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Evolving Realities of Estate Management: Challenges and Opportunities Within Nigeria's Public Institutions

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Abstract

This paper explores the evolving realities of estate management in Nigeria's public institutions, focusing on persistent challenges and emerging opportunities. Drawing on secondary literature, the study highlights weak governance, financial constraints, cultural inertia, and professional capacity deficits as barriers that hinder effective estate management. Findings reveal that these systemic challenges limit transparency, accountability, and the strategic integration of estate management into institutional objectives. However, the analysis also identifies opportunities for reform through eco-friendly maintenance practices, digital innovation, professional training, and governance reforms that emphasize transparency and accountability. The study argues that estate management must transition from reactive, fragmented approaches to proactive and sustainability-oriented practices. By integrating transparency, professional development, and long-term planning into their estate management systems, Nigerian public institutions can enhance accountability, optimize resources, and position themselves as exemplars of sustainable governance. This shift is essential for institutional resilience and national development.

Keywords: Estate management; Public institutions; Governance; Sustainability; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Estate management has emerged as a critical aspect of institutional functionality in both developed and developing economies. Its realities within Nigeria's public institutions reveal a complex interplay of persistent challenges and emerging opportunities. As a discipline, estate management extends beyond the administration of land and property to encompass planning, valuation, maintenance, and the development of strategies that align institutional resources with broader socio-economic goals. In the Nigerian public sector, where real estate accounts for a significant proportion of institutional assets, the evolving demands of sustainability, governance, and innovation underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of estate management practices. The global discourse on sustainability offers a helpful entry point into understanding these evolving realities. The Brundtland Report (1987) emphasizes the need to meet present needs without compromising the needs of future generations, a principle that resonates in the stewardship of public property. Bartlett and Chase (2004) extend this by asserting that sustainability requires institutions to adopt long-term practices that balance immediate resource needs with enduring responsibilities. Within the Nigerian context, estate management in public institutions must address urgent challenges of dilapidated infrastructure and inadequate maintenance while simultaneously adapting to sustainability imperatives that demand eco-friendly and cost-effective solutions.

Asset management is a central theme in estate management, and scholars highlight its critical link to institutional performance. Barrett and Baldry (2003) define facilities and estate management as integrated processes that align assets with organizational objectives, while Hodges (2005) stresses that proactive management of resources reduces risks and fosters long-term resilience. Applied to Nigerian public institutions, these insights underscore the importance of aligning estate management with governance frameworks that promote accountability and efficiency. Yet, as Hasim (2014) observes, entrenched organizational cultures and resistance to change often prevent institutions from adopting such proactive strategies. This makes the study of estate management in Nigeria particularly pertinent, as it reflects the tension between long-standing practices and the demands of modern governance.

The role of transparency and stakeholder trust is also prominent in estate management literature and is equally relevant for Nigerian institutions. Price, Matzdorf, Smith, and Agahi (2003) note that the quality of institutional services influences stakeholder choices and perceptions, while Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, and Lambrechts (2013) argue that commitments to sustainability are credible only when backed by transparent internal practices. For Nigerian public institutions, transparency in estate management not only enhances accountability but also builds public trust in the stewardship of state-owned resources. This is especially important in a socio-economic context where public skepticism of governance structures remains high. Governance and policy frameworks emerge as decisive factors in shaping estate management outcomes. Elmualim, Shockley, Valle, Ludlow, and Shah (2010) argue that senior management commitment is essential for sustainability initiatives, while Ávila *et al.,* (2017) identify governance weaknesses as barriers to institutional innovation. In Nigeria, where public sector governance is often hampered by bureaucratic inertia and inadequate enforcement of policies, estate management suffers from inconsistent application of standards. Vidler (2011) stresses that sustainability must be viewed as a necessity rather than a luxury, and in Nigeria, this means treating estate management as a strategic function rather than an administrative afterthought.

