OPTIMIZING WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION: ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES IN NIGERIA

[1*]Hyginus Chidiebere Onyekachi Unegbu, [2]Danjuma S. Yawas, [3]Bashar Dan-asabe, [4]Abdulmumin Akoredeley Alabi

Department of Mechanical Engineering, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria
Samaru, Zaria, Kaduna State
[1]chidieberehyg@gmail.com, [2]dyawas@yahoo.com, [3]bashar.dan.asabe@gmail.com,
[4]abdulmm2001@gmail.com
(*) *corresponding author*

Abstract

This study investigates waste management practices in Nigeria's construction industry, with a focus on evaluating the adoption of circular economy (CE) principles. Using a mixed-methods approach, including structured surveys and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, the research highlights significant barriers to CE implementation. The findings reveal that while awareness of CE principles is moderately high, actual adoption remains limited due to financial constraints, weak regulatory enforcement, inadequate technical expertise, and insufficient infrastructure. The industry primarily relies on unsustainable waste disposal methods such as landfilling and open dumping, with limited recycling and material reuse. The study identifies opportunities for improving waste management through government-led financial incentives, regulatory reforms, capacity-building programs, and investment in recycling infrastructure. Furthermore, the adoption of digital tools like Building Information Modeling (BIM) and strategies such as modular construction are highlighted as promising approaches to reducing waste and enhancing resource efficiency. The research concludes with recommendations for a collaborative effort between government, industry, and educational institutions to drive the adoption of CE practices. Implementing these strategies could lead to significant environmental, economic, and social benefits for Nigeria's construction industry.

Keywords: *Circular economy, construction waste, Nigeria, sustainability, regulatory enforcement, recycling, Building Information Modeling (BIM)*

INTRODUCTION

The construction industry is pivotal to global economic development but generates approximately 35% of the world's waste, including concrete, metals, glass, and plastics, much of which ends up in landfills, exacerbating environmental degradation and resource depletion [1]. In response, sustainable construction practices, particularly the circular economy (CE), offer transformative solutions to minimize waste and optimize resource use [2].

The CE shifts from a linear "take-make-dispose" model to a sustainable "reduce-reuse-recycle" framework, extending resource lifecycles through recycling, reuse, and regeneration [3, 4]. In construction, CE adoption has proven to reduce waste, conserve energy, and minimize environmental harm, as evidenced by successful implementations in countries like the Netherlands, Sweden, and Japan, where waste reduction coexists with economic growth [5].

In Nigeria, rapid urbanization and infrastructure expansion challenge the construction sector's ability to manage waste. Current systems depend on inefficient landfills and open dumping, posing severe environmental and public health risks [6]. Despite global trends favoring CE principles, Nigeria lags due to limited stakeholder awareness, weak regulations, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient government support [7, 8]. With urban populations growing, construction waste volumes are expected to rise, straining existing systems and intensifying health and environmental crises [9, 10].

The overexploitation of natural resources underscores the urgency of CE adoption. Nigeria's construction industry heavily consumes raw materials like sand, gravel, and timber, contributing to deforestation, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation [11]. An unstructured approach to recycling exacerbates resource depletion [12]. Embracing CE could reduce raw material demand, promote waste reuse, and enhance sustainability [13].

Improper construction waste disposal also endangers public health. Waste is frequently dumped in public areas, waterways, and residential zones, causing pollution linked to respiratory illnesses and waterborne diseases [14]. CE strategies can alleviate this environmental health burden, fostering healthier communities.

This study evaluates CE adoption in Nigeria's construction sector and proposes strategies to improve waste management, guided by three research questions: (1) What are the current waste management practices in Nigeria's construction industry? (2) To what extent are CE principles being adopted? (3) What strategies can optimize waste management and promote sustainability? These questions address the pressing need to integrate CE within Nigeria's resource-intensive, urbanizing economy.

