text) that these are actions that HR could take in supporting SBPs implementation but do not currently perform. Discussions so far has shown that HR, through their functions and their position within the organisation can adequately support in the transition towards SBPs implementation however, evidence suggests that this is currently not the case in these organisations and the position is not utilised to its full potential. This could be due to a number of reasons which includes inadequate power and authority to drive the required and necessary processes as highlighted below: Having said all, HR would need to have the

necessary authority to operate within their capacity to support SBPs implementation because without the necessary power and authority, HR would be unable to make the necessary impact as highlighted by this respondent:

> "… I think my comment is still going to be that the traditional HR as we know it that is all powerful, all-encompassing they are like the car gear that change the speed of the car is no more what it used to be. The current business requirement for HR is not what it used to be traditionally where all the change will come from them, where all the culture will come from them…" (SBP001).

The view of this respondent is that there is reduced influence of HR within the organisation to support in driving SBPs implementation Therefore, it can be inferred that HR may not possess the required/ necessary authority (mandate) to drive SBPs implementation within the organisation. It should be noted that this is one of the respondents who stated that the HR business partner model has been implemented within his organisation. He maintains that the HR function does not possess the level of power and authority that it did in the past. Therefore, it can be inferred that HR may not possess the required/ necessary authority to drive SBPs implementation within organisations. This highlights the issue around power and authority as discussed in section 4.4.1. He goes on to explain the reason why: "If an HR comes to me that we need to change, I'll be looking at you like where did you just come from? Are you really sure of what you're saying? Do you really understand what I do for you to say this is what we should do now?" (SBP001). The problem highlighted here is the issue of HR's knowledge of employees' roles within each department in the organisation therefore this lack of knowledge may reduce the level of authority and influence that can be exerted by HR in supporting SBPs implementation. In addition, it appears that the respondent views HR in a traditional role of recruitment and payroll and should not interfere with employees' tasks. However, if HR works together with the various departments within the organisation and gains knowledge or opinions from employees on how sustainability initiatives can be implemented within their roles or tasks alongside a redefinition of HR's mandate, there may be an increase in the possibility of success with SBPs implementation. The issue of authority and power raised here brings into focus the importance of these two dynamics (as discussed in section 8.3) and how they can be used to achieve organisational goal(s) including a change in organisational culture. This then calls into question the view of SBP001 who strongly maintains that the current level of power and authority HR possess within the organisation to support SBPs implementation is not sufficient, but then he is also of the opinion that HR can be a driver of change and a policy keeper ensuring that guidelines are adhered to: "The case for change is usually championed by HR" (SBP001). Therefore, HR can be assumed to have (as part of one of its functions) the responsibility to try to ensure that the organisation's policies on sustainability are adhered to. The information gathered here is slightly contradictory as the respondent has previously stated that HR only played a minor role in creating change and the necessary organisational culture. Does this statement

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reflect the respondent's opinion as against actual practice? This further aligns to the earlier argument that despite statements of HR role in supporting the drive towards SBPs implementation, these are theoretical rather than practical. However, either actual or perceived, one thing is clear – the required authority or power may not be currently present but there appears to be a possibility that HR can be a driver of change by making use of their interfacing position to support in driving SBPs implementation.

From preceding discussions, it is apparent that the possession of the right level of authority should support HR in performing its task(s) efficiently to achieve the desired goal(s) and outcome within the organisation. If this is not achieved, then HR is at the risk of becoming redundant as expressed by this respondent: "I don't think we should have a HR business partner anymore the way … I understand the move from HR-to-HR business partners but lately their role is really, really… I'm not saying they're on their way out like that but their influence…" (SBP001). It is apparent that HR's current level of influence through authority and control does not support their effective involvement in the transition towards SBPs implementation within the organisation. This view is corroborated by SBP008 who does not believe that HR has any other role within the organisation asides from the function of recruitment:

> "To me I think human resources is to source for competent hands, to fill vacant positions in a company and eerrmm I am not sure human resources will look for solution to problems that companies are facing… Fine they can look for competent hands… not that they will now sit down and start solving individual problems that companies have".

It is apparent that more work is needed to ensure that awareness is created on HR's possible influence in the sustainability discourse and that the right level of authority is given to the function by top management. The importance of authority and control in this discourse aligns to findings from literature on control and agency within organisations and HR's role in this regard. For example, Scott (2003) argues that control is at the centre of the organisation discourse while Leitch et al (1995) explained empowerment of employees as "the importance of giving employees both the ability and the responsibility to take active steps to identify problems in the working environment that affect quality or customer service and to deal effectively with them" (p. 72). Such control can be exercised through HR functions such as performance appraisals and rewards and compensations to enable the achievement of the organisation's sustainability agenda while agency may be achieved through employee engagement and motivation programs and policies. Swingler (2017) put forward an argument for Agile HR which views/ treats employees as capable adults who perform well at their roles and this in turn leads to proper management, motivation, and engagement of these employees in the best possible way. She maintains that this is more effective method than mainstream HR which "works from the perspective of policing employees through policies and procedures that suffocate and restrict employees and hinder creativity and innovation at work" (p. 6). Based on this therefore, employees should also be encouraged be 'themselves' at work and be free to express their views and concerns without fear of

prejudice. However, it appears that this currently not the case within organisations as expressed by the respondent below:

> "We can also… I mean part of the complaints I have heard recently is – as part of the survey we did recently – is that people are not allowed to talk, I can't even share my ideas. It is creating a culture where people are allowed to even talk, let them share their ideas. Sense and nonsense... Creating that kind of environment, I believe" (HR010).

It is important to create a culture of innovation and agency and this according to Mandosela et al (2017) is an important component in achieving SBPs implementation and sustainability. Daily and Huang (2001) posit that employees are more likely to be involved in sustainability if they have decision making power and autonomy.

Swingler (2017) argued that one of the reasons why HR is not as effective as they should be within an organisation is due to the use of outdated policies and processes. She therefore suggested that HR should regularly carry out a review of the organisation's policies to determine if they are still fit for purpose. One respondent, HR010, attested to this being done by HR within her organisation: "so one of the things we've done recently is to look at our policies and practices in the organisation. Reviewing all of our processes actually". Such review of policies and practices within the organisation to determine their continued relevance is driven by HR and this avenue can be used to ensure that these processes and policies align with the sustainability agenda of the organisation.

Another possible reason why evidence suggests that HR is not currently utilising their position/ function to support in driving the transition towards SBPs implementation is their lack of knowledge of what role to play in driving sustainability and SBPs implementation and the research data shows this. For example, when speaking about HR's support in driving SBPs implementation, HR002 stated that "We don't have a competent resource system. We outsource it". This is evidence that HR currently do not actively support the organisation in the transition towards SBPs implementation due to lack of required knowledge of how to support colleagues within the organisation in this regard. It is important that HR understands what role they can play because it can be argued that knowledge and awareness lead to action and development of the right behaviours and culture. When HR understands what role they can play in driving SBPs implementation then they can help provide the required support in every department through their HR business partner position within these departments.

A final observation on the data and one more concerned with the style of speaking rather than the content was that respondents demonstrated some restraint/ hesitation while responding to questions. This could be as a result of reluctance to discuss the issue of corruption, fear or caution due to being recorded and the risk of being quoted and possible recrimination. It could also be as a result of the nature of the industry and not wanting to be seen as having negative opinions of the organisation's

practices. Many instances revealed contradictory statements made by respondents when probed further and in an attempt to correct certain statements to prevent portraying a negative image of the organisation. Another possible reason could be the fact that the respondents said what they thought the researcher needed to hear. For example, this respondent upon further questioning admitted that the SBPs mentioned were not practiced by his organisation even though he had previously stated that they were: "to be honest with you, I am not talking specifically about what my company does, I was just talking generally about the benefits of sustainable business practices" (HR010). Furthermore, it was evident that employee voice was not being heard within these organisations. For example, HR010 laments this fact: "…You want to raise your voice and you will be called to order from even your office to say the GED and something and something called and mentioned your name, you don't want them to be mentioning your name so in that meeting where you, just keep quiet". This could be as a result of the bureaucratic nature of these organisations or the organisational culture which does not support agency and employee voice. This poses as a challenge or threat to SBPs implementation as this stifles innovation which has been argued to be key to effective SBPs implementation.

According to CIPD (2021), voice is divided into two - organisational voice and employee/ individual voice and they described them as follows:

- Organisational voice which represents the efforts of employees to assist the organisation to improve their performance. For example, through sharing ideas.
- Individual/employee voice, which is the opportunity for self-expression at work, revealing if people feel appreciated as human beings, and for ideas to impact decisions at work.

They postulated that organisations need to engage with employee voice in order to improve motivation and align organisation's resources with goals of the business. They argue that having voice is relevant in the following areas: establishing an inclusive work environment, harnessing the ideas of employees within the organisation, and ensuring confidence and trust amongst employees, leaders and organisations. Enabling voice within the organisation can act as a source of continuous improvement and innovation and bring about obvious benefits, particularly when the organisation is committed to being influenced by the ideas and views generated.

From the discussion above, it has been argued that employees within organisations where employee voice is encouraged feel safe and empowered to speak up with innovative ideas. However, this requires creating the right culture within the organisation. HR has been argued to play a vital role in building a culture in which freedom of expression exists. It takes dedicated effort to make sure the fundamentals for this are in place, and to recognise that this will not easily be achieved. CIPD (2021) maintains that

though HR has a crucial role to play in ensuring employee voice within the organisation, the job is not theirs alone but alongside the leaders/ top management of the organisation.

CONCLUSION

During this discussion, it was observed that both HR and SBP personnel believed that SBPs are controls within the organisation. However, HR viewed these controls as needed for business continuity while the SBP personnel viewed these as necessary for prevention of environmental degradation. The researcher however argues that though the focus of the benefit of these controls differs, these still align because to achieve business continuity, it is important to maintain licence to operate as well as good brand image which this research's respondents have asserted can be obtained when SBPs are implemented, and the environment is protected (see Chapter six results and findings).

Discussions throughout this chapter have shown that the relationships between the key stakeholders within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria have been unstable and this has in turn created challenges with regards to achieving sustainability within the industry. Some of these challenges include lack of buy-in and involvement/ commitment on the part of these stakeholders in achieving SBPs implementation. This directly or indirectly then results in lack of funding for sustainability projects or initiatives within the organisation. Aligned to this is the issue of corruption which was highlighted in the preceding chapter as a major issue which affects SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry. Though this concern is not directly within the purview of HR functions, the researcher believes that if HR helps create a knowledgeable and engaged workforce, this will in turn limit the influence of corruption on employees and ensure that all employee actions remain aligned to the achievement of the organisation's sustainability agenda i.e., SBPs implementation. In addition to this, certain factors/ dynamics within the organisation are seen to aid or hinder the implementation of SBPs within the organisation. These include bureaucracy, power, and authority. In addition, the issue of control and agency was highlighted by respondents as being important in both encouraging innovation and ensuring that the right behaviours and culture are created to drive SBPs implementation. Following on with this, respondents were of the opinion that HR possesses both the capability and capacity to achieve these.

Data shows respondents affirming that to achieve sustainability and SBPs implementation, the following should occur:

- employee actions should be controlled by HR through functions such as rewards and performance management.
- top management (of which HR is a part of) should be involved through complete buy-in and creation of an enabling environment within the organisation which should ensure that all

employees are engaged and aligned to achieving the sustainability agenda as HR has (or should) oversight of all employees within the organisation.

- effective communication is needed between management and employees within the organisation on the importance of SBPs implementation and its link to the overall organisational goal(s).

Respondents also believe that more control through autonomy and authority should be given to employees in a bid to encourage creativity to enable SBPs implementation because currently the organisations are bureaucratic, and employees' opinions are not sought. However, this is ironic as these respondents also stated that control of top management can be an obstacle to SBPs implementation through stifling of freedom or creativity. Similarly, data revealed that though employees resent the bureaucratic nature and control within the organisation, there appears to be NO pushbacks. This could be due to the attractive remuneration within the industry. HR can explore the use of remuneration to elicit the desired sustainable behaviours and culture. The question can also be asked, how can a balance be struck to find the right level between control and agency within the organisation? HR, which has been portrayed as being a part of the top management by many respondents, would need to devise a means of achieving this balance through the use of their functions. Furthermore, it remains unclear how HR is utilising their management position to support SBPs implementation. This could be due to a low level of knowledge of HR personnel on SBPs/ sustainability, what their role is (can be) and how their functions can be utilised to support in the transition towards SBPs implementation. It comes as no surprise then that there also appears to be NO focused HR sustainability initiative(s) within the oil and gas organisations, based on the data collected, which suggests that HR is currently not playing an active role in the transition towards the effective implementation of SBPs. Consequently, awareness needs to be created within the HR profession of their possible role within the sustainability discourse and how this can be achieved.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RESULTS AND FINDINGS FROM SECOND DATA COLLECTION EXERCISE AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

8.1   INTRODUCTION

Following the analysis of data collected between November 2019 – January 2020, it became apparent that a second data collection exercise was required to address questions raised within some themes identified during the analysis of data and discussion of findings – highlighted in the preceding chapter and in the paragraph below. This chapter explains the results and findings emerging from the second data collection exercise undertaken in January 2022 and provides a succinct discussion of these findings. It was important to present this as a separate chapter to avoid a mix up of data and set clearly what the new findings are and how they have addressed identified gaps. It also allows for clearer corroboration of themes found in both data sets.

Five HR respondents[11] across four oil and gas exploration and production organisations, recruited using snowballing technique, were interviewed. These interviews were carried out as telephone interviews (see chapter five for full discussion of the research methodology). The data collected was based on key emerging themes arising from Chapter seven which required further investigation:

- HR and its role in building an enabling organisational culture
- Strategic and tactical role of HR within the organisation
- Employee voice within the organisation
- Monitoring and evaluation of actions and culture within the oil and gas organisations.

It was important to explore these themes further to highlight how they can be used to support effective SBPs implementation. The presence of an enabling organisation and employee voice encourages innovation, which is an important element for SBPs implementation. In addition, HR has been shown to have a role to play in sustainability however, it is vital to understand the level of involvement of HR at the strategic level as top management have been argued to be crucial to SBPs implementation due to the presence of the required level of authority and control to drive SBPs implementation.

Accordingly, the interviews conducted during the second data collection exercise aimed to explore the opinions and experiences of respondents on key issues concerning sustainable business practices (SBPs) and how HR can be aligned to support organisations in driving SBPs implementation effectively within the oil and gas industry. The interview questions were generated by building upon the initial results

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[11] Table 5.3 in appendix 5 shows that there were six respondents however, data from one respondent – an NGO worker – was excluded from the analysis and discussion of data because though his views were interesting to note, the NGO was outside the study's sample scope and one respondent was not deemed as a representative sample size.

obtained as outlined in chapter six as well as insights from the discussion in chapter seven, as mentioned earlier. Following the analysis of the second set of data collected on the basis of the themes above, the results and findings are now presented, depicting three themes that, if considered, could support HR's involvement in facilitating SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry and further reinforces the findings from the first data collection. The themes are:

- Top management involvement crucial for effective SBPs implementation
- Factors within the organisation needed to enable SBPs implementation
- HR business partnering and functions aligned to SBPs implementation

Finally, based on the insights into the prospective role of HR, a potential HR sustainability conceptual framework which could further increase HR's support in facilitating an effective SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry is recommended. In addition, quotes from research participants are presented in a tabulated form to offer detailed accounts of their opinions as well as to highlight different views of research participants on the subject matter.

8.2   TOP MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT IN SBPs IMPLEMENTATION

This section explores the opinions of the five research participants on the importance of top management involvement in ensuring the effective implementation of SBPs within the organisation. Based on respondents' opinions, the ways in which top management can enhance as well hinder SBPs implementation are highlighted including the leaders' understanding of the importance of initiatives and their buy-in.

8.2.1   <u>Importance of top management buy-in to ensure effective SBPs implementation</u>

Respondents believe that the buy-in of top management to any initiative or proposed change within the organisation is crucial to its success. The buy-in of these leaders will ensure that the initiative(s) or change is driven by top management and cascading the change from the top comes with more authority and importance. These are highlighted in Table 8.1 (see appendix 9).

Top management buy-in is viewed as crucial to the effective implementation of new initiatives or a change within the organisation. However, not only is involvement important but also accountability is expected of the leadership of the organisation: "It helps you to hold leaders accountable on some of those people behaviours that you are trying to drive, and it helps you to also know which segment of the organisation has what kind of problem and then it helps you of course in planning" (HR015). This respondent argued that top management should be held accountable in driving processes or embedding desired behaviours within the organisation. This finding bears similarity to findings from the first set of

interviews conducted where respondents maintain that to ensure success of SBPs implementation through incorporating sustainability/ SBPs into the organisation's strategy. At the strategic level, there are certain questions that need to be asked and answered to enable proper planning of the embedding process of any new initiative. This argument is echoed by HR018 who posits that "at the strategy level, you would have identified what the change is. You would have also sort of captured what value it will bring to the business. Who are the people that the change will affect? That would have also been identified". It can then be argued that though top management involvement is crucial to achieving the sustainability goal, because people are involved and would implement these SBPs, it is important that HR should be involved in this process to align to the people element for effective results.

8.2.2 Top management as an obstacle to SBPs implementation

From the findings so far, it is apparent that the first step to an effective implementation of SBPs is top management involvement. However, despite the previous arguments in favour of top management involvement, some challenges arising from top management that can hinder SBPs implementation have been highlighted by the respondents. These are set out in Table 8.2 (see appendix 9).

The respondents have highlighted that though top management involvement is required for the effective implementation of SBPs, certain factors can also result in top management becoming a hindrance to achieving SBPs implementation. These include being resistant to change, lack of awareness of the benefits of SBPs as well as bureaucracy. There is also a focus on the profit margin of the organisation and this focus can result in two different outcomes. One outcome is where the protection of the profit margin is prioritised over SBPs implementation and the second is to implement SBPs which research has shown can lead to business profitability (See Mandosela et al 2017 and discussions in chapter two). One particular respondent insists that in order to protect the profit of the organisation, top management have no choice but to listen to the suggestions of the sustainability team and align their decisions to them:

> "I make that point to make a bigger point which is to say that the nature of the industry and the incessant searchlight on the industry means that people that are responsible for SBPs their voices are naturally heard by senior management because they know that if we get it wrong along the lines of business practice, there would be huge implications particularly from a fine and litigation perspective" (HR013).

This is an interesting point because the question can then be asked: if this is the case, why the persistent problems and conflicts with the host communities in the Niger Delta over environmental degradation and community entitlements (as seen in discussions in chapter three)? The responses from the respondents appear to provide a possible answer to this question. There seems to be a focus of

organisations on the financial or profit bottom-line where sustainability budgets and initiatives need to be justified and 'sold' to both top management and employees. Table 8.3 highlights this perspective (see appendix 9).

The responses detailed in the table indicate that there will always be a focus on the profitability/ bottom-line of the organisation. However, there needs to be a balance between ensuring the profit levels are maintained and being sustainable through the implementation of SBPs. This is reflected in the findings from the first set of interviews where respondents maintain that SBPs come with added costs and require justification:

> "We have to put a lot of new infrastructure which necessarily are not compulsory for you to achieve your primary objective. So one big challenge which we all have agreed that we don't have a choice and it may be more expensive in the long run is that it doesn't come cheap" (SBP012).

> "The thing is that you just need to justify and that is where… the management they are there to support operations, but they will not support the operation blindly. You need to bring your justification; you need to also balance it with costs – effective costing. No management will approve that so you need justification" (SBP008).

An involved top management that understands the benefits of SBPs can then provide funds required and also demonstrate and cascade these values to all employees within the organisation which can then lead to an engaged workforce. An engaged workforce would mean that the employees at all levels in the organisation would align their behaviours and buy into the organisation's sustainability agenda. This would in turn result in the achievement of more sustainable business practices implementation in the organisation through alignment of every function to the sustainability agenda leading to reduced environmental degradation and associated social issues.

8.3   FACTORS WITHIN THE ORGANISATION THAT CAN ENABLE SBPs IMPLEMENTATION

The findings have shown that there are indeed factors that can enable effective SBPs implementation within the organisation. These include effective and regular communication, an enabling environment, employee engagement and employee voice. These will now be highlighted and briefly discussed in the following sections.

8.3.1   <u>Communication of organisation's strategy to employees</u>

Clear and regular communication of the goals and strategy of the organisation to all employees have been demonstrated as essential to the success of any planned change or implementation of new process

or culture within the organisation. The responses of the research participants' views in this regard are set out in Table 8.4 (see appendix 9).

As discussed in chapter seven, having knowledge and awareness of a subject matter results in the generation of interests which would in turn lead to the development of desired values or behaviours in employees within the organisation. Increased knowledge and awareness can come from communication of relevant information. The responses have demonstrated that in order to change the organisational culture or build desired behaviours and values within the organisation, clear and regular communication of top management plans and strategy to employees at all levels is important. This point was also emphasised by respondents from the first data collection exercise: "I think one of the things we do is continuous education. So… awareness of staff" (HR006). The respondents argue that such plans can never be over communicated:

> "So how we pass message across in terms of the change in culture is about communication. You can never over communicate. You communicate, communicate and communicate. So with that helps the employees to have a better understanding of what you are talking about, your expectations and why the change in culture. So, it is surrounded by communication" (HR017).

Despite the huge emphasis on the need for communication, there is a need to plan the best ways to communicate important information to the employees. The most effective means of communication is needed to ensure that the information is cascaded efficiently and obtains the desired results: "You still need to have the conversation to say the best way to cascade it". (HR017). Therefore, planning is required prior to information dissemination to achieve the desired change. The need for communication is not only limited between the top management and employees, it also extends to all stakeholders of the business: "So, understand that whatever you are doing, you have to understand that you have partners which you have to report to at the end of the day" (HR014). This respondent explains the importance of the buy-in of all stakeholders involved within a business process to guarantee success of that process.

One importance of effective communication within the organisation is that all employees will obtain the same information of the required values and expectations. It can be argued that constant communication of expected behaviours to ensure alignment can be a medium of organisational control over its employees. This helps to build the desired behaviours and culture within the organisation.

8.3.2   Organisational culture and change

Most of the research participants posit that when an enabling environment is created, it will increase the potential of achieving effective SBPs implementation. This view echoes views by research

participants from the first set of interviews who argued that building a culture of sustainability is important for SBPs implementation: "You need to build the culture of sustainability as part of your business and is gonna cut across whether if you are from the boardroom… from the gateman to the boardroom" (SBP001). Table 8.5 (see appendix 9) summarises the views of the respondents on organisational culture.