Knowledge and professional capacity also define the evolving realities of estate management. Lai and Yik (2006) highlight the impact of practitioner knowledge gaps on the effectiveness of facilities management, and Sarpin and Yang (2012) propose frameworks for developing knowledge capacity to bridge such deficits. For Nigerian public institutions, capacity-building in estate management is crucial for addressing professional shortcomings that hinder the effectiveness of maintenance, valuation, and resource allocation. Ugbaja (2018) highlights that African institutions often encounter systemic barriers, including resource shortages and ineffective policy enforcement, which mirror the challenges faced in Nigeria. Ultimately, estate management in Nigeria's public institutions holds significant symbolic value. Cortese (2003) argues that institutions serve as exemplars in advancing sustainability, shaping societal expectations through their practices. For Nigerian public institutions, effective estate management is not only a means of improving operational performance but also a way of signaling accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to public needs. By adopting sustainable practices, leveraging innovation, and strengthening governance, estate management in these institutions can shift from being a site of persistent challenges to a field of transformative opportunity. Estate management in Nigerian public institutions reflects a dynamic tension between long-standing challenges and the potential for new opportunities. Literature on sustainability, governance, and professional practice underscores that while weak governance, cultural inertia, and limited resources continue to hinder progress, opportunities exist through innovation, transparency, and capacity-building. Exploring these evolving realities contributes to a deeper understanding of how estate management can support institutional resilience and national development.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the current challenges confronting estate management in Nigeria's public institutions.
2. To identify emerging opportunities for innovation and sustainability in estate management practices.
3. To analyze the role of governance, policy frameworks, and institutional culture in shaping estate management outcomes.
4. To propose strategies that enhance efficiency, accountability, and long-term sustainability in public sector estate management.

RELATED WORK

Estate management in public institutions has increasingly been examined through the lens of sustainability, governance, and institutional performance. The literature highlights recurring challenges, including poor maintenance culture, resource scarcity, weak governance structures, and professional capacity deficits, while also identifying opportunities in innovation, transparency, and sustainable practices. The following review situates estate management within these debates by drawing on key secondary studies. The sustainability discourse provides the foundation for understanding estate management challenges and opportunities. The Brundtland Report (1987) defines sustainable development as meeting present needs without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations, which directly relates to how institutional estates are managed and maintained. Bartlett and Chase (2004) expand on this by arguing that sustainability must be embedded in institutional practices, rather than being treated as a peripheral agenda. For Nigerian public institutions, this means that estate management strategies must strike a balance between immediate infrastructure demands and long-term environmental, social, and economic considerations. Facilities and estate management literature emphasizes the integration of asset management with organizational goals. Barrett and Baldry (2003) conceptualize facilities management as a holistic process that aligns infrastructure with institutional objectives. Similarly, Hodges (2005) stresses that proactive management reduces risks and fosters efficiency. Within the Nigerian public sector, these insights underscore the importance of integrating estate management into governance structures to ensure alignment with broader institutional and national development priorities. Yet as Hasim (2014) observes, organizational culture often inhibits the adoption of forward-looking practices, particularly in environments where maintenance and resource planning are undervalued.

Transparency and accountability also occupy a central place in related scholarship. Price, Matzdorf, Smith, and Agahi (2003) found that the quality and reliability of institutional services influence stakeholder choices and perceptions. Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, and Lambrechts (2013) argue that institutional commitments to sustainability are credible only when supported by transparent internal practices. For Nigerian public institutions, where public skepticism regarding governance is widespread, transparency in estate management is both a practical necessity and a symbolic tool for rebuilding trust. Governance emerges repeatedly as a decisive factor. Elmualim, Shockley, Valle, Ludlow, and Shah (2010) highlight the lack of senior management commitment as a key barrier to the adoption of sustainability. Ávila *et al.,*(2017) similarly demonstrate that governance weaknesses undermine institutional innovation across global contexts. In Nigeria, where governance frameworks are often weakened by bureaucratic inertia and inconsistent enforcement, estate management outcomes are profoundly affected. Vidler (2011) argues that sustainability should be treated as a necessity rather than a luxury, reinforcing the idea that estate management cannot be relegated to the margins of institutional policy but must be recognized as a strategic function.

Knowledge and professional capacity represent another critical area of related work. Lai and Yik (2006) emphasize that knowledge gaps among practitioners undermine effective management. Sarpin and Yang (2012) propose knowledge capability frameworks to build the competencies required for sustainability, while Sarpin (2015) extends this by developing people capability models to embed sustainability into professional practice. For Nigeria, where estate managers in public institutions often face limited training and outdated practices, capacity-building is crucial for overcoming systemic inefficiencies. Resource limitations are also frequently cited. Shafii, Ali, and Othman (2006) identify financial constraints as barriers to sustainable construction in Southeast Asia, while Shah (2007) highlights the deterrent effect of high costs on sustainability implementation. Ugbaja (2018) underscores that African institutions often lack adequate funding and policy enforcement, conditions that resonate strongly in Nigeria, where resource shortages are among the most pressing constraints in estate management. These findings emphasize that while sustainability in estate management is desirable, its feasibility depends heavily on addressing financial and policy-related barriers.