The study is significant for its focus on reducing the environmental impact of construction waste in Nigeria, demonstrating CE's potential to conserve resources and mitigate health and environmental risks. Additionally, it fills a knowledge gap in CE adoption in developing countries, offering evidence-based insights to inform policies, improve construction practices, and guide sustainable waste management strategies in Nigeria and similar contexts [16, 17].

The construction industry generates 30% to 40% of global solid waste, including concrete, metals, wood, and glass [18]. Traditional disposal methods, such as land-filling and incineration, are environmentally unsustainable, causing greenhouse gas emissions, soil degradation, and resource depletion, while also wasting recyclable materials and increasing economic burdens [19, 20].

Developed countries have implemented sustainable waste management strategies to address these issues. The European Union's Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) requires a 70% recycling or reuse rate for

construction and demolition (C&D) waste [21]. The Netherlands aims for 100% material circularity in construction by 2050 through recycling, reuse, and sustainable design [22]. Similarly, Sweden promotes material recovery to minimize landfill waste [23].

In contrast, developing countries, including Nigeria, face challenges such as weak regulations, financial constraints, and inadequate infrastructure [24]. In Nigeria, informal disposal systems dominate construction waste management, exacerbating environmental and public health risks.

The circular economy (CE) extends resource lifecycles through reuse, recycling, and regeneration, minimizing waste in construction via closed-loop systems and sustainable design [25, 26]. Unlike the linear "take-make-dispose" model, CE repurposes materials at the end of a building's life cycle.

Design for deconstruction enables easy disassembly and reuse of materials like steel and timber, reducing demolition waste, as seen in Japan and Denmark [27, 28]. Building Information Modeling (BIM) enhances CE implementation by tracking materials, predicting waste, and optimizing designs for reuse and recycling [29, 30].

Integrating CE and digital tools transforms construction waste management, improving efficiency and reducing environmental impacts.

Nigeria's construction sector, driven by urbanization, faces major waste management challenges, with most construction waste disposed of in landfills and open dumps, causing pollution and health risks [31]. The lack of formal collection and recycling infrastructure exacerbates these issues, hindering sustainable practices [32].

Despite regulatory frameworks like NESREA, weak enforcement allows many construction firms to operate without over-sight, relying on informal waste collectors who lack training and proper equipment, releasing hazardous substances into the environment [33–35]. Low awareness of circular economy (CE) principles among stakeholders further impedes progress, as most firms still follow linear waste management approaches [36]. Financial constraints and the absence of government incentives also deter CE adoption [37].

Effective solutions require stronger regulatory enforcement, capacity building, and greater public-private collaboration.

Implementing circular economy (CE) principles in developing economies like Nigeria faces significant challenges. A major barrier is the lack of recycling infrastructure, forcing reliance on traditional disposal methods due to insufficient facilities [38]. Limited financial resources further hinder investments in sustainable waste management systems [39].

Knowledge gaps among construction professionals also impede CE adoption, as many lack expertise in sustainable design and recycling concepts like design for deconstruction [40]. Informal waste

management practices, dominated by untrained workers, complicate integration of formal CE strategies [41]. Cultural and regulatory barriers exacerbate the issue, with firms prioritizing short-term savings over sustainability and weak enforcement enabling unsustainable disposal practices [42, 43]. Addressing these issues demands policy reform, targeted training, and stricter regulatory enforcement.

Adopting circular economy (CE) principles in Nigeria's construction sector offers significant environmental, economic, and social benefits. Reusing and recycling materials like concrete, steel, and wood can conserve natural resources, reduce deforestation, and mitigate land degradation, addressing the nation's resource depletion concerns [44, 45]. Recycling materials such as steel and aluminum also requires less energy, reducing waste, greenhouse gas emissions, and the construction sector's carbon footprint, aligning with global sustainability goals [46].