The responses highlight the need for a planned focus on building desired culture within the organisation to achieve the required results. The respondents emphasize on the role organisational culture plays in the implementation of SBPs within the organisation. One important point mentioned is the need for a culture of innovation. This would ensure that new ways are constantly being sought to engage in more sustainable business practices. HR018 sheds more light on this fact: "What essentially, I am trying to say is that there is that opportunity to be able to make suggestions. We value creativity". There is an indication of a culture which encourages innovation, which has been shown by literature to be important for SBPs implementation (as discussed in section 2.4.2). In addition, there is a view that IOCs always have as part of their organisational culture the need to leave the environment in a better position before the oil and gas practices were carried out:

> "Traditionally almost all the oil… the international oil companies, they have the eermm this as part of the organisational culture and that is what they call the environmental stewardship. So as times change, there is always the need to review and upgrade those core values that drive the way people behave within the organisation" (HR015).

The use of the word traditionally may suggest that all the IOCs, from inception have sustainability (environmental stewardship) as part of the culture. This is not reflected in literature regarding oil and gas organisations' operations in the communities/ environment (see discussions in chapter three). Also, constant review of processes is highlighted as important – innovation. This respondent also stated that "there has been a conscious drive to incorporate all these sustainability behaviours in the organisational culture". However, how effective these conscious efforts are remains debatable based on the discussions in chapter three.

Finally, respondents opine that an enabling culture would help encourage employee voice: "There is that… for want of a better word… open door policy where people can share their views and then the organisation takes advantage of that…" (HR018) and in turn, employee voice supports innovation such as SBPs implementation.

8.3.3   Employee voice

The ability of employees within the organisation to voice out their concern, feel confident to provide suggestions to top management to enable smoother processes and innovation, has been mentioned by the research participants as an important factor in the drive towards SBPs implementation. Table 8.6 (see appendix 9) highlights these opinions.

The information in the table demonstrates that employee voice is seen as an important factor in the successful implementation of SBPs. HR018 clearly lays this argument while describing the role of the sustainability team within the organisation:

> "They have a voice. They also have a core value around continuous learning and growth. We have a core value around professionalism. So what that does is that it allows every employee to make suggestions, to take ownership and be accountable. So, if somebody feels that there are certain things that we need to do, you are free to make those suggestions, go through the right protocols and then it is very easy to get all of those approved…" (HR018).

HR017 is of the same opinion regarding the level of employee voice especially where the sustainability team is concerned: "so, in terms of the sustainability team having a voice with the top management, that one you don't need to set up a meeting, just a WhatsApp message will give you a result (smiles)". Based on these responses, employees involved in sustainability are portrayed as having the freedom to make suggestions, tender proposals which easily get approved. Easy approval of projects or proposals tend to contradict the respondent's earlier statement of many chains of command and the fact that not all suggestions are taken on board. A possible reason for this discrepancy is highlighted by the same respondent who speaks about the level of maturity of an organisation being linked with level of employee voice (both the presence of voice and management encouragement of voice through tangible actions based on voice).

> "Again, I will go back to the maturity level of the organisation. I have seen company x come from a place where you find it very difficult to suggest things, initiatives because you feel that you can be… you stand the risk of being eermm victimised, penalised. But once you create an enabling environment that makes employees to trust the organisation, you develop line managers to the extent that they can fully represent the organisation, you then move away from that system where there is mistrust to a point where people then have trust and believe in the organisation" (HR018).

The respondent is of the opinion that a matured organisation has the tendencies to have built the enabling environment for trust and enabling environment as against the mistrust within an organisation that has not attained a matured stage. The discrepancy in statements may also indicate that the response may be theoretical as against current practice within the organisation. Also, it may be that though employee voice is encouraged, it is done with caution as portrayed by this respondent:

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"You will find myriads of challenges in the way work is done, in the way you may need to guide people's behaviours and all of that. So again, HR sort of still has responsibility to deal with xxx (inaudible) in terms of people who probably for want of a better word I am going off tangent, so that even if that freedom is there, you also find out that you have to sensor most of the time and you have to also properly have to guide the kind of suggestions and the kind of actions that comes from the different channels that you are adopting to let people lend their voice (HR018).

The respondent argued that HR has the responsibility of ensuring a balance is struck between employee voice and control/ order within the organisation. This belief may have stemmed from the fact that HR is seen as a part of the top management within the organisation. On the other hand, some respondents have portrayed HR as being an intermediary between top management and the employees. HR ensures that information is passed to and from top management and all employees:

"… we did what we call a pulse survey, an opportunity to speak up and for their voice to be heard. So, everybody got the opportunity to speak their mind and what HR did was to have a summary of what people have said and presented the summary to the top management (HR017).

Here, HR is seen as representing the employees as well as ensuring that employee voice is heard by top management. HR is shown to be actively involved in encouraging employee voice through involving employees in the decision-making process: "I think there has been a conscious move to involve employees much more in the decision-making process and in the shaping and planning programs" (HR015). The operative word here being 'conscious' however to what extent are actions taken based on employee opinions and suggestions?

In addition, one challenge that can hinder employee voice within the organisation in Nigeria is the cultural factor: "So those are some of the things that HR will measure and try and find out OK so why are people reluctant to give feedback and also look at the quality of the feedback. We have some cultural limitations. It is not culturally common for a child to give a parent feedback or for a direct report to give a manager feedback. So, we try to look at those things and say how can break down some of those things that are preventing people from freely accessing these mechanisms that exist" (HR015). Nigerian culture does not particularly encourage the young ones giving feedback and suggestions to someone older than they are[12]. This is translated to the workplace to some extent and this respondent explains that this can hinder employees from giving valuable feedback to their bosses. A possible solution to this problem could be a change in culture within the organisation through communication and creating an enabling environment by top management.

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[12] This is drawing on the researcher's knowledge and experiences as a Nigerian.

Communication, involving employees in the decision-making process including encouragement of employees as well as building an enabling culture can all lead to an engaged workforce which can in turn lead to achievement of SBPs implementation as highlighted in section 8.2.2. In addition, the findings have shown that respondents view employee engagement as an important factor in achieving SBPs implementation.

8.3.4 Employee engagement

All but one of the research participants indicated that it is also important to engage the organisation's employees and ensure that they buy into the organisational goal(s) or whatever initiative that is being proposed. Achieving employee engagement can be through different means as highlighted in table 8.7 (see appendix 9).

These responses demonstrate that the buy-in and involvement of employees at all levels within the organisation is necessary to ensure adoption of new processes or initiatives. The argument made is that when the initiative or plan is communicated to the employees and they understand the benefits of the proposed change, then their buy-in is obtained resulting in more engaged and motivated employees who will then strive for the successful implementation of the change/ process/ initiative(s). HR has been highlighted by respondents as being responsible for the dissemination of information to all stakeholders within the organisation, an intermediary and an advocate for employee voice. The HR function as it aligns to the effective implementation of SBPs within the organisation will be set out in the section 8.4.

8.3.5 Reward as a source of motivation

The use of reward to help align employee actions to the organisational goal(s) has been highlighted by the respondents. A reward system is linked to the employee's performance appraisal/ management to ensure that they remain focused on the set objectives. This is explained by the respondents in table 8.8 (see appendix 9).

With the use of a reward system, employees are motivated to attain their set individual and team objectives, and this was also highlighted previously: "So, if you are hired in company x, in fact your family will go to church and do thanksgiving because they know they are already made you understand? (laughs) Because your salary alone, in terms of motivation every of these things is taken care of…" (SBP008). This system can be replicated to support in the drive towards SBPs implementation within the organisation through the reward management function of HR. Again, the use of reward to align employee behaviour could be said to be a mechanism of control and exercise of power over the employees by the organisation. This may inhibit agency and discourage employee voice due to fear of

losing out on rewards. HR should be aware of these dynamics and be prepared to provide the right balance between employees and top management.

8.4   HR

The findings so far have shown that HR is viewed as a crucial role in drive towards SBPs implementation by all research participants and this strongly mirrors the findings from the first data collection exercise where respondents believed HR can effectively support SBPs implementation within the organisation. HR functions are seen as having the potential to help the organisation achieve its goal(s). These roles played range from being part of the strategic decision-making process, communication of such strategic decisions, building and sustaining an enabling culture and encouraging employee voice within the organisation. In addition, the respondents argue that HR possess the right level of authority to enable their support of the organisation's transition towards SBPs implementation. These will now be discussed in the following sections.

8.4.1   <u>HR function supporting implementation of SBPs</u>

Based on the responses received, HR is said to have numerous roles to play in ensuring that businesses remain sustainable and engage in sustainable business practices. Table 8.9 (see appendix 9) highlights some of these responses.

From the information in the table, HR's involvement ranges from recruitment, stakeholder management, creating an enabling environment and monitoring and evaluation of business practices to ensure that they are relevant and align to the organisation's goal(s). This begins right from the start of an employee's journey in the organisation – recruitment and selection: "So, in terms of recruitment, it is important for me to understand because that helps my sourcing and that helps me to get the right person for the unit or department" (HR017). Again, the need for knowledge of subject matter highlighted. A HR manager describing his role has this to say "So, I always describe my job in a very simple term saying errmm I speak with a lot of talent every day to ensure that their skills and competencies close the gaps that we have in the business…" (HR017). HR recruitment function used to ensure that only the right people are placed in the right positions. This function can be used to ensure that only people with the right behaviours and mindset are recruited to help drive sustainable behaviours.

As previously mentioned, innovation is important in ensuring effective SBPs and respondents have indicated that HR has the responsibility of continuously reviewing strategies to guarantee their relevance and effectiveness: "so apart from the planning and deployment, HR has the responsibility of

continually reviewing how effective those strategies are" (HR015). Here, the respondent hints on continuous improvement – an important factor in SBPs implementation.

In addition, the role of HR is viewed by respondents as indispensable:

> "only if we deceive ourselves (laughs), the business will fail if HR does not have a say because the business owner or the so-called top management do not come down to disseminate the message. They feel some people in the business are closer to the (inaudible) guys than them and that is why we have the HR guys. So, if you don't listen to HR perspective or view… because they are not speaking from common sense, they are speaking from reality" (HR017).

This respondent's opinion that the role of HR cannot be overstated or over emphasised because HR is needed for any people related action or processes within the organisation. He argued that the lack of involvement of HR guarantees failure. HR is shown to be crucial in disseminating information and ensuring new processes are embedded.

The need for HR to interface with other departments is highlighted: "yes it does because the data source actually comes from HR because we have an enterprise resource planning (ERP) and for anything that will be done from a data perspective, you have to interface with HR. So, HR is not missing in the scheme of things. One of the ways HR does this is through providing relevant information to the team to carry out tasks. Also, when asked how involved HR is with the CSR team of the organisation, HR018 responded "to a great extent". Here, HR highlighted as being actively involved in attaining the sustainability agenda of the organisation. HR also interfaces with the top management of the organisation:

> "They have the data, the information and they know what to do and how to go about it. You need them because you call them people management because they manage the people. You use them to get to people and equally get feedback from the people to the top management for better decisions to be made". (HR017).

This respondent argued that any process carried out by people requires HR to be involved on some level. HR is also involved in gathering required data and using said data to help management make the right decisions within the organisation.

8.4.2   HR as part of leadership – authority and control

The research participants view HR as a part of the leadership/ top management of the organisation with the relevant level of authority and control to support in the transition towards SBPs implementation. The opinions of the respondents are set out in table 8.10 (see appendix 9).

It can be surmised that the respondents consider the role of HR in people management and ensuring that organisational goals are achieved very crucial and cannot be underestimated: "The involvement of HR is very very, key at the top" (HR017). In addition to possessing the required level of authority to drive processes, HR is believed to drive positive change using this authority. Respondent HR015 is of the opinion that HR is currently involved in the strategic decision making through to executing initiatives/ tasks. He stated that:

> "the first how is being involved in the planning. At the planning stage, a couple of things will have to come into play. It is good to come up with or identify the need for organisational change but eerrm looking at the wholistic view, is it a short-term change or is it a longer-term change? How best do you deliver such program and all the other details"?

HR is seen to be involved in the planning and strategy that results in organisational change. They are also seen to be involved in identifying the need for a change in behaviours and culture such as sustainability. It can then be argued that HR can use this position to drive/ support in the transition towards SBPs implementation. The drive towards SBPs implementation in the organisation can begin with HR driving or being involved in setting sustainability goals within the organisation, a position/ role which they already occupy according to HR018: "HR may not be involved in the day-to-day activities of the business but in terms of the strategic direction of what the business wants to achieve and with what timeline, HR is at the forefront of goal setting". Not only is HR involved in goal setting but, the respondent is of the opinion that the role of HR also includes ensuring that organisational goals are achieved through performance management (see section 8.4.5).

HR is portrayed not only as a part of the top management, but also an intermediary between top management and the employees ensuring employee voice is heard: "HR is the representative representing the employees in discussion and interfacing with management to say this is what our people want… that is the role of HR. so middle man and mediator and is equally the one advising both the employees and management and ensuring that we strike a balance for peace to reign in the organisation" (HR017). He goes further to explain that HR one of HR's roles in this capacity is by passing information from top management to the employees and vice versa: "yes. Whatever management wants to do, they break it down and it is HR that will still communicate. One way or the other… sometimes when you bring up anything they (employees) will say management has spoken again (laughs)" (HR017).

Based on the findings discussed so far, it has been shown that there is indeed affirmation that HR is definitely involved in the strategy of the organisation. However, it is unclear what the level of such involvement is: "So what I am trying to say is that we don't ask if HR is involved in the business planning these days. You can say to what extent are they involved? Or to what extent are their opinions

heard"? (HR015). The current and potential extent of involvement of HR will now be discussed in the next two sections.

8.4.3   HR as role model for transition towards required change

The responses in the table below reveal that the research participants view HR personnel as individuals who should model whatever change in values or behaviours within the organisation. According to the respondents, the status of a role model can be attained through building their knowledge about the subject matter as well as demonstrating such knowledge and values. These views are highlighted in table 8.11 (see appendix 9).

Speaking about the role of HR in driving change within the organisation, HR015 argued that for success, HR needs to imbibe and demonstrate the change: "More like a hands-on demonstration of how it will work and then being open too…". This implies that HR needs to have full knowledge of whatever values or new process to enable effective impartation of such knowledge to other employees. HR modelling the change because communication of the desired values or behaviours is not sufficient as explained by this respondent: "the view of HR is very important and because it is the people that you need to get results. It is not enough to cascade or to send out an information to say just go and tell them…" (HR017). One reason why HR needs to model the desired values and behaviours is to ensure that they demonstrate the right behaviours in the function as HR business partners which entails HR personnel to sit within a business unit and support that unit in achieving the organisational goal(s).

8.4.4   HR business partners

The research participants have revealed that the HR business partner model has proven beneficial in HR's role of supporting the organisation in attaining its goals. Different views of the respondents on how this operates are set out in table 8.12 (see appendix 9).

HR017 further elaborates on the role of a HR business partner:

> "So, HR plays a (inaudible) role in terms of the partnering. So, you have the partnering direct to the business, people are closer to them, they are ready to listen to them. They build trust with time and whatever they say, they believe because they know these are people that will listen to them. So, there is a key role that HR plays, but it now depends on where we want them to play. So, we play a significant role in ensuring that these changes are well implemented".

From the response above, it is important that HR builds trust with the employees which then allows the employees to follow their directives. Another vital role of HR as a business partner is employee relations

which allows HR to relate with employees and address all concerns or challenges that may hinder achieving a set goal. It also allows for adequate performance management of employees within the business units HR is situated in.

8.4.5   Performance management (measurement) as a function of HR

It is crucial to set however it is also important to measure performance to ensure that they are in line with the goals set out. The research participants have emphasised the benefits of an efficient performance management system within an organisation. These are outlined in table 8.13 (see appendix 9).

It is important that employees are clear on what the organisational goals are and what their individual and team roles are in achieving said goals. HR018 explains this clearly:

> "What that does is that at the beginning of the year, there is nobody whose goal setting does not derive from the overall business objective of that year. So, you follow the principles that are cascaded. So, what that means is that everybody within the company has something that is connected… has a goal that is connected to the overall objective of that business and then everybody also has development requirements for that year".

What is described above is performance management which ensures that all employees' performance objectives align to the organisation's goal(s). Therefore, it can be surmised that if the organisation has a sustainability goal, the performance objectives of all employees can be aligned to achieve that goal.

To guarantee an efficient performance management system, one respondent argued that it was important for the organisation to develop a more robust system:

> "In the new performance management process, it includes a very strong feedback mechanism. before now, managers will say they want to assess my people, but what we have implemented is what we call multi directional feedback. So, the same the manager or supervisor is getting feedback on his people that is the same way that the manager's manager will be getting feedback from the direct reports on how the manager is doing his or her managerial duties" (HR015).

The system described above allows for a more robust performance management which encourages employee voice and feedback and as previously discussed, employee voice is an important factor for building an innovative culture which is needed for SBPs implementation.

8.4.6   Monitoring and evaluation

Alongside performance management, monitoring and evaluation has been highlighted as an important exercise which can be carried out by HR to ensure that employee actions consistently align to the organisational goals and agenda. the respondents' views on monitoring and evaluation are outlined in table 8.14 (see appendix 9).

Monitoring and evaluation of the business practices as well as employee actions ensures that there is a constant alignment of practices to the organisational goals. It also encourages innovation and improvement of practices which is needed to drive SBPs implementation within the organisation.

In table 8.15 (see appendix 9), the Nigerian government are highlighted (similar to findings in chapter six) as an important actor in the sustainability discourse within the Nigerian oil and gas industry. The table above shows what roles the government plays (or should play) and the challenges faced by the oil and gas organisations when interacting with the government with regards to sustainability matters.

In summary, section 8.2 highlighted the importance of top management involvement in driving SBPs implementation within the organisation. This section showed the different views of respondents on how top management actions can support or hinder SBPs implementation. This included development of interest on the subject matter through improved knowledge and awareness which in turn leads to a focus on driving the sustainability agenda of the organisation. The respondents also argued that though top management involvement is crucial in achieving effective SBPs implementation, some factors may result in this group of people becoming a hindrance in achieving SBPs. This included resistance to change, a lack of knowledge about the subject matter as well as a focus on the bottom line of the organisation over sustainability. Therefore, there should be more awareness from the top of the benefits of SBPs which can then translate into more focused strategic actions in driving effective SBPs implementation.

Section 8.3 focused on the factors identified by respondents which they opine can support in the effective implementation of SBPs. They include creation of an enabling organisational culture, employee voice, effective communication, employee engagement and the use of reward as a motivation in achieving set goals. The respondents argued that it is vital for the strategy of the organisation to be clearly and regularly communicated with employee at all levels and this will potentially lead to the development of a culture of trust and open communication which is required to encourage employee voice. Employee voice and the use of an efficient reward system should result in an engaged workforce which can in turn lead to a culture of innovation which is required for SBPs implementation.

Section 8.4 then focused on the role of HR in driving SBPs implementation within the organisation. The respondents argued that HR has a very vital role to play both generally within the organisation and

also towards the implementation of SBPs. These roles include the use of their functions of recruitment and selection, performance management, reward, communication and as HR business partners. The respondents posited that all these roles can be aligned to drive and achieve the sustainability agenda of the organisation. They argued that HR should be a role model for whatever values and behaviours being driven within the organisation. This role model status can be achieved through improved knowledge about the subject matter. Finally, HR is not only found to be the right function to drive this process but also seen to possess the right level of authority to do so.

A succinct discussion of these themes will be carried out in the next section which will in turn lead to detailing the key enabling factors (a guiding framework) that should be considered for HR to support in the facilitation of SBPs in the oil and gas industry.

8.5   DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

As previously mentioned, (see section 8.1), there are three emergent themes from the second data collection exercise, and these will now be evaluated based on the findings discussed above and in relation to the theoretical underpinning of the research. These themes reinforce the results, findings and outcome of discussions in both chapters 6 and 7.

8.5.1   <u>Top management involvement (buy-in)</u>

Top management involvement has been highlighted, by respondents from the first set of data collected, as crucial to the implementation of SBPs within the oil and gas organisations (see section 6.6.3). Top management involvement has been argued by scholars such as Cha et al (2018) to be a crucial element in achieving SBPs implementation. The leadership of the organisation are not only required to buy into proposed innovation, but they should also be seen as the drivers of the change through demonstrating the desired behaviours, making strategic decisions to align to the sustainability goal and creating the right culture: "So, organisational culture is driven primarily by top management that is my opinion and from my organisation from what I see" (HR014). Top management involvement can also be made evident through communication of the sustainability strategy, and this shows top management commitment to the process/ initiative: "So when things come from the executive committee like that, it comes with a lot of weight… so when you are cascading it down it is quite clear that it is serious business." (HR007). In addition, it is important for top management to provide the right level of authority to relevant employees to enable them drive SBPs. The issue of power and authority and how these can influence (positively and negatively) SBPs implementation have been discussed extensively in section 7.3. The possession of the required power and authority has been highlighted by respondents

as required to enable HR (who is also a part of top management) to support the organisation in implementing SBPs.

8.5.2 Factors within the organisation required for SBPs implementation

The respondents maintain that there is employee voice within the organisations where employee opinions are sought by the top management of the organisation. However, there is a question of how this information or ideas received from the employees are being utilized, if at all. The effectiveness of employee voice in these organisations is called into question by this respondent: "there are platforms for voice to be heard but I would rather say is it everything that they say that management does? Management can hear your voice but is management implementing or fulfilling all you want them to do"? (HR017). The effectiveness of the presence of employee voice is when it comes as a two-way communication between top management and the workforce. However, the findings (from both data collection exercises) indicate that there is a presence of a one-way communication system within the organisations. This can also be linked to the presence of bureaucracy as highlighted by SBP012 who stated that: "We operate a vertical structure" and this respondent describes the employees as foot soldiers. The disadvantage of bureaucracy is that there may be limited flow of information especially from the bottom up. HR can therefore play a role of ensuring effective communication of the organisational strategy and its benefits and also encourage employees at all levels to put forward innovative ideas that will enhance SBPs implementation.