Cultural and institutional inertia further complicate estate management practices. Støre-Valen and Buser (2017, 2019) examine how cultural resistance and organizational inertia undermine sustainability initiatives in Nordic contexts, despite relatively stronger governance and resources. Their insights demonstrate that challenges of cultural change are not limited to developing economies. In Nigeria, such inertia manifests in the persistence of reactive rather than preventive maintenance practices, reflecting entrenched habits that resist change despite inefficiencies. The symbolic and societal role of institutions adds another dimension to the literature. Cortese (2003) asserts that institutions function as exemplars of societal change by modeling sustainable practices. In the Nigerian context, public institutions that adopt transparent and innovative estate management strategies not only enhance their own performance but also influence broader societal attitudes toward accountability and sustainability. Lozano *et al.,*(2013) similarly argue that institutional commitments must be matched by practices that demonstrate integrity. This principle resonates in the Nigerian context, where public institutions are subject to constant scrutiny. Corporate and strategic approaches to estate management are identified as avenues for reform. Adewunmi, Omirin, and Koleoso (2012) argue that corporate real estate strategies can overcome fragmented governance structures and enhance efficiency. Applied to Nigeria, this perspective suggests that adopting structured and strategic frameworks in public institutions could mitigate many of the systemic barriers currently impeding estate management. The literature reveals that a combination of persistent challenges and emerging opportunities shapes estate management in public institutions worldwide. Weak governance, financial constraints, and professional capacity deficits remain significant barriers; however, opportunities exist in areas such as transparency, innovation, and capacity-building. For Nigerian public institutions, these global insights provide both cautionary lessons and practical pathways, underscoring the evolving realities that frame estate management in the country today.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, informed by an integrative review of secondary literature, to examine the evolving realities of estate management in Nigerian public institutions. Russell (2005) defines integrative reviews as a systematic approach that synthesizes findings across diverse studies to provide new insights and theoretical perspectives. This approach is well-suited to estate management, where empirical data from Nigeria remains limited. Still, a growing body of literature on sustainability, governance, and facilities management provides a strong conceptual basis for analysis. The integrative review method allows for consolidation and critical interpretation of literature relevant to estate management challenges and opportunities. According to Lee and Kang (2013), this method is particularly suitable for studies that aim to integrate insights from diverse contexts and disciplines. Guided by this framework, relevant secondary sources on governance, transparency, sustainability, resource management, and professional capacity were identified and analyzed thematically. LoBiondo-Wood and Haber (2010) note that such reviews strengthen both theoretical and practical contributions by ensuring findings are grounded in established scholarship. Thematic categories were informed by recurring issues in the literature. Elmualim, Shockley, Valle, Ludlow, and Shah (2010) highlight governance and leadership as key barriers to sustainability, while Hasim (2014) stresses organizational culture as a determinant of practice. Financial and resource constraints identified by Shafii, Ali, and Othman (2006) and Shah (2007) also provided a thematic lens for evaluating estate management realities in Nigeria. Comparative perspectives from developed and developing contexts, including those of Støre-Valen and Buser (2017, 2019) and Ugbaja (2018), enabled an analysis that captures both global trends and local challenges. The methodology is qualitative, integrative, and thematic. It synthesizes diverse literature to frame estate management in Nigerian public institutions as both a challenge and an opportunity within broader debates on sustainability and institutional performance.