Economically, CE can drive growth through investments in recycling plants, material recovery facilities, and secondary materials markets, creating jobs and new revenue streams [47]. Moreover, CE supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting resource efficiency, reducing environmental degradation, and strengthening Nigeria's resilience in the global transition to sustainable development [48].

METHODS

A. Data Collection Methods

This study utilized both primary and secondary data collection methods to comprehensively assess current waste management practices and the adoption of circular economy (CE) principles in Nigeria's construction industry. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and structured surveys. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 key stakeholders, including representatives from construction firms, waste management companies, and regulatory agencies in Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. The interview questions covered a range of topics, including the current state of waste management, challenges in implementing CE principles, and potential strategies for improving sustainability in the construction sector. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility, enabling participants to share insights on issues beyond the predefined questions [49]. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour, and all interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure data accuracy.

In addition to interviews, structured surveys were distributed to 100 construction firms, 30 waste management companies, and 20 representatives from relevant regulatory agencies. The survey was designed to gather quantitative data on waste management practices, the level of awareness of CE

principles, and the perceived challenges in implementing sustainable waste management strategies. Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of different waste management practices, such as material recycling, reuse, and recovery, and to identify barriers to CE adoption. The surveys provided a broader understanding of industry practices and attitudes towards sustainability, complementing the qualitative insights from the interviews [50]. The combination of interviews and surveys allowed for a triangulation of data, strengthening the study's findings by ensuring that insights from different sources were cross-validated [51].

Secondary data were collected from a variety of sources, including government publications, industry reports, academic journal articles, and case studies. These sources provided context for the study by highlighting global best practices in CE implementation in the construction industry, as well as offering a comparative perspective on waste management policies and frameworks in other countries [52]. This secondary data was particularly useful in identifying international case studies that could serve as benchmarks for Nigeria's construction sector.

B. Sampling Technique

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to ensure that participants with relevant expertise and direct involvement in construction waste management and CE implementation were included. This non-probability sampling method was deemed appropriate because the study sought to obtain insights from individuals who had specific knowledge of waste management practices and sustainability issues in the construction industry [53]. The sample included 150 participants from construction firms, waste management companies, and regulatory bodies, with participants selected based on their roles and responsibilities within their organizations.

To further enhance the representativeness of the sample, a snowball sampling technique was used. During the initial interviews and surveys, participants were asked to recommend other professionals or organizations that could contribute valuable insights to the study. This method allowed the research team to access a broader range of stakeholders, including individuals who may not have been identified through purposive sampling alone. Snowball sampling is particularly useful in studies where identifying all potential participants is challenging, such as in sectors with fragmented or informal waste management systems, as is the case in Nigeria [54]. This combined sampling approach ensured that the study captured diverse perspectives from across the construction industry, waste management sector, and government agencies.

C. Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis of data collected from the surveys and interviews involved both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a holistic understanding of the research problem. Quantitative data from the structured surveys were analyzed using a range of statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages, were calculated to summarize the data and provide a clear overview of waste management practices and CE awareness in Nigeria's construction industry [55]. Additionally, more advanced techniques, such as factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, were employed to explore the relationships between key variables influencing CE adoption. Factor analysis helped identify underlying variables, or "factors," that explain correlations among observed variables related to waste management practices and sustainability challenges [56]. This method was particularly useful in reducing the dimensionality of the data and identifying key drivers of CE adoption.

Multiple regression analysis was used to model the relationship between the level of CE adoption (dependent variable) and a range of independent variables, such as company size, financial resources, awareness of CE principles, and the presence of regulatory support [57]. This allowed the research team to determine which factors were most strongly associated with CE implementation, providing insights into how different variables affect the likelihood of firms adopting sustainable practices. By employing regression analysis, the study was able to quantify the impact of various organizational and external factors on waste management outcomes, offering actionable insights for policymakers and industry leaders.