The involvement of top management (and all it entails) in addition to the effective communication of the organisation's sustainability strategy by HR can aid in building an enabling organisational culture. A culture that encourages the desired behaviours as well as actions from employees at all levels through raising awareness of sustainability/ SBPs and their benefits. This in turn creates interest and encourages employees to be innovative. As earlier mentioned, top management would need to be prepared to listen innovative ideas and employee opinions. An enabling organisational culture influences the behaviour of employees as discussed in section 4.3 and can in turn help in building a culture of sustainability. The researcher argues that a combination of all these factors can result in an engaged workforce who operate within an organisational culture that encourages innovation, agency, equips employees with the right level of authority to drive processes and is free from the limitations of bureaucracy. It would be the role of HR to ensure that a balance is maintained between agency and the required and necessary level of control to ensure that employees remain aligned to the organisation's sustainability agenda.

8.5.3 HR functions aligned to SBPs implementation

The discussion in the preceding sections has highlighted the role(s) that HR can play to support the organisation in the effective implementation of SBPs. The research participants from both sets of interviews emphasised the crucial role HR can play in the sustainability discourse especially within the organisation (see section 6.7 and 7.4 for comprehensive discussions). The respondents maintain that HR can use their traditional functions such as recruitment and selection, performance management, training and development and so on to help support SBPs implementation. In addition to this, the researcher argues that the factors indicated in the sections above can be translated into roles for HR to play with particular focus on driving sustainability. Furthermore, the role of HR as a business partner (with the necessary level of authority) that sits within each business unit can be utilized to support the alignment of each business unit to the organisation's sustainability agenda.

8.6   IMPLICATIONS – A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Embedded in the sociology of organisation theory is the argument that through the understanding of the existing conditions (principles) that are related to social interaction within the organisation, goal(s) set can be attained (Scott and Davis 2007). This research study, through its findings, has built on this theory by critically assessing the potential of HR role in the transition to SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria while taking into consideration these principles. In line with this, the researcher proposes the concept of HR sustainability business partners to drive the organisation's sustainability agenda from an HR perspective.

It is apparent that a conceptual model which will be fit for purpose within the Nigerian context is vital. This model is designed to create a potential role for HR to support the oil and gas organisation in the transition towards SBPs implementation in the Nigerian oil and gas industry while also guiding interactions between stakeholders driving sustainability within the organisation. The model is based on three emergent themes drawn from the findings outlined in chapters seven and eight which are (a) top management involvement, (b) factors within the organisation that can enhance SBPs implementation and (c) HR functions and business partnering. These were further deconstructed into factors that can enable SBPs implementation which further translate to potential roles HR can play to support SBPs implementation: driving top management buy-in, effective communication, enabling organisational culture, encouraging and improving employee voice, employee engagement and monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, these are now presented in a HR sustainability conceptual model (figure 8.1) to support HR in advancing SBPs implementation as well as integrating their functions within the context of sustainability debate.
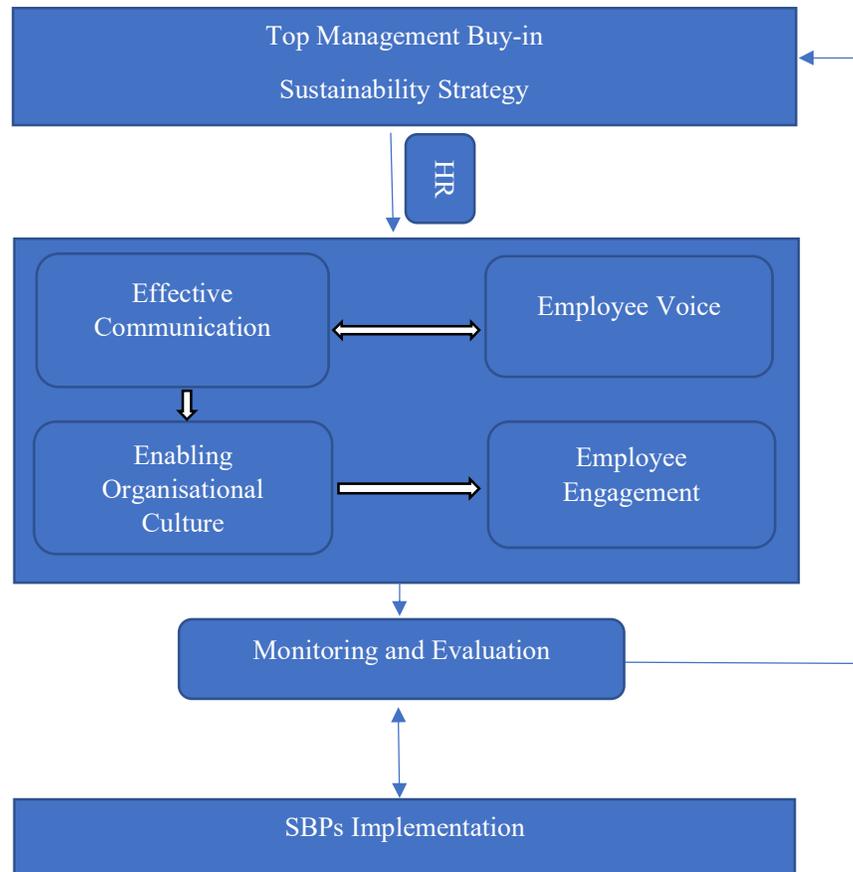
Figure 6: 8.1: HR sustainability model. Author Generated

The conceptual model elements are discussed below.

8.6.1   Top Management Buy-in

Top management buy-in requires increasing the knowledge and understanding of management about sustainability and SBPs as well as their benefits. This then translates into addition of sustainability matters (for example SBPs implementation) into the organisation's agenda and embedding it into the organisation's strategy. With the improved knowledge and understanding of sustainability, challenges such as lack of engagement of top management; skepticism over the cost of sustainability and reluctance to approve such costs will be addressed (as highlighted in section 6.6.2 of the findings from the first set of data collected). Leadership understanding and buy-in will also, hopefully, help breakdown some of the barriers consistent with bureaucracy: "so based on it, you now look at it and think ok how do we incorporate it to our budget, annual budget stuff even though we need to go through lines of approval and stuff" (SBP009)? HR as part of the top management (as indicated by the research participants) will be in a position to drive buy-in and involvement of top management as well as support the process of

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embedding the initiative of SBPs implementation into the organisation's strategy especially from a human resources perspective.

8.6.2 HR Sustainability operations

Effective Communication and Employee Voice

The HR representative in top management team/ board then cascades this strategic focus and objective to the HR business unit. The HR sustainability business partners in turn cascade this objective to the various business units where they sit within the organisation. Such communication will also involve training/ coaching on what the sustainability agenda entails. Communication should be regular, clear and concise. It is important that the communication within the organisation remains a two-way communication in order to encourage employee voice and innovation which is vital for SBPs implementation. It is also vital that when employees speak up within the organisation, such voice is acknowledged by top management for example, through the implementation of innovative ideas proffered by employees. HR can ensure the above is achieved by acting as a link between the top management and employees as indicated by this respondent: "HR is like an arbiter, an ombudsman between the management and the workforce." (HR011). With HR link, this forms some sort of loop and keeps the channel of effective communication open which in turns leads to the creation of an enabling organisational culture.

Building an Enabling Organisational Culture and employee engagement

The presence of regular effective communication of the sustainability agenda to all employees by HR has been argued by most of the research participants to not only encourage employee voice, but also aid in building an enabling organisational culture. A culture that entails employees developing the desired behaviours and interests through constant communication of the benefits of sustainability and its alignment to employee functions. This enabling organisational culture can also encourage innovation (Mandosela et al 2017). The creation of an enabling organisation should essentially come from building the desired behaviors and interests through communication and encouraging employee voice by HR. It is then argued by the researcher that all of these would lead to the creation of employee engagement. An engaged workforce will result in employees at all levels, buying into the organisation's sustainability agenda and aligning their tasks to achieve this, with the support of the HR sustainable business partners.

8.6.3   <u>Monitoring and evaluation</u>

The research findings have indicated that monitoring and evaluation of business processes is crucial to effective SBPs implementation. This has been adapted in this model to argue for the monitoring and evaluation of HR functions to ensure that they remain effective to continue to guarantee attainment of the goal of SBPs implementation. Monitoring and evaluation can be considered as an important step in the sustainability transition management process (Geels 2004). In addition, the information/ data received from the monitoring and evaluation exercise is then fed back to top management/ HR who then have the opportunity to restrategise, improve processes and design ways to make these potential HR roles more effective to continue supporting in the transition towards SBPs implementation.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the conceptual model engages with the recommended concepts and highlights how the challenges of SBPs implementation can be addressed. At the strategic level, top management buy-in ensures sustainability is on the organisation's agenda; bureaucracy involved in budget approval for SBPs implementation reduced and the necessary authority assigned to employees to carry out tasks aligned to SBPs implementation. Effective two-way communication addresses the concern of bureaucratic one-way communication highlighted by the respondents and encourages some level of agency given to employees through employee voice which encourages innovation and SBPs implementation as well as employee engagement.

Respondents from both data collection exercises have argued that HR indeed have a role to play in supporting the oil and gas organisations in the effective implementation of SBPs. Certain roles that HR can play have been highlighted and these include enabling top management involvement, encouraging employee voice and employee engagement, building an enabling organizational culture and environment and monitoring and evaluation. These roles can be performed by HR while being aware and dealing with the principles that can enable or hinder goal attainment such as SBPs implementation, within the organisation. Based on these, a conceptual model has been designed as a guide to support HR in assisting the oil and gas organisations in the transition towards the effective implementation of SBPs.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter responds to the research questions which were set out in section 1.4. The chapter also goes on to draw attention to the research's main contributions to knowledge and practice as well as the study's limitations. The study concludes by putting forward some recommendations and signposting towards potential future works.

9.2   RESEARCH SUMMARY AND ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study was to critically evaluate prospects for HR's support towards SBPs implementation through identifying key factors within the organisations that can enable or hinder the implementation of SBPs within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. To accomplish this aim, research questions were developed, and these will now be discussed in the next sections to show how they have been responded to.

9.2.1   What SBPs are currently being implemented by business entities in the Nigerian oil and gas industry?

The main focus of this research question was on determining and understanding what the current sustainability practices in the Nigerian oil and gas industry are, and in particular, what SBPs are currently being implemented. Based on the extensive literature review conducted as well as the empirical evidence gathered, the current sustainability practices in the Nigerian oil and gas industry appears to be limited to CSR activities. According to the research participants, examples of what sustainable business practices are engaged in by the oil and gas organisations include:

- Building schools for local communities
- Encouraging communities to engage in agricultural activities
- Providing employment for locals
- Provision of scholarship funds to Niger Delta indigenes for education
- Responding to oil spill(s) situations.

The list above indicate that CSR activities are termed as SBPs by the respondents. This calls into question the level of knowledge and awareness of the oil and gas personnel about SBPs and their

benefits. It was also noted by the researcher that the knowledge about sustainability/ SBPs of the respondents was skewed towards business sustainability which entails ensuring ongoing success of the business. Therefore, the researcher argues that inadequate knowledge about SBPs can be a challenge with regards to SBPs implementation because proper understanding of a subject matter results in engaging in appropriate action(s) for the achievement of a particular goal. Therefore, it is important for the right level of knowledge of what constitutes SBPs to be gained by oil and gas professionals in general to enable appropriate actions for effective implementation.

Respondents also highlighted certain challenges encountered which hinder the implementation of SBPs. This can be classed into two. First, the challenges within the organisation – lack of required authority to drive processes or make necessary decisions (limited agency), bureaucracy and a huge focus on the cost of implementing SBPs. Second, the challenges outwit the organisation which can hinder SBPs implementation including corruption, lack of government understanding, support and involvement, community disruptions. When these challenges are addressed, this can increase the potential for true SBPs implementation.

9.2.2 What roles do HR personnel play, if any, in facilitating the transition towards SBPs implementation in the Nigerian oil and gas industry?

The research participants have portrayed HR as currently being involved in the effective implementation of 'SBPs' within the oil and gas organisations. The respondents maintain that the roles that HR currently play include:

- Recruitment and selection of employees

- Training

- Performance management

- Reward management and

- Communication of the organisation's strategy to employees within the organisation.

It is important to note that based on the understanding of the respondents, these roles HR allegedly plays are carried out with business sustainability in mind to maintain brand image, profitability and ensure the continuity of the business. Notwithstanding, the researcher notes that these functions listed can also be utilized to support in the transition towards SBPs implementation based on the discussions in chapter

eight. It was highlighted that it is inadequate (on its own) for HR to simply play a supporting role using their functions because there are certain principles within the organisation that HR should be aware of in order to utilize their functions efficiently to achieve SBPs implementation. These are bureaucracy, control and authority, employee voice and communication. These principles could enable or hinder SBPs implementation as seen in the discussions in chapter four, seven and eight.

9.2.3   How can HR support the organisation in transitioning towards SBPs implementation? What is HR's current involvement and potential role in SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry?

Though section 9.2.2 has highlighted what the current HR role in SBPs implementation is, this section will briefly focus on the relevant research finding(s) in relation to the research aim. This study's findings have shown that there appears to be key roles that HR could play to support SBPs implementation in oil and gas organisations. These roles are shown in the table below.

HR ROLE TO SUPPORT SPBs IMPLEMENTATION	DESCRIPTION
Top management buy-in	Facilitating top management buy-in towards increasing governance framework for enhancing SBPs implementation
Employee engagement	Ensure employees at all levels buy into the organisation's sustainability agenda. For example through communication
Employee voice	Improving employee voice in providing opinions on how SBPs could be designed and implemented in the organization
Enabling organisational culture	Building an enabling organisational culture by encouraging desired sustainable behaviours and actions. This can be aided by increasing knowledge and awareness of SBPs and their benefits as well as impact on business growth
Effective communication	Ensuring effective communication of the organisation's sustainability strategy to all employees
Monitoring and evaluation	Designing and providing monitoring and evaluation programs to ensure SBPs are implemented based on overall sustainability strategy

Table 36: 9.1: Potential HR roles in supporting SBPs implementation

The roles detailed above and in addition to the principles within the organisation that influence goal attainment as stated by Scott and Davis (2007) can be used by HR to align their function to support implementation of SBPs. The function of recruitment and selection can be used to ensure that individuals with the right skills and mindset which align to the organisation's goal are recruited. HR can ensure employees are trained in and awareness of sustainability matters raised, its benefits and importance. HR can drive the effective communication of the organisation's sustainability agenda. Effective communication can also be utilized to build an enabling organisational culture – a culture which promotes agency and innovation thereby increasing SBPs implementation within the organisation. The monitoring and evaluation of these functions should encourage review and improvement of the processes. The potential for the attainment of the sustainability agenda through the consideration of these factors can be further enhanced if these are put in place using the HR business partners function, in this case HR sustainability business partners. HR business partners are HR professionals who sit within each business unit to give support and ensure that these units function efficiently (see sections 7.4 and 8.4 for more discussions on HR business partners).

9.3   RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Two sets of research contributions are presented – contributions to theory and to practice.

9.3.1   <u>Research contribution to theory</u>

The study analysed the potential role of HR in the effective implementation of SBPs in oil and gas organisations in Nigeria. The analysis was carried out drawing upon sociological studies to highlight the importance of principles such as power, authority, control and agency in the achievement of organizational goals. The literature review conducted showed that this has previously not been done, especially within the context of Nigeria.

Previous studies have had singular areas of focus such as: a) individuals and agency in organisations b) organizational culture and the potential for change c) principles within the organisation that enable or hinder goal attainment and d) the complexity of stakeholder relationships in the Nigerian oil and gas industry and its impact on sustainability initiatives implementation. This is the first study that has integrated these different theoretical perspectives in a way that enables practical recommendations.

This research study therefore enables specific HR situations to be viewed through sociological lens, identifying how HR functions could potentially support in effective SBPs implementation. It brings into focus how this can be achieved through the three fields of HR.

From the viewpoint of Human Resource Management (HRM), the study proffers ways of achieving employee engagement and improved employee efficiency to drive SBPs implementation through a change in organisational culture using employee voice and effective communication. In addition, HR's role/ function as a strategic asset to the organization with regards formulation of sustainability-based decisions and appropriate human capital coordination to achieve effective SBPs implementation is emphasised. With regards to Human Resource Development (HRD), this study outlines the importance of training and development of employee skills and capacity to drive SBPs implementation by utilising the HR business partner function to support focused learning to achieve the sustainability agenda – SBPs implementation. Lastly, in line with Organisational Development (OD), this study puts forward ways of achieving organisational transformation through driving employee engagement and monitoring and evaluation leading to culture change within the organisation. This will be led by HR at the strategic level to ensure top management involvement/ buy in to sustainability agenda and mindset.

There is no indication that there has been any empirical evidence gathered in this regard especially within the Nigerian context. This is the first study that has a direct focus on how HR can support the organisation's sustainability strategy through SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry though there have been studies with regards to sustainability in the Nigerian oil and gas sector (see chapters two and three). This research therefore addresses that gap.

The study has also identified specific factors within organisations that can enable or hinder SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry. If considered, knowledge of these can allow HR to effectively support SBPs implementation by enhancing the positive influencing factors and mitigating against factors that can hinder attainment of SBPs implementation.

9.3.2   **Research contribution to practice**

This research has helped to increase the awareness of the oil and gas professionals (the research participants) on the topic of sustainability and SBPs in particular. This was achieved through the discussions held during the course of the interviews when it was realized that explanations on what SBPs mean had to be given to enable research participants' understanding of the subject matter. Following these discussions, some respondents expressed their opinion on the crucial role of HR and called for HR to be a part of the SBPs discourse within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. This suggests that the study has created more awareness and understanding on the subject of SBPs and HR's potential role in their implementation.

The possibility of the researcher undertaking a knowledge transfer programme (KTP) following this research is currently being explored. Undertaking a KTP will further increase HR's exposure to the

sustainability/ SBPs discourse and in turn change behaviour and increase actions towards effective SBPs implementation within oil and gas organisations and organisations in general.

9.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the challenges encountered during the data collection exercise, only 12 respondents across six organisations were recruited for the first set of interviews and another six respondents across four organisations for the second set of interviews of which two of them were interviewed during the first data collection exercise. The sample scope was limited to oil and gas exploration and production organisations in Nigeria only, and this resulted in a smaller sample size which meant that more HR personnel could not be reached across a larger number of organisations. However, on completion of both data collection exercises no new themes emerged as previously highlighted in sections 5.2.3 and 5.4.1. As a result, and given the restrictions of Covid at the time research was being conducted, it was decided that sufficient data had been collected to give meaningful results.

As noted in section 5.3.4.1, it is the perception of the researcher that some participants may not have provided objective responses due to several reasons (Creswell 2009) or may have struggled with the decision to do so or not. These were observed in hesitations to respond to questions and instances where respondents provided contradictory statements/ responses. The researcher believes that the perceived reluctance of respondents has not had any negative impact on the outcome of the study. Where the respondents showed hesitation to respond or difficulty in providing a response, the researcher made use of prompts to aid conversation and reassured the respondents by reiterating the guarantee of anonymity. To address contradictory responses, questions were asked by the researcher to allow the respondents to clarify their responses.

9.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.5.1 HR Sustainability Business Partners

The researcher recommends the development of the concept of HR sustainability business partners. As discussed in section 8.4, the HR business partner function sits within each business unit in the organisation and this function provides a good opportunity for HR to provide required support to business units. This function of HR can be adapted to provide sustainability support and drive SBPs implementation by assisting each business unit to fully engage with the sustainability strategy of the organisation. These HR professionals will possess expert knowledge about sustainability matters and sit within each business unit to advice and help these units in aligning their tasks and functions to the

sustainability strategy of the organisation. In addition, these professionals can advise on the strategic sustainability direction of the organisation with regards to the human resources of the organisation as well as act as a medium of communication between management and the workforce. See section 8.6 for detailed description of the proposed role of the HR sustainability business partner.

9.6   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

During the course of this study, several areas worthy of further exploration have been identified. These are detailed below:

- It will be interesting to explore in detail, as part of an operational role, the concept of HR sustainability business partnership in oil and gas organisations. This will provide the researcher an opportunity to put into practice the conceptual model designed as part of this research. It will also provide an opportunity to gain more understanding on how HR can play a role in the effective implementation of SBPs while dealing with both internal and external factors that can hinder such a goal. Based on this, further research, through a knowledge transfer programme (KTP) in an oil and gas organization, should be conducted to demonstrate the effectiveness of the conceptual framework set out in figure 8.1 as a guide for HR support in SBPs implementation.

The interview sessions and data analysis highlighted the government and the host communities as important actors whose actions can either enable or hinder SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. Hence, research can be conducted with a wider scope to:

- Determine the government's understanding of the concept of sustainable business practices. This is because the government's understanding of SBPs will also help align the activities of relevant government agencies, legislative arms to ensure appropriate policies and regulations are developed and relevant actions are taken to guarantee effective SBPs implementation.

- Evaluate the communities' understanding of SBPs and what implementation means to them from the context of environmental, social and economic. Due to the significant impact of host communities' actions, their perspective on how they can support the organisations in SBPs implementation, if at all, should be explored.

- Study the intersection of the community, government, and organisations within the context of SBPs so that a more holistic view of the SBPs discourse in the Nigerian oil and gas industry is presented.

- Explore the relevance of the HR sustainability model to other business sectors including manufacturing industries which also operate in communities.