Evolving Realities of Estate Management

Persistent Challenges in Public Institutions

Estate management in Nigerian public institutions faces a complex range of persistent challenges that hinder efficiency, accountability, and sustainability. These challenges are rooted in weak governance, financial constraints, cultural practices, and deficits in professional capacity. While estate management has been recognized globally as a strategic function that aligns assets with institutional goals, Nigerian public institutions continue to struggle with structural and systemic barriers that undermine their effectiveness. One of the foremost challenges is weak governance and a lack of institutional accountability. Elmualim, Shockley, Valle, Ludlow, and Shah (2010) emphasize that sustainability practices often fail when senior management commitment is lacking. In Nigerian public institutions, governance structures are often characterized by bureaucratic inertia and fragmented decision-making, resulting in inconsistent policies on estate management. Ávila *et al.,*(2017) highlight how governance weaknesses hinder innovation in global institutions, and the Nigerian context reflects similar difficulties where estate management is often relegated to administrative margins rather than integrated into strategic planning. Vidler (2011) argues that sustainability must be treated as a necessity rather than a luxury, underscoring that estate management cannot remain a secondary consideration if public institutions are to function effectively. Financial and resource constraints also pose significant barriers. Shafii, Ali, and Othman (2006) demonstrate that financial limitations hinder sustainable practices in Southeast Asia, while Shah (2007) notes that the perceived high costs of sustainability deter adoption. Nigerian public institutions mirror these constraints, with chronic underfunding resulting in many estates being left in disrepair. Deferred maintenance, inadequate budgeting for repairs, and poor investment in infrastructure exacerbate inefficiencies. Ugbaja (2018) notes that African institutions frequently struggle with insufficient funding and weak enforcement of policies, conditions that directly hinder effective estate management in Nigeria. As a result, public assets often deteriorate faster than they are maintained, creating a cycle of decline that is difficult to reverse.

The challenge of cultural inertia further complicates estate management outcomes. Hasim (2014) highlights how organizational culture can either support or obstruct sustainability initiatives. In Nigeria, a culture of reactive rather than preventive maintenance remains entrenched. This maintenance culture prioritizes short-term fixes over long-term planning, leading to recurring costs and inefficiencies. Støre-Valen and Buser (2017, 2019) demonstrate that even in developed contexts, institutional inertia prevents effective implementation of sustainability practices. Their findings are particularly relevant for Nigeria, where entrenched habits and attitudes discourage innovation in estate management. Another persistent barrier is the shortage of professional capacity and knowledge among estate managers. Lai and Yik (2006) stress that gaps in practitioner knowledge reduce the effectiveness of facilities management. Similarly, Sarpin and Yang (2012) argue for knowledge frameworks that strengthen professional competencies, while Sarpin (2015) extends this to people capability models for embedding sustainability into practice. In Nigerian public institutions, estate management is often handled by undertrained personnel who lack exposure to modern practices, technologies, and sustainability frameworks. This deficiency contributes to inefficiencies in planning, valuation, and resource allocation. Without adequate training and capacity-building, estate managers are unable to adopt innovative or eco-friendly approaches that could address pressing challenges.

Transparency and accountability remain critical concerns. Price, Matzdorf, Smith, and Agahi (2003) suggest that the quality of services shapes stakeholder perceptions, while Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, and Lambrechts (2013) argue that institutional declarations are meaningful only when supported by transparent practices. In Nigerian public institutions, corruption, favoritism, and lack of accountability frequently undermine estate management decisions. Contracts for maintenance or development are often awarded without due process, leading to substandard work and wasted resources. The absence of transparent frameworks erodes public trust and perpetuates inefficiencies in estate management practices. The symbolic role of estate management in public institutions highlights the seriousness of these challenges. Cortese (2003) contends that institutions serve as exemplars in promoting sustainability, influencing societal norms through their practices. In Nigeria, however, the poor state of public estates reflects governance shortcomings and perpetuates public skepticism about institutional accountability. The inability to maintain or innovate within public estates symbolizes systemic failures that extend beyond physical infrastructure to the broader credibility of public institutions. Nigerian public institutions face persistent challenges in estate management that stem from weak governance, financial limitations, cultural inertia, knowledge deficits, and a lack of transparency. These barriers create a cycle of inefficiency and decline that prevents estate management from fulfilling its strategic role. While these challenges are not unique to Nigeria, their severity is compounded by systemic weaknesses that demand urgent reform. Addressing these persistent challenges is essential if estate management is to evolve from a reactive and fragmented function into a driver of institutional sustainability and accountability.