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data [58]. The interview transcripts were carefully coded, and recurring themes related to challenges in waste management, opportunities for CE adoption, and the role of policy and regulation in promoting sustainability were identified. NVivo software was used to facilitate the coding process, allowing for the efficient organization and categorization of large volumes of qualitative data. Thematic analysis provided a nuanced understanding of the barriers and enablers of CE adoption in Nigeria's construction industry, complementing the quantitative findings from the survey data.

D. Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into waste management practices and the potential for circular economy adoption in Nigeria's construction industry, several limitations must be acknowledged. One

limitation is the geographic scope of the study, which was limited to three major urban centers: Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. These cities were chosen because they are the largest construction hubs in Nigeria, but their waste management practices may not fully represent those in smaller cities or rural areas where construction activity is less intensive. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to the entire country, particularly regions with different economic or infrastructural contexts [59]. Future research could address this limitation by expanding the geographic scope of data collection to include a more diverse range of locations across Nigeria.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data from surveys and interviews. Although participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, there is always a risk of response bias, with some participants potentially overstating their compliance with sustainable practices or downplaying the challenges they face in adopting CE principles. To mitigate this risk, the study triangulated the primary data with secondary data from industry reports and government publications, helping to validate the findings [60]. However, this limitation remains a factor to consider when interpreting the results of the study.

Additionally, while the sample size of 150 participants was sufficient to provide a broad understanding of waste management practices in Nigeria's construction industry, a larger sample would have increased the robustness of the findings. Specifically, future studies could include more participants from smaller construction firms and rural areas to capture a more representative picture of the industry's waste management challenges. The study's reliance on a limited sample size may have also restricted the ability to explore more detailed sub-sectoral differences within the construction industry, such as differences between residential, commercial, and infrastructure projects [61].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings from the structured surveys and semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders in Nigeria's construction industry. The results are organized into four main areas: (1) an overview of current waste management practices, (2) an assessment of circular economy (CE) principles implementation, (3) barriers to effective waste management and CE adoption, and (4) potential for optimizing waste management strategies. Tables and figures are used where appropriate to support the findings.

A. Overview of Waste Management Practices in Nigeria's Construction Industry

The survey data revealed that waste management practices in Nigeria's construction sector remain largely inefficient. The majority of companies continue to rely

on unsustainable waste disposal methods, with 68% of respondents indicating that landfilling or open dumping is their primary method of managing construction waste. Table 1 summarizes the reported waste management practices.

This lack of sustainable waste management is further compounded by the fact that only 22% of the companies surveyed engage in any form of material recycling, and an even smaller proportion (10%) actively reuse materials from demolition or construction activities. These findings align with previous research, which has highlighted the limited recycling infrastructure available in Nigeria [62]. Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of companies that engage in different waste management practices.

The interviews revealed that the companies involved in recycling focus primarily on easily recyclable materials such as metals (particularly steel and aluminum), while other materials like concrete, wood, and plaster are typically discarded.

Table 1. Current Waste Management Practices in Nigeria's Construction Industry

Waste Management Practice	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Landfilling/Open Dumping	68
Recycling	22
Reuse of Materials	10
On-site Sorting of Waste	26
Informal Waste Collection	74

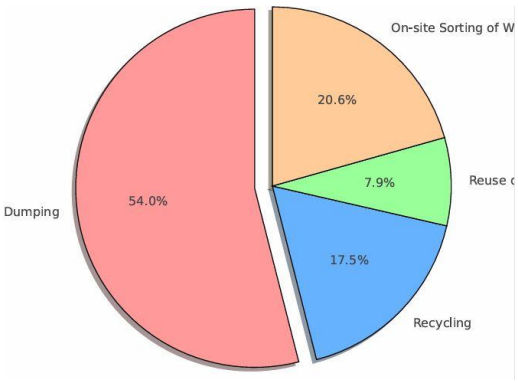

Figure 1. Distribution of Waste Management Practices in Nigerian Construction Firms

This practice mirrors global trends, where metal recycling is favored due to its high financial returns [63]. Additionally, 74% of respondents acknowledged that they do not separate waste materials by type before disposal, which significantly limits the potential for material recovery and recycling [64].