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APPENDIX 1

LIST OF OIL AND GAS ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE RESEARCH SCOPE

Colour codes – white oil producing

Red oil servicing

Yellow not related to oil and gas/ into chemicals but not oil

S/N	Company Name	Position of person(s) contacted
1	Amber Resources Nig. Ltd.,(ARNL)	General Manager Snr. Manager HR
2	African Oilfield Nig. Ltd., (AOSORWELL)	Deputy General Manager Human Resources Manager
3	African Drilling Company Limited	Manager HR
4	Addax Petroleum Dev.Co. Ltd.	Managing Director GM, Human Resources
5	Agip Energy & Nat. Resources	HR MGR
6	Ascot Flowlines Ltd DSV Engineering (Ascot)	Managing Director HR Manager
7	Arco Petrochemical	Head, Human Resources
8	Aveon Offshore Ltd	Managing Director
9	Atlas technical Services (chevron contract) Macronet international	Management
10	ABNL Limited	Manager HR
11	Ariosh Limited	Management
12	Beneprojecti Nig. Limited	Manager HR
13	Bell Oil and Gas Limited	Manager HR
14	BENKLINE NIG. LTD	ADMIN/HR MANAGER
15	Baklang Consultants Ltd	Manager HR
16	Brittania-U Nigeria ltd	Manager HR
17	Bureau Veritas Nigeria Ltd	Managing Director HR Manager
18	BAKER HUGHES	Managing Director HR MANAGER

19	CKS Environmental Services Waste mgt	Managing Director
20	CLEDOP West Africa Ltd	Managing Director Human Resources Manager
.21	Cameron Offshore Systems Ltd. ONESUBSEA	HRM
22	CETCO	Management Human Resources Manager
23	Chevron Nig. Ltd.	Director, Human Resources & Medical Manager, Industrial Relations Human Resources & Medical
24	CISCON	GM HR
25	CHESROC NIGERIA LIMITED	HR
26	Deepdrill Oilfield Services	Manager HR
	Delta Environmental Logistics Ltd.	
27	Deltatek Engineering Ltd	HR
28	Dover Engineering	General Manager Human Resources/NCD Coordinator
29	Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR)	Technical Asst.to director Ind. Relations Officer
30	DBN LIMITED Delattre Benzons Nig. Ltd.,	Managing Director BASE MANAGER
31	Dec Oil & Gas	Human Resources Manager
32	CENTURY ENERGY	CEO
33	Drilling Dynamics Limited (DDL)	MD Manager HR
34	Dril-Quip Nig. Ltd,	Operations Manager Base Manager
35	Emval Nigeria Limited	Base Manager /HRM
36	ELEME PETRO CHEMICAL /Indorama Nig. Ltd(EPCL)	Managing Director Manager, Human Resources
37	Euroflow Designs Limited	MD
38	EXTERRAN	HRM
39	ETERNA OIL & GAS PLC	Manager HR
40	EXPROTECH NIGERIA LTD.	Ind. & External Relations Mgr. Area Human Resources Manager
41	FREDIKOV Petroleum Services Company Ltd	
42	Frontier Oil Ltd.	Managing Director Human Resources Manager

43	Frank's Int. Oilfield Services Nigeria Limited	Admin Assist
44	World Technical service Limited. Formerly (GAC MANNING)	Operations Manager
45	Geoservices Nig. Ltd.,	General Manager Managing Director Human Resources Manager
46	Global Gas & Refining Co. Ltd.,	General Manager, Human Resources /Admin
47	G E International Operations (Nig.) Ltd	Chief Operating Officer, West Africa (Oil & Gas)
48	Globestar Engineering Company (Nig) Ltd.	Management
49	Global Petroleum Resources Limited (GPRL)	MD/CEO Admin Officer
50	Hercules Offshore Nig. Ltd.,	Managing Director Human Resources Manager
51	HYPROPS NIGERIA LTD	MANAGER HR
52	HYSON	Manager HR
53	Halliburton Energy Services Ltd	In-Country Human Resources Manager HR Generalist
54	Integrated Data Services Limited sub of NNPC	HR
55	LINKSO	HR MANAGER
56	Inspectorate Marine Services Nig. Ltd	HRM
	I.T.S Drilling Services Nig. Ltd	
57	Schneider Electric Formerly (Invesys Systems Nig. Ltd.)	Human Resources Manager
58	Joeny Integrity Nig. Ltd.	Management-
59	Kaduna Refinery & Petrochemical Co.,KRPC	MD Manager HR
60	KOP	HR Manager SERVICE MANAGER
	Kimeric Nig. Ltd.	
61	NALCO Formerly (Keedak Eng. & Keedak Nig.)	District Manager/Human Resources In-Country District Mgr Human Resource Manager
62	LAMNALCO NIGERIAN LTD.,	Managing Director Human Resources Manager
63	LES ENERGY	Management
64	M.I. Magcober Nig. Ltd (M I Swaco)	Human Resources Manager HR Compliance Mgr (NGA)
65	Mobil Oil Nig. Plc.,	Human Resources Manager

66	Mobil Producing Nig. Unlimited Chairman & Managing Director	E D Human Resources Manager Staffing & Employee-Relations
67	Mobil Producing Contract Staff	Field HRM
68	MIDEN SYSTEM LIMITED	HR
69	Marine Platform Nig. Ltd Vam Onne, Rivers State.	Chief Finance Officer
70	Nigeria *Liquefied* Natural Gas NLNG	Deputy Managing Director Head Industrial relations Manager, Employee Relations,
71	Nig. Agip Oil Company Ltd. NAOC	General Manager Human Resources Ag Human Resources Divisional Manager
72	NAOC Contract	General Manager Human Resources
73	NNRA	Assist. Director HR
	NAOC Services Contract	
74	Nigeria Petroleum Development Comp. Ltd. (NPDC)	Human Resources Manager
75	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, (NNPC Corporate Headquarters)	HRM Manager, Employee Relation
76	NNPC RETAIL LIMITED	Executive Director Service
77	National Petroleum Investment & Management, Services Petroleum Industry Management & Consultancy Services (NAPIMS)	GGM NAPIMS
78	Nigerian Gas Company Limited (NGC) sub of NNPC	MD Manage, HR
	NOTORE Chemical Industrial Ltd	
79	NETCODIETSMANN Nig Ltd.	Human Resources Manager & Industrial Relations Manager
80	NETCO	Executive Director Manager, HR
81	NETCO Direct Hire	M.D
82	NECONDE ENERGY LIMITED	HR Manager
83	Nigeria Agip EXPLORATION (NAE) (AGIP EXPLORATION)	General Manager (NAE)
84	Noble Drilling Nig. Ltd.,	Human Resources Manager
85	NIGERIAN CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & MONITORING BOARD. NCDMB	Executive Director Gen. Manager, Human Resources
86	NEWCROSS E&P	HR

87	NEWCROSS PETROLEUM	Management
88	NIPCO PLC	Managing Director Human Resources Manager (HRM)
89	GCA ORION ENGINEERING	HR
90	OBAX WORLDWIDE LIMITED	GM HRM
91	OANDO Plc	The Chief Human Resources Officer
92	Orieman Nig. Ltd.	
93	OANDO Marketing(OVH ENERGY)	GM Corporate Services Oando Marketing Ltd.
94	OIL DATA	Management HR
95	Oil Offshore Combination ltd	Director/Legal
96	Petroleum Technology Dev. Fund (PTDF)	Executive Secretary Head Human Resources
97	Petroleum Training Institute (PTI)	Ag. Principal/Chief Executive
98	Petroleum Training Institute (PTI) Contract	
99	PPI	Management
100	PEF (MGT) Board	Executive Secretary Head (Human Resources)
101	Pan Ocean Oil Corporation	MD/Chairman LEAD IR/HR ADVISOR
102	Petroleum Product Pricing Regulatory Agency	Executive Secretary
103	PACIFIC	MD HR MANAGER
104	PLANTGERIA	HR
105	Pipe line & Product Marketing Co.Ltd (PPMC)	Manager, Human Resources Manager HR & Admin
106	Port Harcourt Refining Co,. P H R C	Executive Director (Services) Manager Human Resources
107	PIPE COATERS Nigeria Limited	Human Resources Manager Africa
108	Profield Nig. Limited	HR/Admin/Personnel Manager
109	Paradigm Geophysical (Nig.) Ltd	Managing Director
	Pivot GIS	Management
110	Q&Q Control Services Ltd	
111	SAPETRO (South Atlantic Petroleum Ltd.)	Executive Chairman

		HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMIN
112	Sinopec	MD
		HRM
113	Schlumberger Nig Ltd	Industrial Relations Advisor
		Industrial Relations Manager
114	Statoil	Human Resources Manager
115	Solar Turbines Services Nig. Ltd	Managing Director
117	Specialty Drilling Fluids (SDF)	MD/CEO, SDF
118	SIRAMEX Nig. Ltd.	Human Resources
119	Sudelletra Maintenance	Admin Manager
120	Seawolf Oilfield Services Nig. LTD/OFFSHORE MGT SERVICES	Receiver / Manager
121	SHELF DRILLING LTD	Human Resources Manager
122	Shell Pet. Dev. Co of Nig. Ltd,	I R Manager
123	SEVEN EXPLORATION &PRODUCTION NIG. LTD	HR
124	SERVETICO	Project Manager
125	SEADRILL MOBIL E UNITS (NIGERIA) LTD.	Human Resources Mgr
		HR Advisor
126	Sterling Services Companies-	HR Manager-
127	Sterling Global Resources & Energy Production Company Ltd	Managing Director
		Human Resources Manager
128	Tenaris Global Services Nig. Ltd.	Labour Relations Manager ;
129	Tecon Oil Services Nig. Ltd	MANAGING DIRECTOR
		Group Human Resources Manager
130	TOTAL E&P Nigeria Limited (TEPNG)	ED, Human Resources and Corporate Affairs
131	Total E&P Nigeria Contract	Chairman (Forum)
132	Total Nig. Plc	General Manager (HR/COOPERATE SEVICEA/COY SEC.)
133	Total E & P (Maintenance) Rivbeach/Ahiahu	HR
134	Universal Energy Resources Limited	MD
		Head, Human Resources
135	PRESSURE CONTROL SYSTEM NIG. LTD. (Vetco Aibel Nig. Ltd)	The Human Relations Manager
136	Veloci Suprintentend Nig Ltd.	Country Manager

137	Wopat Int. Limited	Admin Manager
138	Weatherford Nig. Ltd	Human Resources Manager
139	Warri Refinery & Petrochemical Company (WRPC)	MANAGEMENT-
140	World Technical Service(WTS)Former (GAC Maning)	MANAGEMENT
141	West Africa Offshore Ltd,	Human Resources Manager
142	Weafri Well Services Nig. Ltd.	MANAGER HR
143	WAGPCO West African Gas Pipeline Company Ltd.	Managing Director

APPENDIX 2

INITIAL EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A PILOT SURVEY

Dear Sir/ Ma,

Compliments of the season and I hope this mail meets you well.

My name is Jane Richard-Osu and I got your contact details from Pengassan. I am a PhD research student at Robert Gordon University Aberdeen UK and currently conducting a research to critically evaluate the role of Human Resources (HR) in the transition towards Sustainable Business Practices (SBPs) in the oil and gas industry. ***SBPs are defined as an organisation's efforts to manage the effects of its business and operational activities on the environment and by extension the societies therein***.
As part of the research, I am conducting a pilot survey of HR personnel associated with the oil and gas industry to gain an understanding of the general knowledge and perception of SBPs and how HR professionals can help in their implementation. The survey will be in form of a web-based questionnaire and will only take up **10mins** of your time.
I would you be grateful if you can participate in this survey as one of the key stakeholders in the industry.

I look forward to a favourable response.

Kind regards,

Jane

Oluchukwu Jane Richard-Osu
Doctoral Researcher
School of Applied Social Studies
Robert Gordon University
Aberdeen
AB10 7QG

Email: j.richard-osu@rgu.ac.uk

APPENDIX 3

INIVITATION EMAIL TO PARTICIPATE IN WEB BASED PILOT SURVEY, COVER NOTE AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Sir/ Ma,

I am a PhD research student at Robert Gordon University Aberdeen and currently conducting a project to critically evaluate the role of Human Resources (HR) in the transition towards sustainable business practices (SBPs) in the oil and gas industry. *SBPs are an organisation's efforts to manage its effect on the ecosystem and its whole business network*. Therefore, the aim of the research is to evaluate the prospects for HR's role towards facilitating SBPs implementation. This would be done by identifying critical success factors that can be applied and embedded in organisations by HR.

As part of the research, I am conducting this pilot survey of HR personnel associated with the oil and gas industry to gain an understanding of the general knowledge and perception of SBPs and how HR professionals can help in their implementation.

The statements in the questionnaire will allow you to express your opinion related to SBPs in both your organisation and the country in which you work. I hope you would be willing to give me 10 minutes of your time to contribute your opinions by completing the questionnaire. I would be very grateful if you would complete and submit it on or before the **15th of February**.

If you participate in the survey and would like a copy of the summary findings, please email me and I would be happy to send it to you.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

Jane Richard-Osu

COVER NOTE

Dear Sir/ Madam,

The aim of the research is to evaluate the prospects for HR's contribution towards SBPs implementation - **SBPs are an organisation's efforts to manage its effect on the ecosystem and its whole business network**.

The survey should take around 10 minutes to complete. I would appreciate it if you can answer all questions and provide as complete an answer as possible. Your opinion is of great value to the research. The online survey is being conducted through the JISC Online Survey tool, which is fully compliant with all UK data protection laws.

Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time (before submission) without giving a reason. The questionnaire is completely anonymous, and the data submitted via this tool is non-attributable to a respondent. In addition, all responses would be treated in strict confidence. Any personal data will be subject to the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and Data Protection Act 1998 and will be stored securely. Data collected may be processed manually or with the aid of computer software. Only individuals involved in the research would have access to the data which can be held for up to 10 years after publication of results.

Completion and submission of this survey will be taken as consent to the above.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours Faithfully,

Jane Richard-Osu

School of Applied Social Studies

Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen AB10 7QG

<h1 style="text-align:center">PILOT SURVEY QUESTIONS</h1>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Job title...……………………………………………………………………………………….

Number of years in current role...

Number of years in the oil and gas industry..………………………………………………….

Work location: Nigeria   UK

SECTION ONE

Please tick the option that best describes your knowledge on SBPs

SBPs are an organisation's efforts to manage its effect on the ecosystem and its whole business network.

1. Based on the definition given above, I have heard of SBPs

    Agree Disagree

2. How would you describe your level of knowledge on SBPs and their implementation?

    Very knowledgeable, Knowledgeable, Fairly knowledgeable, Limited knowledge, No knowledge

3. SBPs and their implementation are important to me

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

SECTION TWO

Please select an option that reflects your opinion on Sustainable Business Practices (SBPs) within the oil and gas industry in the country in which you work

4. SBPs are implemented within the oil and gas industry in the country in which I work

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

5. The impact of the oil and gas industry on the environment in the country in which I work is

    Very positive, Fairly positive, Fairly negative, Very negative

6. The impact of the oil and gas industry on the economy in the country in which I work is

    Very positive, Fairly positive, Fairly negative, Very negative

7. The impact of the oil and gas industry on the societies in which they operate in the country in which I work is

    Very positive, Fairly positive, Fairly negative, Very negative

SECTION THREE

Please select an option that reflects your view on what Sustainable Business Practices (SBPs) implementation should involve

8. Sustainability initiatives should be effectively embedded within an organisation's strategy and operations

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

9. Leadership support is important in the development and implementation of SBPs in an organisation

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

10. There should be effective leadership support with regards to implementation of SBPs in oil and gas organisations

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

11. There should be a good understanding of the concepts of sustainability and SBPs among oil and gas personnel

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

SECTION FOUR

Please select an option that indicates the current practices with regards to sustainability and Sustainable Business Practices (SBPs) in your organisation

12. SBPs are currently being implemented in my organisation

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

13. Sustainability initiatives are effectively embedded within my organisation's strategy and operations

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

14. Leadership support is important in the development and implementation of SBPs in my organisation

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

15. There is effective leadership support with regards to implementation of SBPs in the oil and gas industry in the organisation in which I work

    Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

SECTION FIVE

Please select an option that indicates your view on the role of HR in the implementation of Sustainable Business Practices (SBPs)

16. HR is involved in the general strategic planning within my organisation

   Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

17. HR plays a role in the implementation of SBPs in my organisation

   Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

18. HR is currently involved in the implementation of SBPs in my organisation

   Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

19. There is more potential for HR to be involved in the implementation of SBPs in my organisation

   Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

20. My organisation recruits personnel aligned to its sustainability agenda to help it achieve its sustainability goal

   Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

21. Employee engagement is seen within my organisation as an important factor in achieving SBPs

   Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

Please add any comment with regards to the HR professional's role in the implementation of SBPs and perceived challenges for HR departments you feel are important but not covered in the questionnaire.

If you would like to participate in an interview, please contact me by email j.richard-osu@rgu.ac.uk, by phone on 07553692853 or my supervisor Dr Sarah Buckler by email e.s.buckler@rgu.ac.uk

The aim of the research is to evaluate the prospect for HR's role towards facilitating SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry. This would be done by identifying certain critical success factors that can be applied and embedded in organisations by HR. However, for these critical success factors to be effective, HR personnel must have an understanding of SBPs, including their role in facilitating their implementation. Hence the aim of this survey is to gain an understanding of the level of knowledge of HR personnel on SBPs and their implementation.

For any query with regards to the questionnaire or if you have participated in the survey and would like a copy of the summary findings, please email me at j.richard-osu@rgu.ac.uk and I would be happy to send it to you.

Also, if you will be willing to help in the interview stage of my research, please contact me by email j.richard-osu@rgu.ac.uk, by phone on 07553692853 or my supervisor Dr Sarah Buckler by email e.s.buckler@rgu.ac.uk

THANK YOU

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant Information Sheet Template

Ensure that your information sheet and consent form are accessible to participants—this is particularly important if participants may have limited literacy, in which case you should use short words and sentences, write in the active voice, and avoid technical terms.

Also ensure that you amend wording if your information sheet, consent form and debrief are directed at parents or guardians of child participants

Study title: A critical evaluation of the role of HR in the transition towards sustainable business practices in the oil and gas industry

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research that aims to critically evaluate the role of HR in supporting the transition to sustainable business practices (SBPs) within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria. This is a postgraduate research towards a PhD degree. It is important you understand the context of the research before deciding if you will like to participate or not. Please read the following information carefully.

Purpose of the study

The study aims to understand HR's current involvement and their potential role in supporting oil and gas organisations in Nigeria in the transition towards sustainable business practices (SBPs). This is due to the increased awareness of climate change along with the broader context of sustainable development goals and corporate social responsibility.

This research seeks to critically evaluate the role of HR in supporting businesses within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria move their business practices/ processes to more sustainable practices. It seeks to determine to what extent HR is currently involved in the formulation and the implementation of sustainable business practices (SBPs), if they are aware of the ways they can assist businesses in this area and what possible challenges are they facing within the organisations.

What's involved?

Your participation in this research will be in the form of a semi-structured interview. It is anticipated that this will last for no more than an hour (60mins). There will be a set of questions which you will be required to answer, and these are aimed at guiding the discussion during the interview to ensure the aim of the research is achieved. The interview will be audio recorded except you express your objection to this to the researcher in which case only handwritten notes will be taken. If preferred, your organisation will not be made aware of your participation in the study. In that case, a convenient venue, such as a meeting area in an educational centre, will be chosen for the purpose of the interview.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this research as you have been identified as a HR/ sustainability/ CSR professional within the oil and gas industry with experience/ knowledge on sustainability issues and practices within the industry.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. Information contained in this participant information sheet (PIS) is intended to enable you decide whether to take part in the research or not. Following your acceptance, you will be asked to complete, sign and date a consent form prior to the start of the interview.

What if I want to withdraw from the study?

You have the right to refuse to answer any or all the questions that will be asked during the interview. You can withdraw your participation from the research at any time without reason and repercussion. However, if you do participate in the research, you have seven days after your interview to withdraw (if you wish). After this time, you will be unable to withdraw as data analysis will be underway. If you do withdraw, all data about you will be destroyed.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks to taking part?
There are no possible disadvantages anticipated as a result of your participation in this research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
While it is unlikely that individual respondents will benefit personally from this research, the data collected will assist in proffering recommendations that will help HR support in the transition of oil and gas companies to sustainable business practices. Consequently, this will lead to more positive environmental, social and economic impacts of the oil and gas companies. It will also help in furthering research and have a wider impact through the adaptation of recommendations to other oil producing developing countries.

How will my information be kept confidential?
Full data sets will be available to only the researcher and the research supervisory team. Consent form (hard copy) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet allocated to the researcher in the research hub. Soft copy of electronically signed consent form (if applicable), audio recordings and transcribed data will be stored in a secure folder on the university server. This folder will be accessible on the researcher's personal laptop which is password protected. The copy of recordings on the audio recorder will be deleted as soon as these have been transferred to the university server. Also, audio files will be deleted as soon as they have been fully transcribed.

Anonymity will be ensured by withholding your name from all data generated. Names will be swapped for participant number or code. When extracts are taken from interview transcripts, no names will be added to quotes. In addition, names of organisations will not be identified in the thesis, any written academic work or extracts.

Data collected from this research will be stored for at least a year following the successful completion of the PhD and then deleted from the university's server.

What will happen to the results of this study?

Data collected during this research will form part of the thesis for the award of a PhD. Data collected may also be used to write executive summaries and publications in related subject areas in the future. However, no participant will be identified in the publications and no reference will be made to anyone in person or the company they represent.

A summary of the research findings can be made available to respondents upon request.

What happens next if I do decide to take part?

If you do decide to take part in this research, please contact the researcher (details given below) to arrange for an interview date and time.

Who has reviewed this study?

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Robert Gordon University Graduate School.

Further information and contact details

For response to questions or further information, please contact:
Oluchukwu Jane Richard-Osu
Doctoral Researcher School of Applied Social Studies
Robert Gordon University Aberdeen
AB10 7QG
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CONSENT FORM (Participant copy / Researcher copy)

Title of Project: A critical evaluation of the role of HR in the transition towards sustainable business practices in the oil and gas industry

Name of Researcher: Oluchukwu Jane Richard-Osu

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without any repercussions. I understand however that I will not be able to withdraw my data seven days after the interview as data analysis will be underway. ☐

3. I understand that the information collected about me will be used for a research project and may be further disseminated. In all cases, my data will be stored securely and anonymously. ☐

4. I understand that the interview will be audio recorded, and that the recording will be deleted once a written transcript has been produced. ☐

5. I understand that all my data will be treated confidentially. ☐

6. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of Person   Date   Signature

taking consent

DEBRIEF FORM

Title of Project: A critical evaluation of the role of HR in the transition towards sustainable business practices in the oil and gas industry

Name of Researcher: Oluchukwu Jane Richard-Osu

Thank you for taking part in this research.

The study aims to understand HR's current involvement and their potential role in supporting oil and gas organisations in Nigeria in the transition towards sustainable business practices (SBPs). This is due to the increased awareness of climate change along with the broader context of sustainable development goals and corporate social responsibility.

This research seeks to critically evaluate the role of HR in supporting businesses within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria move their business practices/ processes to more sustainable practices. It seeks to determine to what extent HR is currently involved in the formulation and the implementation of sustainable business practices (SBPs), if they are aware of the ways they can assist businesses in this area and what possible challenges are they facing within the organisations. Therefore, the following questions will be answered by the research: 1. What SBPs are currently being implemented by business entities with emphasis in the oil and gas industry? 2. Are HR personnel currently involved in SBPs implementation? 3. What roles do HR play, if any, in practice, in the context of facilitating the transition towards SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry?