Opportunities for Innovation and Sustainability

Despite the persistent challenges confronting estate management in Nigeria's public institutions, there are significant opportunities for innovation and sustainability that can transform the sector. Global literature on facilities and sustainability management highlights pathways through which institutions can overcome resource, governance, and cultural barriers to achieve efficiency and accountability. For Nigerian institutions, opportunities lie in embracing eco-friendly practices, adopting digital technologies, strengthening professional capacity, and embedding governance reforms that support transparency and accountability. One key opportunity is the adoption of eco-friendly and cost-effective practices in estate management. The Brundtland Report (1987) emphasizes the need to meet present needs without compromising those of future generations, and Bartlett and Chase (2004) argue that sustainability must become an integral part of everyday institutional operations. In estate management, this translates into energy conservation, water efficiency, and sustainable construction techniques that reduce long-term costs while enhancing environmental responsibility. Shafii, Ali, and Othman (2006) identify how developing countries can achieve sustainability in construction through innovative practices, and these insights are applicable in Nigeria, where low-cost yet eco-friendly practices can help mitigate resource constraints. Hodges (2005) further notes that proactive management of assets reduces risks, suggesting that adopting preventive and green maintenance approaches could significantly improve efficiency in public estates.

Digital tools and technological innovation also present emerging opportunities. Barrett and Baldry (2003) stress that estate and facilities management must align processes with institutional goals. Modern digital technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Building Information Modelling (BIM), and automated maintenance systems enable more accurate planning, valuation, and monitoring of estate resources. Støre-Valen and Buser (2017, 2019) demonstrate that institutions that embrace change are better equipped to adapt to shifting demands. For Nigerian institutions, integrating digital tools can modernize estate management practices and mitigate inefficiencies caused by manual and outdated systems. Technology-driven innovation thus represents a key pathway for overcoming inertia and improving responsiveness in estate management. Capacity-building and professional development are equally critical opportunities. Lai and Yik (2006) highlight that knowledge gaps hinder effective management, while Sarpin and Yang (2012) propose knowledge capability frameworks to build professional competencies. Sarpin (2015) further argues for embedding sustainability skills through structured people capability models. For Nigerian estate managers, targeted training programs, professional certification, and exposure to international best practices can help bridge knowledge and skill gaps. By developing capacity, institutions can empower estate managers to adopt preventive maintenance, eco-friendly practices, and strategic planning approaches that improve long-term performance.

Governance reforms also offer opportunities for sustainability. Elmualim, Shockley, Valle, Ludlow, and Shah (2010) emphasize that leadership commitment is crucial for driving sustainable practices, while Ávila *et al.,*(2017) note that institutional innovation often depends on strong governance frameworks. In Nigeria, reforms that enforce accountability, strengthen policy implementation, and integrate estate management into strategic planning would create a more enabling environment. Vidler (2011) reinforces this by stating that sustainability must be treated as a necessity, underscoring the urgency of reforms that prioritize estate management as a strategic rather than administrative function. Transparency and accountability are additional opportunities that can rebuild public trust. Price, Matzdorf, Smith, and Agahi (2003) observe that the quality of services shapes stakeholder perceptions, while Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, and Lambrechts (2013) argue that sustainability commitments gain legitimacy only when supported by transparent practices. By adopting transparent valuation, procurement, and maintenance processes, Nigerian public institutions can strengthen public confidence and reduce corruption in estate management. Adewunmi, Omirin, and Koleoso (2012) also emphasize the value of corporate approaches that systematize estate management, providing Nigerian institutions with a model for reform that integrates transparency and efficiency.