B. Assessment of Circular Economy Principles Implementation

The survey results showed a low level of circular economy (CE) principles adoption within Nigeria's construction industry. Only 15% of respondents reported that their companies actively implement CE strategies, such as designing for disassembly, material reuse, or cradle-to-cradle approaches. The data, as presented in Table 2, indicate that awareness of CE principles is growing, but actual implementation remains limited.

Several firms indicated that they were aware of CE concepts but had not implemented them due to financial constraints and lack of technical expertise. These barriers reflect findings from previous studies, where financial costs and insufficient knowledge of CE practices have been cited as significant impediments in developing economies [65]. Figure 2 illustrates the gap between awareness and implementation of CE principles across the construction industry.

Table 2. Awareness and Implementation of Circular Economy (CE) Principles

CE Adoption Indicator	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Awareness of CE Principles	58
Implementation of CE Principles	15
No Awareness of CE or Not Implementing CE	27

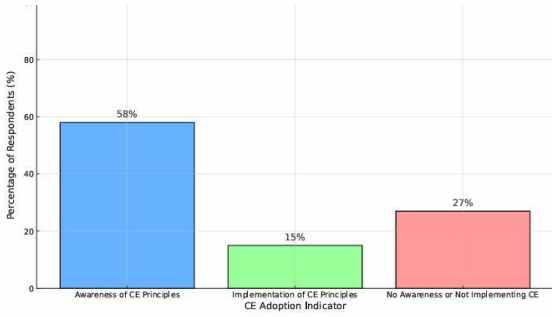

Figure 2. Awareness vs. Implementation of Circular Economy Principles in Nigeria

Large firms, particularly those with international partnerships, were more likely to adopt CE strategies, such as modular construction and the use of recycled materials. One such example was a multinational company that reported using modular building techniques, which allowed for the easier disassembly and reuse of building components. This finding is consistent with global best practices, particularly in countries like the Netherlands, where modular construction is used to reduce material waste [66].

C. Barriers to Effective Waste Management and Circular Economy Adoption

The study identified several barriers that hinder the adoption of effective waste management strategies and circular economy principles in Nigeria's construction industry. The most frequently cited barriers were financial constraints, regulatory enforcement, limited technical expertise, and insufficient infrastructure. These barriers are summarized in Table 3.

Financial Constraints: Over 70% of respondents indicated that high costs associated with implementing sustainable waste management practices, such as installing recycling facilities or retrofitting existing infrastructure, were major challenges. Smaller companies, in particular, struggled with the capital outlay required to invest in advanced waste management technologies or adopt circular economy strategies [67].

Regulatory Enforcement: Despite the existence of environmental laws and regulations, such as the NESREA Act, weak enforcement remains a critical issue. 65% of respondents stated that regulatory bodies lacked the capacity and resources to enforce waste management standards consistently. This lack of enforcement creates an environment in which many companies feel no pressure to adopt sustainable practices [68].

Table 3. Barriers to Waste Management and CE Adoption in Nigeria's Construction Sector

Barrier	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Financial Constraints	70
Lack of Regulatory Enforcement	65
Limited Technical Expertise	54
Insufficient Infrastructure	63

Limited Technical Expertise: The lack of knowledge and technical expertise required to design buildings for disassembly, implement material recovery systems, or incorporate lifecycle assessments was highlighted by 54% of respondents. Many construction professionals reported being unfamiliar with circular economy concepts and sustainable design strategies, which limits their ability to implement these practices [69].

Insufficient Infrastructure: Infrastructure deficiencies, particularly the lack of recycling plants and material recovery facilities, were cited by 63% of respondents as a significant barrier. Without adequate infrastructure, even firms willing to engage in recycling and reuse efforts face logistical challenges in doing so. This issue is prevalent in many developing countries, where recycling infrastructure is often underdeveloped [70].