The interview will be audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed unless you object to this. In that instance, the researcher will take notes during the interview.

Full data sets will be available to only the researcher and the research supervisory team. Consent form (hard copy) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet allocated to the researcher in the research hub. Soft copy of electronically signed consent form (if applicable), audio recordings and transcribed data will be stored in a secure folder on the university server. This folder will be accessible on the researcher's personal laptop which is password protected. The copy of recordings on the audio recorder will be deleted as soon as these have been transferred to the university server. Also, audio files will be deleted as soon as they have been fully transcribed.

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You have the right to refuse to answer any or all the questions that will be asked during the interview. You can withdraw your participation from the research at any time without reason and repercussion. However, if you do participate in the research, you have seven days after your interview to withdraw

(if you wish). After this time, you will be unable to withdraw as data analysis will be underway after this timeline. If you do withdraw, all data about you will be destroyed.

Data collected during this research will form part of the thesis for the award of a PhD. Data collected may also be used to write executive summaries and publications in related subject areas in the future. However, no participant will be identified in the publications and no reference will be made to anyone in person or the company they represent. A summary of the research findings can be made available to respondents upon request.

For response to questions or further information, please contact:
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<h1 style="text-align:center">INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</h1>

What is your job title?

How long have you worked here and within your current role? Have you always been within this professional field? Have you always worked in the oil and gas industry?

ROLE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

1. Can you tell me about the organisational structure within your company?
2. How does HR fit into this structure described?
3. Describe your role within the organisation – what does your role entail?
   - What is your role in driving sustainability within the organisation?

UNDERSTANDING OF SUSTAINABILITY/ SBPs

4. What do you understand by sustainable business practices (SBPs)?
   - What comes to mind when you hear the word sustainable practices?
   - What practices within the oil and gas industry would you consider to be sustainable?

NIGERIA

5. What do you think sustainability means in Nigeria?
   - How do you think people view sustainability in Nigeria?
6. What SBPs are practiced within the oil and gas industry in Nigeria?
   - What sustainability practices have been set as a standard that must be adhered to by all oil and gas producing companies in Nigeria?
7. What, in your opinion, are some of the factors within the Nigerian context that enhance SBPs implementation?
8. What are the obstacles being faced as an industry in SBPs implementation?
   - Give some examples of how these obstacles have been evident

SBPs IMPLEMENTATION, CHALLENGES AND HR INVOLVEMENT

9. As an establishment operating within Nigeria, what SBPs are being practiced by your organisation?
   - What are the benefits experienced due to implementation of these practices?
10. What challenges are experienced by your organisation in the pursuit of implementation of SBPs?
    - What are the reasons for these challenges?

- Can you give some examples of these?

11. In your opinion, how can HR support in dealing with these challenges discussed?
   - What are the factors which can enable HR inclusivity in the sustainability discourse within your organisation?

HR

12. With regards to SBP implementation, can you describe what HR's current role in your organisation are? What tasks are performed which are specifically aimed at sustainability?
   - Are there specific HR sustainability initiatives set out in your organisation?
   - How can HR be involved in SBPs implementation?
   - How can increased HR involvement in SBPs implementation be achieved?
13. How does HR work with other relevant departments in the drive to achieve sustainability?

SUSTAINABILITY PERSONNEL

14. Can you tell me more about the specific tasks carried out by your team to drive SBPs implementation?
15. How does your department work with other departments/ personnel to ensure the sustainability goal is achieved?
   - Can you give examples of how tasks are shared between relevant departments?
16. How does your department work with HR in the drive towards SBPs implementation within your organisation?

AUTHORITY AND POWER

17. From the organisational management perspective, how involved is HR in strategy planning and implementation in your organisation?
   - How involved is HR in the strategic planning of sustainability within the organisation?
18. What authority does HR have to drive sustainable business practices implementation and ensure compliance within your organisation?
   - Do you have the required authority within your role to drive sustainability business practices within your organisation?
   - Does the management structure within the organisation enable HR to support SBPs implementation?

19. What are the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place within your organisation to help ensure that SBPs are implemented?

- What are the processes involved in these?
- What role(s) does HR play within these processes?

IDENTITY – BEHAVIOURS AND INTERESTS

20. What is your motivation for being within your role?
21. How important is the issue of sustainability to you?
22. Why do you think you as an individual can help drive SBPs implementation within your organisation?
23. How can employees' behaviours and interests be used to support/ drive SBPs implementation?

- How does the organisation encourage employees to 'bring themselves' to work to help drive sustainability?

24. Are there other people who care about these issues in the organisation?
    o How do you 'find' each other?

APPENDIX 5

PARTICIPANTS BIO, DATE AND MODE OF INTERVIEW

FIRST DATA COLLECTION EXERCISE

PARTICIPANT CODE	GENDER	ETHNICITY	ORG NAME	IOC OR NOC	POSITION/ ROLE	MEDIUM	DATE OF INTERVIEW
SBP001	MALE	YORUBA	COMPANY A	IOC	SUSTAINABILITY MGR	TELEPHONE	NOV 2019
HR002	MALE	YORUBA	COMPANY B	NOC	HR PERSONNEL	FACE-FACE	NOV 2019
SBP003	MALE	IBO	COMPANY B	NOC	SUSTAINABILITY MGR	FACE-FACE	NOV 2019
SBP004	MALE	YORUBA	COMPANY C	IOC	GM ENERGIES	FACE-FACE	NOV 2019
HR005	FEMALE	YORUBA	COMPANY D	IOC	HR MANAGER	FACE-FACE	NOV 2019
HR006	MALE	NIGER DELTA	COMPANY C	IOC	HR MANAGER	FACE-FACE	NOV 2019
HR007	MALE	SOUTH SOUTH	COMPANY C	IOC	HR MANAGER	FACE-FACE	NOV 2019
SBP008	MALE	YORUBA	COMPANY E	NOC	HSE MANAGER	TELEPHONE	DEC 2019
SBP009	MALE	IBO	COMPANY F	NOC	SUSTAINABILITY MGR	TELEPHONE	DEC 2019
HR010	FEMALE	IBO	COMPANY F	NOC	HR MANAGER	TELEPHONE	JAN 2020

HR011	MALE	IBO	COMPANY G	IOC	HR MANAGER	TELEPHONE	JAN 2020
SBP012	FEMALE	YORUBA	COMPANY H	IOC	SUSTAINABILITY MGR	TELEPHONE	JAN 2020

Table 8: 5.3: Respondents and corresponding organisation and positions. Author generated

SECOND DATA COLLECTION EXERCISE

PARTICIPANT CODE	GENDER	ETHNICITY	ORG NAME	IOC OR NOC	POSITION/ ROLE	MEDIUM	DATE OF INTERVIEW
HR013	MALE	IBO	COMPANY A	IOC	HR MANAGER	TELEPHONE	JAN 2022
HR014	MALE	NIGER DELTA	COMPANY C	IOC	HR MANAGER	TELEPHONE	JAN 2022
HR015	MALE	IBO	COMPANY G	IOC	HR MANAGER	TELEPHONE	JAN 2022
SBP016	MALE	BRITISH	COMPANY I	NGO	NGO VOLUNTEER	TELEPHONE	JAN 2022
HR017	MALE	YORUBA	COMPANY J	NOC	HR PERSONNEL	TELEPHONE	JAN 2022
HR018	MALE	YORUBA	COMPANY J	NOC	HR MANAGER	TELEPHONE	JAN 2022

Table 9: 5.4: Research participants for the second level data collection. Author generated

APPENDIX 6

EXTRACTS FROM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS AND INTERVIEWER'S INTERPRETATIONS (FIRST DATA COLLECTION)

Table 6.1

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR007	"again, it is contextual the issue of sustainability. Even the eerrmm… it will mean different things to different people."	The understanding of the issue of sustainability is seen to be subjective i.e., individual perspectives of SBPs differ.
2.	SBP003	"Well… first of all, to me it connotes ethical business practices eerrrm it equally suggests practices that would support businesses thriving and as well as in ensuring that the environment is left in a way that future generations will continue to benefit from the resources therein."	The organisation appears to be engaging in sustainable and ethical business practices in order to ensure the environment and resources are preserved for future generations.
3.	HR002	"So there are 2 levels of it. If you ask me, the first thing that comes to my mind is business continuity. Essentially talking about that how to ensure that your documents are safe, how to ensure that knowledge is passed from one generation to another et cetera."	SBPs viewed as a way of ensuring business sustainability and continuity through processes and practices within the organisation.
4.	HR005	"What comes to my mind when they talk about sustainable business practices is something like controls, having proper internal controls within your company..."	Here, SBPs are perceived as practices that create controls within the organisation. These controls then ensure that necessary actions are taken, or relevant activities engaged in within the organisation to achieve set organisational goals.
5.	HR006	"business practice that outlives the business. So business practice that ensures that your stakeholders trust you. That it helps your brand because you are synonymous with eerrmm the best way to work in every situation both ethically and morally and eerrrmmm imbibing the best standards actually that help you have a sound, all round capacity to do your business in a safe and orderly way both with your people, environment, government, unions and regulatory bodies generally."	The respondent sees SBPs as practices that help build the brand of the business resulting in business longevity. Also mentioned is licence to operate. These are both benefits of SBPs implementation. Many pauses could indicate respondent is struggling to give responses which would be deemed as appropriate by the interviewer.
6.	SBP008	"a practice that is widely acceptable right now and you don't want to compromise the future generations ."	Sustainable business practices viewed as ethical practices that help protect the environment for future generations.
7.	SBP009	"What I understand that to be, when you say sustainable business practices it depends on your own interpretation of it… we work with the regulatory bodies to ensure that what we do is not contravening the acceptable	Subjective interpretation of SBPs. Implementing sustainable business practices is believed to be used to ensure conformity and good outcome for all

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	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
		standards and what we also do is in conformity to acceptable global standards. So, it is not just about us, it is about every interested party."	stakeholders – organisation, host communities and the government.

Table 50:6.1: Research participants' view of sustainability/ SBPs

Table 6.2

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	SBP003	"you can only get involved in what you are interested in. if you are not passionate about an issue, the chances are that you won't give in your best."	Belief that relevant actions or activities with regards to a particular issue can only occur if there is interest and passion towards said issue.
2.	HR002	"Well awareness is still an issue." "We don't have a competent resource system. We outsource it."	Though interest is needed to generate relevant actions or activities, awareness is needed on the subject matter to generate interest. However, in Nigeria, there appears to be inadequate awareness on sustainability and sustainable business practices which is a problem.
3.	HR006	"interest will create awareness…" "with awareness, more and more people are beginning to think about the issue of sustainability." "I think one of the things we do is continuous education. So… awareness of staff."	Following on from the previous comment, to generate the required interest needed to create necessary actions towards sustainability, continuous education in the subject matter is key.
4.	HR011	"we need to have a very strong educational campaign about the impact of some of these things and generally about sustainable behaviours and sustainable business operations." "If you can have a way of getting everybody to be aware, that will help people to better connect to some of these initiatives and of course at the individual levels and the company levels."	Awareness creates engagement in the sustainability discourse leading to development of relevant behaviours and desired actions.
5.	SBP003	"… eeermm care or caution will be laid in place to ensure that the right practices are cultivated, and it becomes a culture too. There has to be a culture, it is not a one-off practice".	Respondent's opinion that continuous engagement in sustainable practices leads to the creation of sustainability culture.

Table 11: 6.2: Research participants' view on sustainability awareness and interests

Table 6.3

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR005	"We have PPMC and PPPRA and some other regulatory bodies and I know that everybody operating within the oil and gas industry must abide by the all the rules and regulations."	Regulatory bodies set up by the government to regulate the activities and practices of oil and gas organisations.

2.	HR002	"they are many regulatory bodies in Nigeria who monitor how people like us in the extractive industry treat the environment." "Nigeria is not in want of regulations." "… do people circumvent those practices or those laws? Maybe, maybe not." "a regulatory body in Lagos state. They were not going to take it lightly. They wanted things done the way it is in the books. But constraints begin to emerge and then they relaxed."	Numerous regulations in Nigeria however effective implementation remains a problem. Different factors prevent effective SBPs implementation though there appears to be reluctance in discussing what these are.
3.	SBP001	"but in this African where money can change hands and the rules can change."	Corruption hindering SBPs implementation.
4.	HR011	"What I would say is that my organisation and most of the other IOCs operating in the country have a number of regulatory obligations…" "there's been a whole lot of agreements and frameworks that are being put in place to eliminate gas flaring. Some of them requires a number of commitments on the part of the different stakeholders…" "So, some of the communities obviously they haven't worked according to plan so you still have gas here and there…"	Blame of lack of SBPs implementation laid on other actors within the industry for example, the host communities. Conscious commitment required to ensure achievement of SBPs implementation.
5.	HR011	"Although some of these companies have some kind of agreement with the communities, sometimes the communities could just come up and go on strike, prevent them from carrying out the operations and sometimes accuse them of all sorts of things" "In Nigeria for example, spillage is a complex issue. In most other places in the world, spillage happens maybe due to accident or maybe poor maintenance culture or something like that but in Nigeria you have to add the sabotage to most spillages that happen in Nigeria. They happen because somebody went and tampered with some of the infrastructure."	Again, blame laid on host communities for lack of SBPs implementation. 'Nigerian factor' stated as a challenge to sustainability. This is with regards to factors such as poor governance, poor maintenance culture of oil and gas infrastructure as well as conflicts between the oil and gas organisations and host communities resulting in sabotage and oil spillages.
6.	SBP003	"there are usually occasional sabotages even from the host communities probably for reasons... either to attract attention, to make some claims and possibly to attract resources to themselves."	Sabotages of oil pipes and infrastructure due to several factors. Important to address these to prevent further sabotages.
7.	HR006	"I know outside when pipelines are vandalised because we have issues of vandalization."	Host communities as challenges to SBPs implementation.
8.	HR006	"They (communities) give you a license to operate. Company image, friendliness with your stakeholders and of course because we are there, we are being socially responsible to do business there…" "If there are issues… if we have issues with our stakeholders because we are not having sound business practices, economically it will hurt us…"	Communities as important actors within the industry. Importance of all actors within the oil and gas industry working together to achieve sustainability within the industry. Again, this contradicts initial statements of vandalism as a challenge to the organisation (no 7). Theory vs practice/ reality?

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
9.	SBP008	"Because once you know what you are supposed to do, and you keep friendship across the other side with the government agency what you need to do they will tell you"	Friendship is an interesting choice of word while referring to the relationship with government agencies. Respondent highlights the importance of a cordial relationship with the government. Suggests that situations would be more difficult without a cordial relationship with governmental agencies. Friendship would allow laws to be bypassed?
10.	HR002	"But constraints begin to emerge and then they relaxed but it doesn't necessarily mean that when they soft pedalled it doesn't necessarily mean that they don't still believe in what they are trying to enforce. It doesn't necessarily mean that they budged to corrupt. It is just intravenous variables that comes and they just suspend the action et cetera".	Process is not followed through due to external factors. It can then be argued that the avoidance or management of negative impacts environment and communities which is the aim of creating these regulations cannot be achieved.
11.	SBP003	"Quickly report, involve all parties and let everybody do what they should. Identify all the agencies responsible, everybody come onboard, ensure that you have adequate resources to address such issues whenever it happens, at any point in time quickly".	Various actors involved in the sustainability discourse. Indication that there is a good communication system (or there should be) and all parties are aware of what actions should be carried out.

Table 12: 6.3: Oil and gas industry dynamics

Table 6.4

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	SBP001	"which is much more improved under this new government, under the new political clime is much better so your JV is dependent on who is in power at the centre."	The government and politics as factors that influence the implementation of SBPs.
2.	HR011	"… government is aware but then again do we have any clear action plan or ongoing activities to support such sustainability? I would say No…" "There is no bigger framework guiding companies…"	Lack of government plan or action on a national level. No plans on an individual or organisational level.
3.	SBP001	"…if the govt makes the law on one side and they are also the senior partner in the JV, they are also breaking it on one side, it is counterproductive."	The government portrayed as an obstacle to achieving sustainability by not enforcing or obeying set sustainability rules.
4.	HR011	"there are a lot of challenges in Nigeria…" "I think to start with, the government will always need to take the lead on these activities for obvious reasons the government has the power to put certain things in place…" "companies need to really support the government and you know get on with some	Nigerian context as a challenge. The need for the Nigerian government to drive SBPs implementation both in the country as a whole as well as in the oil and gas industry. Different actors need to work together to achieve sustainability.

		of the initiatives that could help to promote sustainable living and business operations."	
5.	HR005	"the issue of sustainability is perceived as a reality and I believe at least from this present government that it is one of their major goals that this country."	Sustainability would only be driven by the government if it is on their agenda.
6.	HR002	"it is definitely a programme of the federal government of Nigeria to ensure that the environment is protected."	Confidence that the Nigerian government is committed to environmental protection.
7.	SBP001	"So for you to stop flaring, you need to put in some things in place to turn the gas that would have been wasted into creative use but the government has not been able to fund the joint venture (JV) to do that".	Lack of funding from the Nigerian government to support SBPs implementation.
8.	HR011	"I think the ministries (inaudible) and all those things they need to be up and doing and take up their responsibilities because we already have ministries responsible for environmental protection and everything. it is either they haven't been given enough support or they haven't been resourced enough to do what they ought to do".	Response highlights the inefficiency of the ministries set up to drive sustainability in the country.
9.	SBP009	"Yes, so much. So much. And the DPR of NNPC they enforce it… they will not give you clearance to commence until they are satisfied and they come often to check your level of compliance as you progress."	Again, reference to many regulations within the industry and also monitoring of oil and gas activities by government regulatory bodies.
10.	SBP001	"Nevertheless, two years ago there was a project initiated by the federal government… the government gave all the oil companies including Shell, Chevron a timeline to close out the flare. Don't forget there is funding constraint. Of course, many of the oil companies could not close out all the flare but they closed out as many as they could through gas gathering projects".	Reference to the role the Federal Government through different agencies and projects initiated
11.	HR010	"There is a lot of potential we are bugged down by the same things that we have been bugged down with in the longest of time. You have… The asset has the potential to do so much more but because of the type of government that we have and the practices, the policies and the agreements and all of the things that they get into, you're unable to drive the people to do what they are supposed to do because there is an agenda and the agenda is personal interest. So there is personal interest every step of the way".	The role of the government as well as the issue of corruption highlighted by this respondent and this issue hinders SBPs implementation within the oil and gas industry.

Table 13: 6.4: Nigerian government as a player within the oil and gas industry

Table 6.5

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR002	"What is the size of Nigerian economy? Nigeria is a poor country." "If you ask my friend Mr X, I'm sure he can speak competently on what we can do but the environment, social cultural economic political environment is just not right."	Poverty in the country affects acceptance of sustainability initiatives. Lack of enabling environment to foster SBPs implementation.
2.	SBP003	"there are a lot of challenges in Africa, in Nigeria, in our host communities, failure of governance and the rest of it. Yes, deep rooted poverty, underdevelopment, dearth of infrastructure…"	Numerous factors in Nigeria that hinder the achievement of sustainability. For example, poverty and poor governance.
3.	HR011	"So in terms of Nigeria, the awareness is there but I just have to be honest with you, due to the issues in the country… people are concerned mostly on how to survive on a daily basis rather than on how they can plan for the planet to be better for the future generation." "I will say that the awareness is very low and there is zero activity in my opinion."	Though the awareness of sustainability is there, there is no corresponding action due to previously mentioned factors in Nigeria.
4.	SBP008	Everything I am talking about is in the law by regulation, by DPR. So, on paper, every company has this and you must submit it and DPR must vet it but if it happens, do we go through all these route?	Everything here refers to the oil spill management process. This response the fact that oil and gas organisations cannot operate without agreeing to these stipulations. Rhetorical question as respondent has previously stated that oil and gas organisations do not abide by these regulations.

Table 14: 6.5: The Nigerian context in the SBPs discourse

Table 6.6

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR002	"And then the western world must provide leadership because they decimate the environment. They do, they decimate the environment more..." "so there is a temptation for people who are in the oil communities to desert the environment… of them probably causing more damages to the environment. So, I see oil companies actively engage or deliberately engage in agricultural businesses just to ensure that…"	Perception that other actors (for example, the communities and other countries) cause environmental degradation more than the O&G organisations.
2.	HR011	"So there is not much the companies could do in terms of…. It is not that there is not much they could do. There is a lot they can do but the effort does not really guarantee whether	Perception that O&G organisations do all they can to prevent environmental degradation, but it still happens due to

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
		they are going to be a sabotage or not. Sometimes they do everything they can to engage, collaborate but what will happen, still happens."	actions out of their control – actors and activities outside the organisation. Suggests that the organisation has no control over what happens in the Niger Delta and the organisation can only try to limit the impacts of the problems faced within the region.
3.	HR006	"Well… what I would say talking about oil spillage is that it is part of the business." "the oil industry are probably not the major polluters of the environment because there are other activities that pollute even more than the oil industry." "they say that because we are the oil producers, we are the major people that hurt the environment, but they don't look at the general benefits that producing gives the general population."	Acceptance that environmental degradation is part of oil and gas business and cannot be avoided. Perception that benefits of oil and gas outweighs the environmental degradation and all its negative impacts. Respondent is aware of the negative image of the industry re environmental degradation.
4.	SBP012	So you need to do that and then you also need to in the event, unlikely event, of having a spill incident, quickly carry out remediation	Perception that spills do not happen often! This is a direct contradiction to actual situation as reported in literature and media.
5.	HR011	"For example, spillage, no organisation really wants to have oil spillage but things happen of course." "We understand that you cannot eliminate the impact completely…" "Some of those health care whatever is not necessarily as a result of the impact of the exploration…"	Acceptance that environmental degradation is part of oil and gas business and cannot be avoided. Quick to reassure interviewer that not all health problems in the community is tied to the negative impact of O&G practices.
6.	HR011	"there is a well-documented impact analysis that it has on the environment. So, our activities impact the environment, impacts the way they live… programmes that would help the communities find alternative means of livelihood where the exploration and production activities have impacted on their livelihood"	Clear awareness of the negative impacts of O&G practices on the environment and host communities and the need to find solutions to the problems caused.
7.	SBP001	"Who are the big violators? The Chinese. I don't think Chinese companies are going to respect your green rules because they can get money from China… if you check the biggest violators it's probably going to be the Chinese. They are looking for the shortest, the fastest way and somewhere that can give them the fastest return" (SBP001).	Blame shifting to other players – anyone is to blame asides from the oil and gas organisations.