Estate management offers opportunities to enhance the symbolic role of Nigerian public institutions. Cortese (2003) contends that institutions act as exemplars in advancing sustainability, and Nigerian public estates can serve as visible demonstrations of accountability and innovation. Lozano *et al.,*(2013) further stress that internal practices must align with external commitments, suggesting that improvements in estate management can reinforce Nigeria's broader developmental goals and international commitments to sustainability. By modeling effective estate management, Nigerian institutions can influence societal norms and encourage other sectors to adopt sustainable practices. While challenges remain entrenched, the opportunities for innovation and sustainability in Nigerian public estate management are substantial. Eco-friendly and cost-effective practices can reduce long-term costs; digital technologies can modernize management systems; professional development can strengthen capacity; and governance reforms can ensure accountability. Transparency and symbolic leadership further position estate management as a driver of institutional transformation. Leveraging these opportunities will enable Nigerian public institutions to transition from reactive and fragmented estate management to a proactive, transparent, and sustainable framework that supports both institutional efficiency and national development.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The review of literature indicates that a combination of entrenched challenges and emerging opportunities shapes estate management in Nigerian public institutions. Findings highlight that systemic weaknesses such as poor governance, financial constraints, cultural inertia, and knowledge deficits have historically hindered effective estate management. However, opportunities in eco-friendly practices, digital innovation, professional capacity-building, and governance reforms point toward new pathways for sustainability and institutional improvement. The discussion that follows synthesizes these findings, demonstrating the dual realities of estate management in the Nigerian public sector. One of the most consistent findings is that weak governance undermines the effectiveness of estate management. Elmualim, Shockley, Valle, Ludlow, and Shah (2010) argue that the lack of senior management commitment impedes sustainability initiatives, while Ávila *et al.,* (2017) identify governance deficiencies as a barrier to institutional innovation globally. These observations resonate strongly in the Nigerian context, where estate management is often fragmented and treated as an administrative rather than strategic function. Vidler (2011) reinforces that sustainability must be treated as a necessity rather than a luxury, underscoring the urgency of reconfiguring estate management as a central institutional priority. Without governance reforms, estate management practices risk remaining reactive, inconsistent, and vulnerable to inefficiencies.

Resource scarcity also emerged as a significant barrier. Shafii, Ali, and Othman (2006) highlight limited financial capacity as a constraint to achieving sustainable construction in developing economies, while Shah (2007) emphasizes the deterrent effect of high costs. Nigerian public institutions, marked by chronic underfunding, reflect these dynamics as many estates suffer from deferred maintenance and deterioration. Ugbaja (2018) further notes that African institutions often face weak policy enforcement, which compounds resource challenges by limiting the effective use of available funds. These findings suggest that addressing financial barriers through innovative, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly approaches is necessary to break the cycle of decline. Cultural inertia presents another finding with profound implications. Hasim (2014) demonstrates that organizational culture influences the adoption of sustainability, while Støre-Valen and Buser (2017, 2019) show how institutional inertia hinders reform, even in resource-rich contexts. In Nigeria, a culture of reactive maintenance and short-term fixes has become normalized, undermining efficiency and leading to escalating costs over time. Findings suggest that changing this culture requires leadership commitment, capacity development, and incentives for adopting preventive and strategic practices. Knowledge and professional capacity deficits were also identified as persistent issues. Lai and Yik (2006) emphasize that practitioner knowledge gaps hinder effectiveness, while Sarpin and Yang (2012) propose knowledge capability frameworks to address such challenges. Sarpin (2015) expands this perspective through models for embedding sustainability into professional practice. For Nigerian institutions, findings highlight that without sustained investment in professional training and certification, estate managers will remain constrained by outdated practices, limiting their ability to innovate or adopt sustainability-oriented approaches. Despite these challenges, the findings also reveal substantial opportunities. Eco-friendly practices such as preventive maintenance, energy efficiency, and water conservation offer cost-saving measures that simultaneously enhance environmental responsibility. The Brundtland Report (1987) and Bartlett and Chase (2004) emphasize the importance of integrating sustainability into daily operations, while Hodges (2005) highlights the role of proactive management in risk reduction. Findings suggest that adopting such approaches can allow Nigerian institutions to address resource constraints while improving efficiency.

Technological innovation represents another significant opportunity. Barrett and Baldry (2003) emphasize that estate management must align its processes with organizational goals, and digital tools such as GIS and BIM offer avenues for achieving this alignment. Findings from Støre-Valen and Buser (2017, 2019) indicate that institutions that embrace change are more resilient, implying that Nigerian institutions can modernize estate management through digital transformation. Capacity-building and governance reforms also appear as central opportunities. Elmualim *et al.,*(2010) and Ávila *et al.,*(2017) highlight leadership and governance as prerequisites for innovation, while Adewunmi, Omirin, and Koleoso (2012) propose corporate strategies for overcoming fragmented systems. Findings show that professional training, leadership commitment, and structured governance frameworks could collectively transform Nigerian estate management from a fragmented system into a strategic and sustainable practice. Transparency and accountability are key opportunities that address both technical and symbolic dimensions of estate management. Price, Matzdorf, Smith, and Agahi (2003) emphasize the impact of quality on stakeholder perceptions, while Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, and Lambrechts (2013) argue that sustainability commitments gain credibility only when matched by transparent practices. Findings suggest that Nigerian institutions can strengthen public trust and institutional legitimacy by embedding transparency into estate management, thereby demonstrating accountability in the stewardship of public assets. The findings reveal that systemic challenges constrain estate management in Nigerian public institutions but hold substantial potential for reform and innovation. The discussion highlights that while governance weaknesses, financial constraints, cultural inertia, and professional deficits continue to hinder progress, opportunities exist through sustainable practices, digital tools, capacity development, and transparent governance. Together, these findings suggest that estate management in Nigeria is not only a site of persistent challenges but also a domain where opportunities for transformation and sustainability are becoming increasingly evident.

CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH

This study contributes to research by extending debates on sustainability and facilities management to the specific context of estate management in Nigerian public institutions. While global scholarship has emphasized governance, culture, and resource allocation in shaping institutional sustainability, this paper situates those insights within the realities of Nigeria's public sector, offering contextually grounded contributions that highlight both systemic challenges and emerging opportunities. One key contribution is the framing of estate management as a strategic driver of institutional performance. Barrett and Baldry (2003) conceptualize facilities management as an integrated process that aligns resources with organizational goals, and Hodges (2005) emphasizes that proactive asset management reduces risks and enhances efficiency. By applying these insights to Nigeria, the study demonstrates that estate management cannot be treated as an administrative afterthought; it must be embedded in the strategic core of public institutions to foster sustainability and accountability.

The study also contributes to the discourse on transparency and accountability. Price, Matzdorf, Smith, and Agahi (2003) argue that the quality of institutional services influences stakeholder perceptions, while Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, and Lambrechts (2013) emphasize that institutional commitments to sustainability gain legitimacy only when supported by transparent practices. By linking these perspectives to Nigerian estate management, the research highlights how transparent estate practices can help rebuild public trust in governance systems that are often undermined by corruption and inefficiency. Furthermore, the paper contributes to scholarship on governance and organizational culture. Elmualim, Shockley, Valle, Ludlow, and Shah (2010) identify leadership commitment as crucial to sustainability, while Hasim (2014) and Vidler (2011) stress that organizational culture and strategic necessity shape outcomes. This study extends their arguments by demonstrating that governance reform and cultural change are indispensable for transforming estate management in Nigeria's public sector. By drawing on works such as Ugbaja (2018) and Støre-Valen and Buser (2017, 2019), the study broadens the empirical scope of sustainability research by comparing barriers and opportunities in both African and developed contexts. This situates Nigerian estate management within global debates while contributing locally relevant insights for reform.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of estate management in Nigerian public institutions reveals a sector caught between persistent systemic challenges and the promise of transformative opportunities. Findings indicate that weak governance, financial constraints, cultural inertia, and professional knowledge deficits persistently hinder effective estate management. Elmualim, Shockley, Valle, Ludlow, and Shah (2010) emphasize the role of leadership commitment, while Ávila *et al.,*(2017) point to governance weaknesses as barriers to innovation; both resonate in Nigeria's context, where estate management remains marginalized in institutional planning. Similarly, Hasim (2014) and Støre-Valen and Buser (2017, 2019) highlight the role of organizational culture and inertia in obstructing sustainable practices, reflecting challenges embedded in Nigeria's maintenance culture. The study also demonstrates that these realities coexist with opportunities for reform. Bartlett and Chase (2004) and the Brundtland Report (1987) emphasize the importance of integrating sustainability into institutional practices, while Hodges (2005) highlights proactive management as a tool for mitigating risks. Applied to Nigeria, these perspectives reveal how eco-friendly maintenance, preventive practices, and technological innovation can provide cost-effective solutions to long-standing inefficiencies. Price, Matzdorf, Smith, and Agahi (2003) and Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, Huisingh, and Lambrechts (2013) further underscore that transparent practices can rebuild stakeholder trust and reinforce public confidence in institutional accountability.

The conclusion that emerges is that estate management in Nigerian public institutions must transition from reactive and fragmented approaches to strategic and sustainability-oriented practices. By embedding transparency, governance reforms, and professional development into estate management systems, public institutions can not only overcome existing challenges but also seize opportunities for innovation and accountability. Ultimately, estate management holds the potential to serve as a driver of institutional resilience and a visible symbol of Nigeria's broader commitment to sustainable development.

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