Table 15: 6.6: Role of oil and gas organisations in the sustainability discourse

Table 6.7

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	SBP001	"Our company policies are stricter, are much much stricter than the IFC[13] performance	Organisation needs to be committed to creating and implementing SBPs and

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[13] IFC – International Finance Corporation which promotes economic development through the private sector

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
		standards, much much stricter than the equator principles…"	this commitment needs to be driven from a strategic level.
2.	SBP003	"we also try to follow the template of the regulators because they equally have strict compliance rules that you need to follow so that at no point in time the environment be degraded."	There is a presence of regulatory bodies and rules aimed towards the prevention of environmental degradation and ensuring sustainable business practices are engaged in at all times by the oil and gas organisations.
3.	HR007	"we monitor, we track, we report. We follow up to make sure that everybody is in alignment."	Indication of the presence of monitoring and evaluation of practices implemented to ensure consistent effectiveness of such practices.
4.	HR005	"What comes to my mind when they talk about sustainable business practices is something like controls, having proper internal controls within your company."	Opinion that organisations set up internal monitoring controls to ensure processes within the organisation remain effective and organisational goals are achieved.
5.	HR006	"audits – plenty of audits (laughs). Both surprised and scheduled audits." "HR is involved in the training of the people that follow the auditors."	Monitoring and evaluation of the organisation's activities and processes as well as HR's indirect involvement in the process.
6.	SBP003	"we embark on what we call participatory monitoring and evaluation processes which involves active participation of the communities themselves… Monitoring with the full participation if the communities and then the external stakeholders such as the regulators also getting involved."	Indication that there are numerous controls and monitoring and evaluation processes within the oil and gas industry. Not just monitoring activities within the organisation, but also conducted by other actors within the oil and gas industry to ensure the organisation's activities remain sustainable.

Table 16: 6.7: Controls within the organisation

Table 6.8

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	SBP001	"the JV and the funding has been a bottleneck…"	Indication of a problem of funding from one of the stakeholders. This hinders the implementation of SBPs.
2.	HR002	"maybe you need a billion USD to do that and the penalty for waste evacuation let's say in a month is 5million dollars and maybe your revenue is let's say 100 million dollars. You would rather pay 5mil dollars out of 100 mil dollars than go and look for a billion dollars to invest." "Locally, it is a mixed bag – the seriousness is not there and the fund is not there." "you look at it that ok this is eating into the profit of the company and then tell government that you are gonna drive away investors."	The cost/ penalty for engaging in unsustainable practices is negligible so does not discourage such practices. Funds/ budget not allocated to aid sustainable practices. Placing importance of organisational profits and bottom line over cost of implementing SBPs. Difficulty in convincing or getting the buy-in of other stakeholders.
3.	HR007	"There is even eerrmm… competence of the people, you need to invest a lot to bringing people up to that level."	Consideration of the cost of training employees to effectively implement SBPs – to align to organisation's sustainability goals.

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
4.	HR011	"you know how much it costs to clean oil spillage. You know that apart from sustainability that it is a big business plan to avoid it from happening in the first place."	Huge costs of cleaning up oil spills and the fact that it needs to be prevented in the first instance.

Table 17: 6.8: Research participants' perception on the cost of sustainability

Table 6.9

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	SBP003	"people should be meant to fit in in the template that would be able to bring in the best out of them." "More awareness at the top, very important."	Perception that employees and their actions can be controlled to fit into organisation's agenda.
2.	HR006	"How do you keep them doing the right thing at the right time - culturally, ethically?"	There is a need to create an engaged workforce and a relevant culture of sustainability within the organisation.
3.	HR007	"we monitor, we track, we report. We follow up to make sure that everybody is in alignment." "So when things come from the executive committee like that, it comes with a lot of weight… so when you are cascading it down it is quite clear that it is serious business."	Control of employee behaviours and actions within the organisation to ensure organisational goals are achieved. Top management buy-in and drive for SBPs implementation is crucial to ensure effectiveness and success.
4.	HR005	"What comes to my mind when they talk about sustainable business practices is something like controls, having proper internal controls within your company." "We don't want to have just an ageing workforce, people that will say this is how we have been doing it."	Control of processes and actions of employees within the organisation is important to achieve SBPs implementation. Innovation is deemed as necessary in the effective implementation of SBPs.
5.	HR002	"We have a voice but… If we have the leadership that provides… it is the leadership at the very top."	Top management involvement needed to give HR the required 'voice' and authority within the organisation to support SBPs implementation.

Table 18: 6.9: Top management involvement and control of employees

Table 6.10

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR006	"at the end of the day, sustainability drive is the people - it is people that implement it…" p.2 "Well, I think HR plays a huge role in driving sustainability in the business..." "Basically yes. Which means they are involved in the strategy and planning within the organisation."	Employees are crucial in the sustainability discourse, and this is because they are tasked with the implementation of the sustainability strategy. Therefore, HR need to ensure they are well equipped to complete their tasks effectively.
2.	SBP001	"HR have a role to play in making the business greener? Yes, they do." "The case for change is usually championed by HR."	HR as an important player in the drive for SBPs implementation. HR plays a crucial role in enabling change in organisational culture.

		p.9 "I feel if you want to change the culture, you need HR."	
3.	HR011	"HR is like an arbiter, an ombudsman between the management and the workforce." "So what HR should and could do to support the company is to make sure that HR is working with these functions to make sure that resourcing, compensation and other support are provided to make sure that the activities go on well and that the employees that are involved in those activities are properly motivated to do their work well."	HR seen as a link between management and the employees. Opinion that HR needs to interface with other departments within the organisation and support employees to implement SBPs.
4.	HR007	"We need to keep eerrmm… equipping our people with the right skills and competencies so that they can deliver on all these KPIs." "well… our director is at the executive committee. So, I mean right there at the top we have a representation."	HR function of training employees to be equipped to carry out tasks effectively and achieve the organisation's sustainability agenda. HR as part of the strategic decision making as well as having necessary authority to support.
5.	SBP003	"Yeah, ensuring that personnel responsible for ensuring business sustainability… that everyone does their bit… HR should be able to instil order and if need be ensure consequence."	HR as having the authority to control actions and behaviours of employees to ensure alignment to the organisation's sustainability agenda.
6.	HR002	"So, for instance, if we are told to set up a sustainability team… a full-blown sustainability team, we have the competence to do that." "HR certainly has a voice at the top."	Confidence that HR can help drive the achievement of the organisation's sustainability agenda.
7.	HR005	"We have what we call the leadership team and HR is part of the leadership team." P.5 "Yes, HR is empowered right from the top."	HR possesses appropriate authority from top management to help drive SBPs implementation.
8.	HR006	"So, when they see that your practices make the company stable, they are more motivated to work…"	Employee engagement as a benefit of SBPs implementation within the organisation.

Table 19: 6.10: Research participants' view on HR and their role in driving SBPs implementation

Table 6.11

	Research Participant	Quotations	Findings – Researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR011	"… we run what we call the HR business partner structure here. So we have embedded HR professional that sit with the business."	Having HR representatives in each department to help drive SBPs implementation.
2.	SBP003	"We have got a business partnering model now".	HR business partnering as a move from admin to a more strategic position within the organisation.
3.	SBP001	"I see them move from HR to HR business partners. That's actually what we call them so we have HR business partners, each one sitting in a function. So at the leadership team level you get an HR	HR transitioned to HR business partners within the 263rganization. This aligns to findings from literature. This response suggests HR sits with each business unit on a leadership level which would imply

		person with your function as a HR business partner".	that they may have the necessary authority to drive SBPs implementation.
4.	HR002	"We have got a business partnering model now. Presently he is in (inaudible). So, we have got HR business partner for technical division and HR business partner for eerm support division. so basically, those are the people that interface with the operations team and the support team as it were".	HR appears to operate a business partnering model as shown in literature indicating a move of HR from admin to a more strategic position within the organisation. These HR partners can use their positions within other departments to drive the sustainability agenda of the organisation. This can be done through ensuring that they work together to align all tasks towards achieving the sustainability agenda.

Table 20: 6.11: HR business partnering function within the organisation

APPENDIX 7

DATA THEMES AND EXTRACTS FROM FIRST DATA COLLECTION EXERCISE

	THEME	SUB THEMES	DATA EXTRACTS
1	Knowledge of SBPs	• HR personnel's knowledge of SBPs • Generate interest leading to action • Education of individuals • Lack of/ inadequate level of awareness • Varying perceptions of SBPs/ sustainability • Individual interpretations of SBPs	**SBP003** p.2 "you can only get involved in what you are interested in. if you are not passionate about an issue, the chances are that you won't give in your best." **HR002** p.7 "Well awareness is still an issue." P.10 "We don't have a competent resource system. We outsource it." **HR006** p.7 "interest will create awareness…" "with awareness, more and more people are beginning to think about the issue of sustainability." p.4 "I think one of the things we do is continuous education. So… awareness of staff." **HR011** p.7 "we need to have a very strong educational campaign about the impact of some of these things and generally about sustainable behaviours and sustainable business operations." "If you can have a way of getting everybody to be aware, that will help people to better connect to some of these initiatives and of course at the individual levels and the company levels." **SBP003** p.2 "Well… first of all, to me it connotes ethical business practices eerrrm it equally suggests practices that would support businesses thriving and as well as in ensuring that the environment is left in a way that future generations will continue to benefit from the resources therein." **HR002** P.4 So there are 2 levels of it (SBPs). **HR007** p.4 "again it is contextual the issue of sustainability. Even the eerrmm… it will mean different things to different people."
2	Sustainability drive	• Concern for future generation • Concern for the environment • Passion for people • Personal drive • Conflicting interests	**SBP001** p.1 "I'll like to do business today in such a way that my kids can also do business in this environment itself with minimal impact to the environment, keeping the environment as green as we can" **HR011** p.6 "How can we make sure that these natural resources are available for as long as possible so that we will not be the generation that kind of exhausted it and make this planet uninhabitable for the future generation?" **HR002** P.3 "I have a passion for people and basically that is my motivation."

			p.3 "Personally, it is very important ". "I have a neighbour who placed his generating set just by my kids' window and then they can't sleep. So that actually spurred me to work very hard." HR011 p.3 "oh, personally sustainability I think is something I am quite passionate about. I wouldn't just go out and call myself an environmentalist, but I am environmentally aware." HR011 p.3 "In my organisation some of our core values is about how we carry out our business in such a way that we protect the environment."
3	Government involvement	• Priority of incumbent government • Government awareness • Lack of government action • Government as an obstacle • National issues hindering SBPs • Government should have the responsibility to enforce sustainability laws • Government as part of a JV	SBP001 p.3 "which is much more improved under this new government, under the new political clime is much better so your JV is dependent on who is in power at the centre." HR011 p.6 "… government is aware but then again do we have any clear action plan or ongoing activities to support such sustainability? I would say No…" "There is no bigger framework guiding companies…" SBP001 p.6 "…if the govt makes the law on one side and they are also the senior partner in the JV, they are also breaking it on one side, it is counterproductive." HR011 p.8 "there are a lot of challenges in Nigeria…" HR005 p.2 "the issue of sustainability is perceived as a reality and I believe at least from this present government that it is one of their major goals that this country." HR002 P.3 "it is definitely a programme of the federal government of Nigeria to ensure that the environment is protected." HR011 p.6 "I think to start with, the government will always need to take the lead on these activities for obvious reasons the government has the power to put certain things in place…" p.7 "companies need to really support the government and you know get on with some of the initiatives that could help to promote sustainable living and business operations." SBP001 P.2 "So for you to stop flaring, you need to put in some things in place to turn the gas that would have been wasted into creative use but the government has not been able to fund the joint venture (JV) to do that".
4	Cost of sustainability	• Lack of funding • Poor cash flow from JV • High cost of sustainability • Business justification needed • Cost versus profit	SBP001 p.3 "the JV and the funding has been a bottleneck…" HR002 p. 6 "maybe you need a billion USD to do that and the penalty for waste evacuation let's say in a month is 5million dollars and maybe your revenue is let's say 100 million dollars. You would rather pay 5mil dollars out of 100 mil dollars than go and look for a billion dollars to invest." P.7 "Locally, it is a mixed bag – the seriousness is not there and the fund is not there." P.8 "you look at it that ok this is eating into the profit of the company and then tell government that you are gonna drive away investors." HR007 p.2 "There is even eerrmm… competence of the people, you need to invest a lot to bringing people up to that level." HR011 p.8 "you know how much it costs to clean oil spillage. You know that apart from sustainability that it is a big business plan to avoid it from happening in the first place."

| 5 | Community viewpoint | • MOU
• Lack of trust between O&G and communities
• Sabotage by host communities
• Community engagement/ buy-in
• Community's knowledge of rights | **HR007** p.2 "HR again manages MOUs with our host communities, specific MOUs that really, really border around giving them opportunities."
HR011 p.8 "Although some of these companies have some kind of agreement with the communities, sometimes the communities could just come up and go on strike, prevent them from carrying out the operations and sometimes accuse them of all sorts of things"
SBP003 p.3 "there are usually occasional sabotages even from the host communities probably for reasons... either to attract attention, to make some claims and possibly to attract resources to themselves."
HR006 p.3 "I know outside when pipelines are vandalised because we have issues of vandalization."
HR011 p.7 "In Nigeria for example, spillage is a complex issue. In most other places in the world, spillage happens maybe due to accident or maybe poor maintenance culture or something like that but in Nigeria you have to add the sabotage to most spillages that happen in Nigeria. They happen because somebody went and tampered with some of the infrastructure."
SBP003 p.3 "you won't be at conflict with the communities in terms of saying ooh you polluted our environment and the rest of it. So, you have the right atmosphere, the right condition to work."
HR006 p.3 "Having the community that work with directly or indirectly sufficiently caring for your activities and your stake in the community is helpful…"
SBP003 p.2 "For instance you ensure that in as much as possible enlighten the communities where necessary…" |
| 6 | Presence of regulations | • Numerous regulations and regulatory bodies and laws
• Focus on safety
• Non implementation of laws
• Enforcement of impractical laws
• Bribery and corruption
• Crossed/ conflicting interests – self interest | **SBP001** P. 1 "Our company policies are stricter, are much much stricter than the IFC performance standards, much much stricter than the equator principles…"
SBP003 P.3 "we also try to follow the template of the regulators because they equally have strict compliance rules that you need to follow so that at no point in time the environment be degraded."
HR005 p.3 "We have PPMC and PPPRA and some other regulatory bodies and I know that everybody operating within the oil and gas industry must abide by the all the rules and regulations."
HR002 p.2 "they are many regulatory bodies in Nigeria who monitor how people like us in the extractive industry treat the environment." P.6 "Nigeria is not in want of regulations." P.6 "… do people circumvent those practices or those laws? Maybe, maybe not." P.8 "a regulatory body in Lagos state. They were not going to take it lightly. They wanted things done the way it is in the books. But constraints begin to emerge and then they relaxed."
SBP001 p. 5-6 "but in this African where money can change hands and the rules can change." |

			HR011 p.4 "What I would say is that my organisation and most of the other IOCs operating in the country have a number of regulatory obligations…" p.5 "there's been a whole lot of agreements and frameworks that are being put in place to eliminate gas flaring. Some of them requires a number of commitment on the part of the different stakeholders…" "So, some of the communities obviously they haven't worked according to plan so you still have gas here and there…"
7	O & G attitude towards sustainability issues	• Transference of blame to other stakeholders • Acceptance of negative impacts as norm • Belying the extent of impact of O & G practices • CSR activities used for fanfare • Protectors of the environment and community	**HR002** p.9 "And then the western world must provide leadership because they decimate the environment. They do, they decimate the environment more..." P.5 "so there is a temptation for people who are in the oil communities to desert the environment… of them probably causing more damages to the environment. So, I see oil companies actively engage or deliberately engage in agricultural businesses just to ensure that…" **HR011** p.7 "So there is not much the companies could do in terms of…. It is not that there is not much they could do. There is a lot they can do but the effort does not really guarantee whether they are going to be a sabotage or not. Sometimes they do everything they can to engage, collaborate but what will happen, still happens." **HR006** p.3 "Well… what I would say talking about oil spillage is that it is part of the business." p.7 "the oil industry are probably not the major polluters of the environment because there are other activities that pollute even more than the oil industry." p.7 "they say that because we are the oil producers, we are the major people that hurt the environment but they don't look at the general benefits that producing gives the general population." **HR011** p.7 "For example, spillage, no organisation really wants to have oil spillage but things happen of course." **HR011** p.3 "We understand that you cannot eliminate the impact completely…" p.4 "Some of those health care whatever is not necessarily as a result of the impact of the exploration…"
8	Top management	• Bureaucracy as a hindrance • Ensure employee conformity • Use of compensation to ensure conformity • Lack of awareness/ knowledge • Need for top management support	**SBP003** p.2 "people should be meant to fit in in the template that would be able to bring in the best out of them." **HR006** p.2 "How do you keep them doing the right thing at the right time - culturally, ethically?" **HR007** p.3 "we monitor, we track, we report. We follow up to make sure that everybody is in alignment." **HR005** p.2 "What comes to my mind when they talk about sustainable business practices is something like controls, having proper internal controls within your company."

		• Presence of ageing workforce/ lack of innovation	**HR002** p.9 "We have a voice but… If we have the leadership that provides… it is the leadership at the very top." **HR007** p.3 "So when things come from the executive committee like that, it comes with a lot of weight… so when you are cascading it down it is quite clear that it is serious business." **SBP003** p.4 "More awareness at the top, very important." **HR005** p.4 "We don't want to have just an ageing workforce, people that will say this is how we have been doing it."
9	HR	• Actors in the sustainability discourse • HR functions to drive sustainability • HR as business partners and agents of change • HR's competence in driving SBPs implementation • HR's authority/ lack of authority to drive SBPs	**HR006** p.6 "at the end of the day, sustainability drive is the people - it is people that implement it…" p.2 "Well, I think HR plays a huge role in driving sustainability in the business..." **SBP001** P.7 "HR have a role to play in making the business greener? Yes, they do." **HR011** p.2 "HR is like an arbiter, an ombudsman between the management and the workforce." **HR007** p.1 "We need to keep eerrmm… equipping our people with the right skills and competencies so that they can deliver on all these KPIs." **HR011** p.8 "So what HR should and could do to support the company is to make sure that HR is working with these functions to make sure that resourcing, compensation and other support are provided to make sure that the activities go on well and that the employees that are involved in those activities are properly motivated to do their work well." **SBP003** p.4 "Yeah, ensuring that personnel responsible for ensuring business sustainability… that everyone does their bit… HR should be able to instil order and if need be ensure consequence." **SBP001** p.7 "The case for change is usually championed by HR." p.9 "I feel if you want to change the culture, you need HR." **HR002** p.2 "We have got a business partnering model now." **HR011** p.1 "… we run what we call the HR business partner structure here. So we have embedded HR professional that sit with the business." **HR002** p.8 "So, for instance, if we are told to set up a sustainability team… a full-blown sustainability team, we have the competence to do that." p.1 "HR certainly has a voice at the top." **HR006** p.6 "Basically yes. Which means they are involved in the strategy and planning within the organisation." **HR005** p.1 "We have what we call the leadership team and HR is part of the leadership team." P.5 "Yes, HR is empowered right from the top." **HR007** p.3 "well… our director is at the executive committee. So, I mean right there at the top we have a representation."

10	Stakeholders	• Varying and conflicting interests • Benefits of SBPs implementation to stakeholders • Impact of O & G practices on stakeholders	**HR006** p.3 "They give you a license to operate. Company image, friendliness with your stakeholders and of course because we are there, we are being socially responsible to do business there…" **HR006** p.4 "So, when they see that your practices make the company stable they are more motivated to work…" **HR011** p.5 "making sure that everybody kind of gets some kind of benefit from our operations." **HR006** p.2 "If there are issues… if we have issues with our stakeholders because we are not having sound business practices, economically it will hurt us…" **HR011** p.4 "there is a well-documented impact analysis that it has on the environment. So, our activities impact the environment, impacts the way they live… programmes that would help the communities find alternative means of livelihood where the exploration and production activities have impacted on their livelihood"
11	Sustainability culture needed	• Development of Interests and sustainable behaviours • Organisational culture as a factor • Work-life sustainability habits • Top down support needed • Sustainability should be non-negotiable • Incentive for sustainable behaviours	**SBP001** p.7 "You need to build the culture of sustainability as part of your business." **SBP003** p.2 "… care or caution will be laid in place to ensure that the right practices are cultivated and it becomes a culture too. There has to be a culture, it is not a one-off practice." **HR006** p.5 "…it is the culture of the company so it is easy for you to follow." **HR006** p.5 "You are supposed to carry them with you. So living it both in and out of the organisation." **HR007** p.4 "I think it's very important really. Even in our private lives yeah…" **SBP001** p.5 "So long as there's an alternative, sustainability will still be in some people's books and outside some people's books." **SBP001** p.5 "Then reward… maybe there should be a UN reward for companies that do green… Maybe it's time for us to set up one where it says these guys made their money legit without so much impact on the environment."
12	Monitoring and evaluation	• Presence of audits • Doubt of their effectiveness • HR's indirect involvement • Government involvement • Community involvement	**HR006** p.5 "audits – plenty of audits (laughs). Both surprised and scheduled audits." p.5 "HR is involved in the training of the people that follow the auditors." **SBP003** p.4-5 "we embark on what we call participatory monitoring and evaluation processes which involves active participation of the communities themselves… Monitoring with the full participation if the communities and then the external stakeholders such as the regulators also getting involved."
13	Nigeria	• A poor country • Focus on survival rather than sustainability • Political issues	**HR002** P.6 "What is the size of Nigerian economy? Nigeria is a poor country." p.7 "If you ask my friend Ugo, I'm sure he can speak competently on what we can do but the environment, social cultural economic political environment is just not right."

		•	SBP003 p.1 "there are a lot of challenges in Africa, in Nigeria, in our host communities, failure of governance and the rest of it. Yes, deep rooted poverty, underdevelopment, dearth of infrastructure…" HR011 p.6 "So in terms of Nigeria, the awareness is there but I just have to be honest with you, due to the issues in the country… people are concerned mostly on how to survive on a daily basis rather than on how they can plan for the planet to be better for the future generation." p.6 "I will say that the awareness is very low and there is zero activity in my opinion."
14	Miscellaneous	• Well-being • Sustainable lifestyle • Employee voice • Culture of innovation • Complex organisational structure • O & Gs diversifying into renewable energy • Use of NGO or side business to drive sustainability • Inadequate waste management	HR011 p.2 "HR is more like a place where we are all out to make sure that the employees are well taken care of…" p.9 "So, part of the things HR is championing is to make sure that we as employees have what we call the sustainable lifestyle." HR011 p.3 "I like living a balanced lifestyle" "on a personal level, I have taken special interest in living a very healthy life…" SBP001 p.1 "we want to be the leading energy company in the world so that includes electricity". HR011 p.3 "… it is something I would really like to do if we had an NGO that I could work with."

Acronyms

Sustainable business practices (SBPs)

Oil and gas (O & G)

Joint Venture (JV)

Memorandum of understanding (MOU)

CODING PROCESS

OPEN CODING – THEMES FROM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS	AXIAL CODING – CATEGORIES BASED ON FREQUENCY	MAIN CODES
• Priority of incumbent government • Government awareness • Lack of government action • Government as an obstacle • National issues hindering SBPs • Government should have the responsibility to enforce sustainability laws • Government as part of a JV • MOU • Lack of trust between O&G and communities • Sabotage by host communities • Community engagement/ buy-in • Community's knowledge of rights • Numerous regulations and regulatory bodies and laws • Focus on safety • Non implementation of laws • Enforcement of impractical laws • Bribery and corruption • Crossed/ conflicting interests – self interest • A poor country • Focus on survival rather than sustainability • Political issues • Varying and conflicting interests • Benefits of SBPs implementation to stakeholders • Impact of O & G practices on stakeholders	• Government involvement • Community viewpoint • Presence of regulations • Nigeria (Nigerian factor) • Stakeholders	• Oil and gas industry dynamics
• Transference of blame to other stakeholders • Acceptance of negative impacts as norm • Belying the extent of impact of O & G practices	• O&G attitude towards sustainability issues • Top management involvement • Sustainability culture needed	• Factors within the organisation that can aid or hinder SBPs implementation in the oil and gas industry

• CSR activities used for fanfare • Protectors of the environment and community • Bureaucracy as a hindrance • Ensure employee conformity • Employee voice • Use of compensation to ensure conformity • Lack of awareness/ knowledge • Need for top management support • Presence of ageing workforce/ lack of innovation • Development of Interests and sustainable behaviours • Organisational culture as a factor • Work-life sustainability habits • Top down support needed • Sustainability should be non-negotiable • Incentive for sustainable behaviours • Lack of funding • Poor cash flow from JV • High cost of sustainability • Business justification needed • Cost versus profit • Generate interest leading to action • Education of individuals • Culture of innovation • Lack of/ inadequate level of awareness • Varying perceptions of SBPs/ sustainability • Individual interpretations of SBPs • Presence of audits • Doubt of their effectiveness • HR's indirect involvement • Government involvement • Community involvement	• Cost of sustainability • Knowledge on SBPs • Monitoring and evaluation	
• Actors in the sustainability discourse	• HR knowledge	• HR role

• HR functions to drive sustainability • HR as business partners and agents of change • HR's competence in driving SBPs implementation • HR's authority/ lack of authority to drive SBPs • HR personnel's knowledge of SBPs • Concern for future generation and environment • Passion for people • Personal drive	• HR level of authority and control • HR reason for sustainability drive	

APPENDIX 8

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SECOND DATA COLLECTION EXERCISE

Background context (summary of research and findings of primary data collected) explained to respondents before the start of the interview.

What is your role within the organisation?

HR AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

1. Organisational culture has been highlighted as an important factor in the effective implementation of SBPs. based on your experience, how is change in organisational culture driven within the organisation?
   - Can you give me examples of when a change has been initiated and driven within the organisation?

2. In your opinion, to what extent do existing HR functions align to support changes within the organisation with regards to organisational culture?
   - How does HR support in creation of the organisational culture within the organisation?
   - How can HR be positioned within the organisation to support SBPs implementation through creating an enabling organisational culture?

EMPLOYEE VOICE

3. To what extent do employees responsible for SBPs implementation influence top management/ decision making, bearing in mind the high-risk nature of the industry?

4. What role does HR have in supporting this?
   - What are the obstacles faced by HR in their bid to support in the creation of employee voice within the organisation?
   - What can be done differently to create a more open culture with regards to employees having a voice within the organisation, in this case, to enhance SBPs?

STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL ROLE OF HR

5. Data collected has shown that HR is involved in the strategic decision making of the organisation. To what extent does HR contribute to the **business functions'** decision-making process within the organisation?

   - Are they passive or active participants?
   - Can you give me examples of how they contribute?
   - Can you describe to me how the strategy meeting takes place?
   - What is the decision-making style during executive meetings? Collaborative? Authoritative? (the type of style can be indicative of the organisational culture).
   - Are decisions made and passed to HR or is HR part of the decision-making process?

6. Based on the initial data collected, respondents believe that HR are not currently involved in the tactical function of SBPs implementation even though they (respondents) believe HR should be. In your opinion, to what extent does this hinder HR's ability to support SBPs implementation within the organisation?

   - How much control does HR have within the context of their existing function?
   - How does this (control) affect the power and authority of HR/ HR position within the organisation?

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

7. How are the information or data collected through monitoring and evaluation exercises used and fed back into the strategic level (decision making process) within the organisation?

8. Data shows a split between HR involvement and lack of involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of SBPs. In your opinion, why do you think HR is not consistently involved in the monitoring and evaluation exercises? How can a consistent HR involvement be achieved?

   - How can they be involved, with regards to monitoring and evaluation of SBPs implementation?
   - How are lessons learnt from sustainability projects communicated to relevant employees? How are they communicated to HR, if at all?

APPENDIX 9

EXTRACTS FROM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS AND INTERVIEWER'S INTERPRETATIONS (SECOND DATA COLLECTION)

Table 8.1

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR013	"So, with that in mind, we try to ensure that leaders a understand why we are doing the change and why the change is important. So, the why is very key because when they have bought into the why, it is then easy for them to get on with the what and eerrmm helping of course cascade to their team members and ensuring that their team members are on board"	The respondent is of the opinion that it is important for the leaders within the organisation to understand the reason and benefit of any change. This will ensure that leaders carry other employees along in the process of embedding new culture or practices/ processes within the organisation.
2.	HR015	"So really for every organisational change be it cultural, be it safety wise, be it capital stewardship, the key driver is how the organisational leadership views such things… the leadership from the topmost level has to drive it, they have to demonstrate it and they have to support it all the way. So, leadership drive for such organisational change is very key and if it starts at the top, it gets cascaded to everybody".	Here leadership involvement is highlighted as the main driver in changing organisational culture. The respondent argued that the leadership/ top management of the organisation need to demonstrate the change in values and behaviours and cascade to other employees.
3.	HR018	"HR does not drive… well HR drives… is at the forefront of it but HR partners with the relevant authorities within the organisation. The most critical of the partners is the top-level management because for every change, there has to be the (inaudible) first to be able to then roll out and get the buy-in of other team members".	HR shown as a driver of organisational change. However, top management involvement is shown to be a critical factor in this process because though HR drives the change, this needs to be authorised by top management.
4.	HR014	"So, organisational culture is driven primarily by top management that is my opinion and from my organisation from what I see"	Top management involvement important for driving necessary or required organisational culture. This would be through making strategic decisions aligned to said desired culture.
5.	HR015	"For example, leaders will always take a sizable chunk of those responsibility in terms of driving those changes. Leadership at all levels must demonstrate those behaviours for others to key into that…".	Again, leadership involvement and engagement is highlighted as necessary.

6.	HR017	"If the top management refuse to mind that, who will sell the message? You will not sell the message that you do not believe (laughs). It is as simple as that".	This respondent believes that if top management does not buy into the initiative – in this case SBPs implementation – then they will be unable to convince other employees to accept it.
7.	HR013	"So, the other thing that we typically do is that we do have eerrmm we do cascade the change through our different leadership networks. So we target leaders at different levels. So leaders at top level, leaders at mid management level and even emerging new leaders at low levels".	All leaders within the organisation are seen as crucial to successful implementation of any strategic initiative or change of culture within the organisation.

Table 61: 8.1: Research participants' view of top management buy in to SBPs initiatives

Table 8.2

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR017	"there are platforms for voice to be heard but I would rather say is it everything that they say that management does? Management can hear your voice but is management implementing or fulfilling all you want them to do"?	The respondent confirms that though there is employee voice, action on employee suggestions is not taken by top management always.
2.	HR013	"I think the reality is that there are leaders that see themselves as, for want of a better word, they are dinosaurs. They have built empires within the organisation, and they have just become larger than life and the resist the change, they resist the voice and what we want to ensure is that we have a process".	Old, cast in their ways and afraid of change? Resistance of change is not beneficial for SBPs as scholars have argued that continuous innovation is key to SBPs implementation. Therefore, it can be argued that such resistance to change would significantly hinder SBPs implementation.
3.	HR015	"So, that usual resistance to change is always a problem and there are other challenges that HR also encounter, and it is all down to human behaviour. It takes time for people to key into change. They want to see why are we making this change? What is in it for me? I used to do it like this for several years and we have never had a problem so why make this change now"? "You have to demonstrate that you are open to change".	Resistance to change highlighted as a challenge faced by HR in a bid to embed new processes. Could this also be a challenge for SBPs implementation? Resistance to change could be seen as contrary to innovation. Scholars have argued that innovation is needed for SBPs implementation.

4.	HR014	"Also, when there is a lack of top management interest. There could be an issue with that too"	This lack of interest could be due to any number of factors including those previously discussed such as resistance to change, lack of awareness of benefits of the change.
5.	HR013	"…particularly in the big 5, the majors which are the …. Eermm what you typically would see is that these organisations have pyramid structures so what that means is that you have leaders at different levels. So, from CEO and some part of xx business we have 12 levels. So, what it means is that from the CEO to the lowest person, we have 12 leaders in between (laughs). So, you see the point. So, there is CEO and some that reports to the CEO and all and they are leaders in their own right"	Evidence of bureaucracy within the oil and gas organisations. Such complex and numerous levels of authority could potentially slow down implementation of initiatives such as SBPs. Also, the respondent exhibits slight cynicism at the structure he described.
6.	HR018	"If (and again I put this in quote)… if the owners of the business themselves or maybe the business leaders themselves can be trusted. I'm trying to choose my words carefully (laughs). If the owners of the business or the business leaders can be trusted whatever challenges that you may have, will just then be with the managers".	Respondent was cautious in responding. The leadership of the organisation is highlighted as being important in standing as a role model in trust and building an enabling environment. His response shows his belief that once top management can be trusted, other challenges can be easily dealt with.
7.	HR013	"So, you see why leaders have to be on board. So when you decide that at the top level so there are a lot of leaders to weed through to then cascade the change".	Interesting phrase 'a lot of leaders to weed through'. Strengthens earlier argument of respondent's cynicism. It could also indicate a problem of getting everyone on board with planned initiatives as well as the constraints of bureaucracy.

Table 22: 8.2: Challenges from top management that can hinder effective SBPs implementation

Table 8.3

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR014	"So, you have to provide the P and L (profit and loss) to show that what you are doing is going to be profitable at the end of the day. When you look at some practices, it is not obvious to you how it is going to help you to make money especially when it comes to culture and people. But long run you can say ok is this is going to help provide industrial harmony that means I will not have a forced shut down and which would keep production going and if it keeps	Respondent reverts to stating the importance of bearing in mind that the organisation is set up to make profit and whatever processes or practices set up must align to this.

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		production going, that means I am making more money".	
2.	HR015	"you have to have a way of getting employees to see how whatever it is that they do, adds to the global bottom-line".	Importance placed on the need for employees to key into the profit agenda of the organisation. This can be done through communication.
3.	HR017	"When the sustainability team go out and they see what can help the business and they tell top management and they refuse to do it, the business is ready to run down. It is just simple… ok let us take for instance in one of our wells and the community just strike and say no more extraction… in just one hour you know what the business has lost? So, in terms of the sustainability team having a voice with the top management, that one you don't need to set up a meeting, just a WhatsApp message will give you a result (smiles). You need to look at what is realistic to get things done and when those on the field are telling you this, then my own business they listen to it, they deliberate on it, and they try and work things out".	Respondent making an argument that the business will take into account the suggestions and recommendations of sustainability employees on the field because failure to do so will result in loss of profit and reputation and this, he believes, is unacceptable. Therefore, the business has no option but to accept recommendations. On the other hand, he stated that the business needs to be realistic when taking on suggestions put forward by the team.
4.	HR018	"our performance management philosophy would have been achieved and I said that it is development focused so that as we focus on people development, the organisation also benefits in terms of performance"	The respondent believes that better performance by employees will lead to increase in organisational performance and profitability.
5.	HR014	"don't forget that the budget is going to be provided by the commitment of the executives. So, whether they align with what HR is doing to drive the culture that is already inherent in the organisation, or they want to change".	Top management buy-in and involvement translates to provision of funds (budget approval) necessary to encourage building a sustainability culture.

Table 23: 8.3: Profit over sustainability?

Table 8.4

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR018	"now you identify what the learning points are and usually those learning points are communicated across the organisation. That helps in improving certain processes, it helps in creating policies for improving whatever process it is".	The importance of communication to drive processes is highlighted. The respondent argued that communicating intended plans with the employees improves the chances of the successful implementation of any new process.

2.	HR013	"a key part of HR job to ensure that that messaging then is translated on several platforms".	A key role for HR is employee communication. This role can be used to cascade information/ knowledge about sustainability to build desired sustainability awareness/ knowledge/ behaviours/ culture.
3.	HR017	"The HR BP in the different functions started having the cell conversations, a small group conversation with people for them to be able to ask questions after telling them what and the why we are doing what we are doing. So it is still the responsibility of the BP to intensify the message".	HR business partner has the responsibility of cascading required information to all employees within their respective business functions and ensure such information and its benefits are understood and the process consequently embedded.
4.	HR015	"HR will always have a role to play because HR acts as the vehicle through which people related policies and programs are driven and it is not just the role of HR to cascade and push for these things".	HR portrayed as key to driving any change in organisational culture through communication.
5.	HR017	"So, communication is always coming from different levels. From experience and from what I have seen so far, it is about communication, make people have the right understanding about what you are talking about. Let them see the what, the why and how it affects them ".	Communication highlighted as key in building organisational culture or effecting a change in organisational culture. Employees need to be aware of the need and benefit of the change being proposed and this can include transition to SBPs implementation.
6.	HR013	"So that's another way we try to preach the message through that platform and also several bulletins, different newsletters and stuff like that".	The use of the word preach could indicate HR trying to convince employees to engage in the process. The response also highlights the use of different media to be drive home the message.
7.	HR015	"So HR helps to do the planning, create the awareness through townhall, communications, include it in leadership development plans because essentially, it is all about the leadership".	Importance of communication and raising awareness in the process of building desired organisational behaviours and culture is highlighted.
8.	HR014	"HR's role is majorly communication, talking with the stakeholders. Trying to ensure that people perform their tasks".	Communication, employee motivation and engagement.
9.	HR018	"Now, rolling it out to the entire organisation, we adopt a roadshow approach. Now a roadshow approach sort of identifies what the existing system is, what the changes are and what value the changes will bring to the business. So that is the type of approach	The use of communication to achieve the buy-in and engagement of all employees on the new processes or culture within the organisation.

	we use in communicating organisation change or organisation culture within the organisation".	

Table 24: 8.4: Importance of communication of proposed plan/ changes to employees

Table 8.5

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR015	"it is difficult to generalise across the oil and gas companies but if I stay within the international oil companies, most of them they have the same strategy in terms of driving this organisational culture".	Same pattern within the organisations in the industry and this has been noticed in the findings.
2.	HR017	"The first thing for them to understand the existing culture which is very key. If they don't understand the culture of the business, they can't do anything. I talked about cultural fit which is a very key thing during recruitment. We have one funny saying when we are sourcing or recruiting, we say is it Sahara spec? (smiles) is this person cultural fit for this kind of business"?	The importance of recruiting employees with the right/ desired behaviours to enable the recruit fit into the organisation is highlighted. It is also important to induct new employees into the organisation's culture to guarantee alignment to the organisation's goals.
3.	HR018	"understand how well people understand and imbibe the culture within the business and to identify areas of concern and how you can better provide what is needed to ensure that people are in line or people understand what the culture is and are constantly imbibing it".	Information obtained from employees through focus groups to get ideas and ensure that there is understanding of the culture and abide by it. Employees' understanding of the organisational culture is highlighted as important.
5.	HR018	"HR has a critical role in ensuring that for every person who is a member of the team or organisation has a very good understanding of what those values are… So, if you talk about the engagement initiatives for example, it is the responsibility of the HR personnel to create engagement activities that are targeted that ensuring that these values are driven within the organisation".	HR's role and function in building organisational culture as well as employee engagement.
6.	HR013	"we are a learning organisation"	Being a learning organisation could be aligned to continuous innovation and crucial to SBPs implementation.

7.	HR014	"Culture is not built overnight; culture takes years so you cannot change a culture just like that"	Building the desired culture of sustainability will require planning and focus. It cannot be impromptu.
8.	HR015	"well-designed change management helps. It doesn't eliminate those challenges, but it helps to get sizable early adopters into the new program… So well planned change management is really key and that change management is not just one-dimensional plan. It has to be all encompassing".	Respondent believes that a well-planned change process is key to success of organisational culture change. Transitioning towards SBPs implementation as well as building the desired sustainability behaviours and culture cannot be a one-off event which characterises most CSR programs.
8.	HR014	"Because you talked about organisations trying to make profit so when HR is trying to facilitate the process in terms of putting processes that are transparent, reproduceable in other to facilitate the culture to ensure that the culture thrives".	Respondent's answer aligns to business sustainability and the organisation's goal of making profit. Transparency is highlighted as important to building culture.

Table 25: 8.5: The importance of building an enabling environment/ organisational culture

Table 8.6

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR014	"I think employees are quite free to voice out their acceptance or non-acceptance of any kind of process". "we have governance meeting in which they are involved in to make those decisions. There are town hall meetings for them to give information and provide information… so employees are empowered to voice out their opinion".	Indication of the presence of employee voice within the organisation. An avenue for employee voice to be heard within the organisation.
2.	HR017	"The human resources part needs to be considered in that decision that needs to be made. As a matter of fact, in some cases, HR is a major player in getting those decisions right because they are coming not only from the professional point of view, but they will equally be coming from the experience point of view and what they have seen in reality".	HR portrayed as a major player in ensuring employee voice within the organisation especially with regards to sustainability (sustainability team).
3.	HR013	"…we call 'freedom to speak your mind'. It is a big thing. We do have an annual survey and it is called company x people survey and one way to test the strength or the loudest of employees' voice is in that survey".	Employee survey used as a mechanism to encourage employee voice within the organisation.
4.	HR015	"We have been adopting new strategies like open office, open mic. Generally,	Again, the importance of communication is highlighted.

		allow people ask whatever it is they want to ask. Allow people to express themselves".	Also, expressed is the need for employee voice. Allowing employee opinions to be heard.
5.	HR018	"I would say to a large extent and then I will explain why. So, building trust in an organisation is a function of the environment. What kind of environment do you have? How do you build trust"?	This response suggests that building trust leads to employee voice within the organization.
6.	HR013	"I think also one reason why employee voice is also strong in our company is that people see the change that comes about by that and that is a very powerful point… When their feedback is taken on board, it just naturally helps strengthen that voice more".	Positive actions taken by top management based on feedback by employees helps strengthen employee voice within the organisation.
7.	HR014	"oh yes, oh yes. So they will always make suggestions to top management in terms of what they feel because they are on the ground and it makes it more culpable when they give feedback and say this is what we are seeing, this is what is happening and we can drive our business in such a way that enhances our relationship with our stakeholders".	The respondent is emphatic that employees in sustainability give feedback to management but the question mains, are their voices heard? Are actions taken at the back of suggestions made by these employees?

Table 26: 8.6: Employee voice

Table 8.7

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR015	"the essence is that employees were involved across the different locations where the company operates in kind of identifying the changes that needed to be made to the process".	The involvement and engagement of all employees in achieving a change in process and culture is crucial. Therefore, the involvement and engagement of ALL employees in transitioning to SBPs implementation and culture is key.
2.	HR013	"I think another way we drive the change is that we do what we call internal eeerrmm staff engagement. So we do have quarterly staff engagement sessions and this is all staff now so it is not a particular group and that is a great way to cascade change"	Staff engagement portrayed as important in organisational culture change process.
3.	HR014	"…talking with the stakeholders. Trying to ensure that people perform their tasks. Providing jobs that are	Communication, employee motivation and engagement.

		enriched, jobs that make meaning to people".	
4.	HR018	"it is the responsibility of the HR personnel to create engagement activities that are targeted that ensuring that these values are driven within the organisation".	HR's role and function in building organisational culture/ desired values through employee engagement.

Table 27: 8.7: The importance of staff engagement

Table 8.8

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR018	"if you are able to connect your performance management process to your reward management process or philosophy, you will have a greater chance of success than when they operate independently. So for my organisation for example, all merits, all performance pay as an organisation is tied to a compilation of your goal setting and appraisal for the year".	Reward used to ensure that employee actions are aligned to the organisational goals.
2.	HR014	"During appraisals, how is the change aspect looked at? What value is given… in terms of what strength and values is given to rewarding good positive behaviour? How is it reinforced? What reinforcements do you have for positive behaviour"?	Again, emphasis on the use of HR functions to help drive change. This can be aligned to the drive for implementation of SBPs… performance management, reward management: reward for positive sustainability behaviours.
3.	HR013	"the second way is that the second reward system… sort of method outside of performance management system is that we reward the right behaviours in platforms like our town hall that I mentioned".	Reward highlighted as key in creating the desired behaviours and culture within the organisation. This can be aligned to creating the desired behaviours for sustainability.
4.	HR015	"You also measure to what extent they are adapting or adopting the change and sometimes you make it part of their goals and when you make it part of their goals, you assess them on that and you take actions based on that and it impacts the pay determination and the bonus sharing".	Organisation ties reward to actions/ tasks of employees.

Table 28: 8.8: The use of reward as a source of motivation in goal attainment

Table 8.9

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR013	"one key thing HR also those in driving change in an organisation is that we try to reward the right behaviours. So, a reward system is very key for HR"	HR's use of their function of reward management to ensure alignment to the organisation's sustainability agenda.
2.	HR015	"yes of course. HR is really at the heart of any people related changes we want to make. At the end of the day, the organisation is made up of people, employees, contractors and vendors and other stakeholders".	HR is involved due to the people element of the processes
3.	HR014	"I would say HR would facilitate the culture but culture change and all that is driven from the top. That is in my opinion and looking at my organisation"	Respondent's opinion of the role of HR within the organisation – to support in creating the desired organisational culture.
4.	HR017	"My role, like I said is to ensure that we have the right people that will take that vision forward and not those that will draw us back".	HR's function of recruitment and selection used to ensure employee alignment to the organisation's goals.
5.	HR014	"not all, aspects that HR are involved in. so it won't be all the business functions because HR cannot cover all the business functions so it is aspects that are related to people, industrial harmony, performance, wellbeing".	Respondent clarified that HR is not involved in the monitoring of all business practices in the organisation but involved to some extent.
6.	HR015	"we don't just see it as challenges, we see it as part of our work because if you give those managers new responsibilities, it is our responsibility also to make sure that they are trained and supported to be able to perform those roles very well".	Such training and support can also be given by HR to enable embedding of desired sustainability behaviours.
7.	HR013	"yes HR sits at that table. I think the point to also note is that most of the efforts are usually collaborative in terms of ownerships and where it resides from a SBP perspective… the community angle, how we show up externally blah blah blah. HR in my experience is bang in the middle of that".	HR is shown as having oversight of not just the employees within the organisation but also how the organisation's practices are perceived externally in the host communities and how employees interact with the host communities.
8.	HR013	"Also, I need to make the bigger point that when we get the results from the survey and it tells us that questionable and unsustainable business practices are being done… This survey is also	A part of HR function to act of feedback or ensure feedback is acted upon with regards to SBPs

		relating to your team and HR can step in when the results show questionable practices. HR ensures follow through for when actions need follow through".	and the organisation being sustainable.

Table 29: 8.9: HR function within the organisation that supports SBPs implementation

Table 8.10

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR015	"I think at this time, it is a given for most multi nationals for HR to be involved in not just the planning people relating things but generally the business planning from the topmost to the lowest. It is a given. For my organisation, HR is involved in every level".	HR portrayed as being active participants in the strategic planning within the organisation. This can be used to drive sustainable business practices implementation within the organisation.
2.	HR013	"HR is also feared because they think we have a lot of power. I don't think that all of that power is true, but I think some of the power is exaggerated but the leverage that gives is that when HR is in the room".	Strong statement to say HR is feared but claims that is positive and brings about desired results. This authority and power (perceived or actual) may be used to drive SBPs implementation within the organisation.
3.	HR017	"yes. Once the decision is being made from the top management which the director HR is part of, then he brings that message down to our directory".	HR involved in the strategic decision making within the organisation. HR tasked with the responsibility of disseminating the required information to all employees within the organisation.
4.	HR014	"there is a representative of HR in the board so if there is a discussion like that of course HR will be aware that this is where we are going to".	HR as a part of the decision-making process to ensure that the people element of any proposed change/ process is considered for potential challenges to implementation.
5.	HR015	"We need people to adopt those behaviours. HR is also involved at the highest level to say OK how best can we get our people? So, HR is involved in the planning as well as in the implementation of such organisational change". "HR is part of the executive leadership team".	Change within the organisation is embedded by HR right from the strategic level. Tailor the change to achieve best results.
6.	HR014	"HR has a very high level of authority. There is no… I don't know how to describe it. When you hear the name HR called, you will understand that there is a lot of eermm weight behind it in any	HR portrayed as having high level of authority which can be used to

		organisation (laughs). So in terms of authority, I think there is enough, more than enough".	drive SBPs implementation through their functions.
7.	HR013	"So, at the top of the helms in company x global leadership team, we have HR director there".	Presence of HR at the strategic level is shown. The need for HR to be part of the top management as well possess required power and authority has been highlighted by previous findings as important in helping drive SBPs implementation in oil and gas organisations.
8.	HR018	"should HR be involved at the centre table where decisions are made and all of that? hypothetically, yes… company x values that and our HR is usually at the forefront of change initiatives like that for this organisation for they are better able to articulate, engage and track the process".	Mixed messages being sent by the respondent. He admits that hypothetically HR should be involved in the strategic decision making of the organisation though this is a matter if great debate globally. After much probing, he finally stated that HR sits at a strategic level within the organisation. This creates some scepticism of the response.
9.	HR014	"HR's level of contribution is very, very high. Most of the data you get on employees is kept by HR. how is that data analysed? What is it used for? How is it used to help management decision? So, this is a typical example of how data is used to help make strategic decisions".	Respondent is emphatic that HR is involved in the strategic decision making within the organisation through information provided by HR. Resourcing and use of employee data to make strategic decisions.
10.	HR017	"So, their involvement is not something you can underestimate"	HR portrayed as having the right level of authority and control within the organisation to help drive processes implementation.

Table 30: 8.10: HR as a part of the leadership of the organisation

Table 8.11

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR017	"you need to learn a lot things whether it has to do with you or not. You need to know to be active. Don't forget that they will assume that you know everything as a HR person. It is an assumption and that is the more reason you need to do more, be available, learn, know a lot, do	HR business partners need to be knowledgeable on the nature of their respective business functions. This is portrayed as a challenge to HR in successful monitoring and evaluation of processes.

		a lot before you can become a successful BP".	
2.	HR013	"We also do have even at HR we have a change and engage team so that's what we call them. The change and engage team is the team that takes the change architecture framework that I mentioned in terms of translating it and bringing it to life".	HR being involved in organisational culture change – HR's tactical and operational role in enabling effective and efficient implementation of strategic initiatives.
3.	HR014	"so it now goes back to what is the training received by HR people in driving that? what is the communication that is being passed"?	HR needs to have the knowledge of the change/ culture to be embedded. They need to buy into it as well to enable efficient inculcation of desired behaviours, knowledge and subsequent culture.
4.	HR013	"I think the final point I'll make along this line is that we role model… it is called role modelling the change and this is where we as HR we not just preach the change, but we live the change… is also something very key to enhance the culture across the organisation".	For HR to role model sustainability behaviours, they need to first have the awareness, possess the knowledge and passion to drive SBPs implementation.
5.	HR014	"I think the major challenge will be HR not aligning with the business. If you misalign with the business of course you will have issues because you are not being supportive to the overall goal of the business".	Again, respondent highlighting the importance of HR to buy into and align with the business strategy so that they can drive the process more effectively.
6.	HR013	"…but the point really to made is that HR is seen as "the natural custodian of change" Hr is seen as the owner of the change for most times. That exception in itself places on us the responsibility to manage, drive and advocate whatever change is being proposed".	This position/ function could be used to create enabling organisational culture for SBPs implementation.

Table 31: 8.11: HR as a role model of desired organisational values and behaviours

Table 8.12

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR017	There is a lot. What we have done in our organisation to simplify HR… there are some people we call HR business partners. They are closer to the business they are supporting. They sit with them. So, any change in culture… you are not looking for head of HR, it is the HR	HR is portrayed as having many roles to play in building organisational culture. The first is through their function as HR

		business partner… because the person is the first contact.	business partners within the organisation.
2.	HR015	"So at the lower level and the mid management level where you have supervisors and managers, you also have embedded business partners who are there to help them to execute those plans at their own levels"	HR managers situated at different levels and units within the organisation to support in the effective implementation of the change process strategy, tactical and operational.
3.	HR018	": my position is Senior HR Business Partner" "Now from the business itself you also have the appropriate word would be… for want of a better word, I will more or less just call it gatekeepers who are going to then uphold those values. championing these change initiatives, working hand in hand with the heads of the business. That is something that we have created in company x as an organisation. So, this team in the different businesses, they are called the HR business partners".	Decisions from the strategic level then gets actioned at the tactical level where HR then decides on how best to operationalise the strategic decisions to get the best results. This includes assigning roles within HR, in this case to the HR business partners who in turn 'recruit' employees that would champion this embedding process at the operational level.

Table 32: 8.12: HR function - HR business partners

Table 8.13

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR015	"It is all good for leaders to talk about we need to reduce cost, we have to be more environmentally aware but if you cannot translate those changes and behaviours into measurable actions that can be used to hold employees and teams accountable, then it may just be ordinary rhetoric"	The importance of the need to have measurable actions is highlighted. HR can utilise their function of performance management to ensure that tasks are undertaken, and goals met.
2.	HR018	"…you will expect that if our performance management philosophy is development focused when you are checking in with your manager on a monthly basis or as regular as possible, you will get those feedback and you will find out areas where you need to improve"	Regular monitoring of employee actions and tasks to ensure goals are achieved and employees are supported to achieve them.
3.	HR014	"During appraisals, how is the change aspect looked at? What value is given…	Again, emphasis on the use of HR functions to help drive change. This

		in terms of what strength and values is given to rewarding good positive behaviour? How is it reinforced? What reinforcements do you have for positive behaviour"?	can be aligned to the drive for implementation of SBPs… performance management, reward management: reward for positive sustainability behaviours.
4.	HR013	"… some of the change we want to see in that regard we have sort of incorporated it into our performance in such that when you are being assessed at the end of the year based on what you've done"	The respondent surmises that to ensure that employees perform their tasks and work towards set goals, they need to be appraised based on those actions. In addition, in the case of building a new culture or introducing a new process, this change needs to be built into the employee's appraisal to guarantee it remains a point of focus.
5.	HR015	"So, essentially HR helps to drive this thing by implementing tangible and measurable responsibilities for employees and supervisors and then continually reporting on how far because if you have those measuring metrics that you assign to people…"	HR is positioned to set measurable responsibilities for employees and go further to monitor them to ensure they remain focused on set goals.

Table 33: 8.13: The importance of performance management

Table 8.14

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
1.	HR013	"I think one of the ways we do monitor these things is what I mentioned early is the company x people survey and what the annual survey result is telling us. That is how we know that whatever change we are putting in place is working eermm another way is through our different… so we have what we call reporting platforms	Surveys as a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of processes within the organisation.
2.	HR017	"So, at the long run after implementation, we now evaluate and ask what we planned to achieve, have we achieved it? If we have not achieved it, why have we not achieved it and what are the intervention that we need to get this achieved? This is being driven by HR rep which has worked in line with different functions heads, department heads and line managers".	Monitoring and evaluation data collected by HR through their Business Partnering role and this is fed back to top management for decision making purposes.
3.	HR014	"mostly surveys. Asking questions to get eerrmm the response from people". "exactly. So it is mostly surveys, getting the feedback eerrmm including eerrmm how often do you communicate? How often do you make people aware of it? Those are the things that we look at".	Employee surveys used as a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation and organised by HR. Claim that HR monitors all of the organisation's (business) practices. Also, communication is emphasised

			as crucial in building organisational culture.
4.	HR013	"The information from the reporting platform and flaunting of the rules is fed back to HR and responsible because the investigation and punitive behaviour and whatever mitigation and whatever punitive action that will be taken against anyone is a HR decision essentially".	HR involved in monitoring and evaluation through its disciplinary function.
5.	HR015	"So what that means is that the feedback you get in the first quarter is factored in and you try to take corrective actions to see if you can address them and give employees opportunity. So, reassess those areas. you can actually measure whether you are progressing or not progressing on certain categories of that survey. That is another way of measuring that the strategies and tactics that you have adopted to address a particular issue is working or not working… that will help you to take necessary actions".	More opportunities for employee voice to be heard. Opinions and suggestions fed back to management and actions taken. Monitoring and evaluation – review processes to ensure they remain effective and efficient.
6.	HR017	"There is a way they business partners (BP) give them (employees) support and help them gather necessary information that will help you to evaluate if their process makes sense. To what degree are we getting the desired results that we need. You can't partner with a function that you don't understand the ins and out of that function. When it comes to the involvement of HR in ensuring SBPs, it is a huge one. It should not be underestimated or overlooked because as a business it could hurt at the end of the day".	HR's role in monitoring and evaluation cannot be underestimated. This is done using their business partnering function. In addition, HR needs to have knowledge of their designated business functions.

Table 34: 8.14: Monitoring and evaluation within the organisation

Table 8.15

Government involvement (or lack of)

	Research participant	Quotations	Findings – researcher's interpretation based on responses
	HR013	"it is difficult when government is not in support of something just because the picture of who they are, government and they regulate us, you then have to be mindful of how you navigate those sensitive areas".	Highlights lack of full government support as well as the presence of fragile relationship between the actors.

	HR018	From an external perspective, from a government perspective in terms of even improving the governance system within the business and to ensure that you do not encourage corrupt practices.	Government involvement in regulation of oil and gas practices.
	HR014	"my industry is quite regulated because of government involvement so you can imagine that if you are not strong on sustainability, even the government will force you to do what you have to do because of their regulatory rules"/	The Nigerian government's involvement in the industry through regulations to ensure that oil and gas practices are sustainable.
	HR013	"I think the external one, the way we are perceived by our partners which is how we do business and how our partners such as JV and government and how they see us is very important. The external relations team and the government relations team have a way of harnessing the information"	Importance of maintaining a good image and relationships with external stakeholders is highlighted.

Table 35: 8.15: Government involvement (or lack of)

APPENDIX 10

SECOND DATA COLLECTION EXERCISE – CODING PROCESS

OPEN CODING – THEMES FROM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS	AXIAL CODING – CATEGORIES BASED ON FREQUENCY	MAIN CODES
• Top management as a driver of change of culture • Feedback on monitoring and evaluation actioned by mgt • Top management buy-in important • Top management required to approve funds for SBPs implementation • Resistance to change by top management • Management need to encourage employee voice • Employee feedback not actioned by top mgt.	• Importance of top management buy-in to ensure effective SBPs implementation • Top management as an obstacle to SBPs implementation • Profit over sustainability	• Top management involvement crucial for effective SBPs implementation
• Planning of changes • Embed changes • Communication important to build culture • Knowledge on strategy important • Innovation requires communication • Reward for sustainable behaviours • Engagement achieved through communication • The right culture is key to SBPs implementation • Employees' awareness of benefits of change/ SBPs	• Communication of organisation's strategies to employees • Organisational culture and change is important • Employee voice • Employee engagement • Reward as a source of motivation	• Factors within the organisation needed to enable SBPs implementation
• HR business partnering • HR should role model the change • HR as part of the top management • HR set strategy and ensure compliance • Performance management as a role of HR • HR involved in embedding change • HR needs to have knowledge	• HR functions supporting SBPs implementation • HR as part of leadership – authority and control • HR as a role model for transition towards required change • HR business partners important in the organisation	• HR business partnering and functions aligned to SBPs implementation

• HR presence at the strategic level • HR involved in monitoring and evaluation • HR is part of decision making • HR as an intermediary between mgt & employees		

APPENDIX 11

MY RESEARCH AND COVID–19 – A REFLECTION

The pandemic

Covid-19 is an illness caused by the novel corona virus which affects the lungs and airways. According to WHO (2020), the spread of infection is said to have started in Wuhan, People's Republic of China in December 2019 and gradually spread to the rest of the world in 2020. "Deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction" of the virus, WHO finally declared the situation a pandemic on 11th of March 2020 (WHO 2020). The rate of spread and associated deaths was unprecedented and has been likened to the Spanish flu of 1920. Numbers at a glance (worldwide) according to WHO as at July 2020 were: 14, 348, 858 confirmed cases, 603, 691 associated deaths across 216 countries (WHO 2020). Within the UK context, according to the information on the UK government website, as at July 2020, almost 300,000 cases of Covid-19 were recorded in the UK with over 45,000 associated deaths (gov.uk 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic brought along with it fear and uncertainty as this was a virus which left scientists, and indeed everyone, both befuddled and wary. Many questions were playing on people's minds and these made up news headlines day after day: How did this virus come about? How is it transmitted? How can one avoid contacting it? How can it be cured? How can one survive an infection? How soon can a vaccine be developed? With each passing day supposed new information about the virus were released and sometimes debunked a short while later. Most of the information around the virus were speculation and the resulting fear and uncertainty led to increased stress as there was a lot of information out there on how to keep safe and avoid contracting the virus. This led to difficulty in deciding which was potentially true or false information. Not only was havoc been wreaked on physical health, many other facets of people's lives were also affected including mental, financial and emotional health. Not only was there concern for health and the 'fight' to stay alive, there was also financial burden/ stress placed on individuals and families due to job loss or threat of job loss. This was a global havoc with regular news of major organisations going into administration talk less of smaller organisations not worth mentioning on the news. Every conversation with family and friends and even strangers at work centred around the pandemic and its impact on lives and the global economy.

Personally, there was the constant worry both about myself and my family members all over the world especially my elderly parents and this made it quite difficult to be focused. Most of my time was devoted

to keeping in constant touch with them to ensure they are keeping well and adhering to every rule in the book to avoid contacting the deadly virus. In addition, this constant communication also helped act as a great support system in those trying times.

I am one of the fortunate ones who was unaffected by job loss which meant that I still had a job to go to despite the lockdown. In addition, I was required to go into work as I was classed as a key worker and could not work remotely. That increased the fear and stress of being outdoors when majority of people were indoors and safely out of harm's way or so it seemed.

All of this uncertainty and fear meant that I was not in the right frame of mind to work on my research with my desired speed and focus. I noticed that there was no motivation to work as well as low productivity – indeed there was hardly any work done in the first 4-6 weeks of the pandemic.

General wellbeing

With the negative impacts of the pandemic abound, I had to find ways to stay above it all and take care of my mental, physical and psychological health. The steps I took included: talking about everything except my research, searched for things that were entertaining. I had to find ways to relax. I do love playing games on my phone and I found more games to play (to the detriment of my phone battery) and this helped to take my mind off the worries of the pandemic. In addition, certain games were used to induce sleep as that became a problem due to worry.

At some point I stopped listening to the news as it was always doom and gloom and death statistics in bold red figures. I decided for my sanity, I would not listen to the news rather ask family members to give me a brief on world news (not Covid-19 related) once every couple of days.

With all that was going on, I came to a number of realisations:

- I realised that I could not make research progress without a positive general wellbeing therefore finding ways to stay above it all, as stated above, became absolutely important.
- Though a horrible pandemic, Covid-19 could not be used as an excuse not to complete my research.
- There are people who achieved more during the pandemic and others less. I 'unfortunately', fell into the category of those who achieved slightly less than hoped for. This in itself led to increased stress levels because though hardly any work (none at all at some point) was being done on my research at the time, it was still constantly at the back of my mind that there was work to do and I had a timeline to keep to.

- At some point I realised that if I wanted my research to be current and impactful, I had to pay attention to the happenings with regards to the pandemic and think about the effects and how it aligns to my research.
- There is a need to strike a balance between what was going on in the world and what I needed to achieve.
- A need for a change of mindset from feeling negative all the time to a positive mindset. Realisation of the need to recalibrate. However, this realisation did not come quickly and following the realisation, it was still a slow start in initiating the required change.

What actions were taken?

- As earlier stated, I am one of the fortunate ones who was unaffected by job loss which meant I had to go into work. So, I created a structure – fixed days for work and fixed days for study. This created an illusion of normalcy and helped me both mentally and psychologically.
- I identified peak days and times in the day and aimed to work on my research within those times.
- I set little and manageable daily targets and worked towards achieving them. They were not always achieved however they served as a way to motivate myself and kept me working towards my goal.

What was gained?

I was able to participate (free of charge) in some online courses and webinars which ordinarily would have required travel and attendance fees.

It was a period of self-reflection as well as reflections on my research and this led to Improved technological prowess, also helping elderly parents improve theirs (they can now proudly carry out video calls) as well due to the need for constant communication.

With regards to my research, two sets of work were planned following the supervisory meeting held in early March 2020 as well as individual target which I had set. See summary in the table below.

	PRE – COVID PLAN	COVID ERA
	❖ Agreed workplan pre Covid-19: 1. Create a table of themes, sub-themes and extracts. 2. Generate initial results from transcripts 3. Complete second level data collection and commence data analysis	❖ Table of themes, sub-themes and extracts was created ❖ Initial results of data collection were generated following the review of the transcripts ❖ Second level data collection could not be completed due to the pandemic. However, following the completion of my reading list which included 'What is Discourse Analysis?' by S. Taylor (2013) and a chat with my supervisor, it was agreed that other sources of data will be explored to address this gap and find answers to outstanding questions in my research.
	❖ Complete outstanding literature review of the oil and gas industry and practices	❖ Slow progress made on completion of literature review as well as completion of a draft of chapter three (oil and gas section).
	❖ Explore the possibility of a document review	❖ Inability to obtain documents that could be used for the proposed document review. This led to a reassessment of previously chosen method. ❖ Plan to review newspaper articles on oil and gas operations in the Niger Delta including effects of practices and reactions of host communities.
	❖ Second data collection exercise	❖ Contact respondents virtually and plan for telephone interviews.

Table 1.1: Impact of Covid-19 on my research

Impact of Covid-19 on my research

Literature review

As earlier stated, it was initially very difficult to get into the right frame of mind to carry out any work on my research. This meant that my previous plan to have completed my outstanding comprehensive literature review at a certain time was unachieved.

Data collection

Following a brief summary of my research findings submitted to my supervisory team in March 2020, it was suggested that there were a number of unanswered questions which required further interviews. However, with the pandemic, the plan to collect more data had to be postponed as it was unclear how the request to respondents would be received. As an alternative, I made informal contact to my previous

respondents in a bid to keep the line of communication open and also agreed with my supervisory team to carry out telephone or email interviews at a later date.

In a bid to carry on with the research as much as possible despite the setback, my supervisors and I agreed that it would be beneficial to carry on with literature review especially given the fact that I decided to look into a slightly different angle in my research – the community perspective through the media.

Direction of the research

Though a decision was taken to add a different perspective to my research to present a more wholistic view of the problem statement, the overall direction of the research was not affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

General timeline

Due to the postponement of my second level data collection, other aspects of my working timeline were impacted. This included completion of my data analysis and a further knock on effect on my write up. Consequently, the initial timeline for the research had to be reviewed and updated to reflect the revised plan for completion of the research.

Supervisory team and contact

Despite all that was going on with regards to the pandemic, there was continued communication between my supervisory team and I. A number of meetings were held via Microsoft teams and Zoom – both formal and informal meetings. These were very productive as it served as a way to maintain some form of normalcy and well as a means for the team to offer their usual guidance and support to me especially with regards to my research direction.

I must state also that the consideration given to me by my supervisory team through their understanding that the pandemic is a stressful time and therefore offered flexibility really helped if not reduce stress but not heighten it, of which I am grateful.