D. Potential for Optimizing Waste Management Strategies

Despite these barriers, the study revealed several opportunities for optimizing waste management practices in Nigeria's construction sector. The majority of respondents (85%) supported the introduction of government incentives, such as tax breaks, subsidies, or low-interest loans, to encourage the adoption of sustainable waste management practices. Table 4 outlines the types of incentives that respondents believed would be most effective.

Building Information Modeling (BIM) was identified as a potential tool for improving resource efficiency and reducing waste. A few firms reported that they were already using BIM to manage material quantities more effectively and track waste generation throughout the construction process. Studies from other countries have shown that BIM can significantly enhance waste management by optimizing material use and minimizing waste during the design and construction phases [71].

Table 4. Preferred Government Incentives for Supporting Waste Management and CE Adoption

Incentive Type	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Tax Breaks for Sustainable Practices	45
Subsidies for Recycling Facilities	30
Low-Interest Loans for Infrastructure	25

Additionally, modular construction and recycling of building materials were seen as promising strategies for reducing construction waste. These strategies have been successfully implemented in developed countries, where they have led to significant reductions in waste and increased material recovery rates. With the appropriate regulatory support and investment in recycling infrastructure, these strategies could be adapted to Nigeria's context, helping to improve the sustainability of the construction industry [72].

E. Interpretation of Key Findings

The results of this study indicate a substantial gap between awareness and the actual implementation of circular economy principles in Nigeria's construction sector. Although 58% of the respondents were aware of CE concepts, only 15% reported integrating CE strategies into their operations. This discrepancy is consistent with previous studies in developing countries, where the transition from awareness to action is often hindered by systemic barriers [73]. In many cases, construction companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), lack the resources and expertise necessary to operationalize CE strategies [74]. This finding aligns with a broader global trend, where CE implementation lags behind awareness, particularly in industries with complex supply chains and material use, such as construction [75].

Moreover, the dominant use of landfilling and open dumping as the primary waste disposal methods, reported by 68% of respondents, underscores the unsustainable nature of current waste management practices in Nigeria's construction sector. Previous studies have similarly identified landfilling as the most common waste management approach in developing countries, largely due to the lack of adequate recycling infrastructure and the low cost of landfill disposal [76]. This reliance on unsustainable practices highlights the urgent need for improved regulatory frameworks and enhanced infrastructure to promote material recovery and recycling in the construction sector.

The study also revealed that only 22% of the companies engage in recycling, with the majority focusing on high-value materials such as metals, while materials like concrete and wood are often discarded. This selective recycling is driven by the relative ease and profitability of metal recovery, as noted in other studies [77]. In contrast, materials such as concrete and wood require more advanced processing technologies and infrastructure, which are often unavailable in Nigeria. This finding aligns with global trends, where metals like steel and aluminum are prioritized for recycling due to their high recovery value, while other materials are frequently overlooked [78]. This limited focus on recyclable materials suggests that there is substantial untapped potential for improving

recycling rates, particularly for materials that are currently underutilized.

F. Barriers and Opportunities for Circular Economy Implementation

The findings identified several key barriers that impede the effective adoption of CE principles in Nigeria's construction industry. These barriers—financial constraints, lack of regulatory enforcement, limited technical expertise, and insufficient infrastructure—are consistent with the challenges faced by other developing economies transitioning to more sustainable construction practices.

Financial Constraints: The study found that over 70% of respondents identified high implementation costs as a significant barrier to adopting sustainable waste management practices. This finding is consistent with existing literature, which frequently points to financial barriers as a primary obstacle in developing countries [79]. Many construction firms, particularly SMEs, lack the capital needed to invest in recycling facilities, sustainable materials, or modular construction techniques. Moreover, the high cost of imported recycling equipment, combined with a lack of government subsidies, exacerbates the financial burden on firms attempting to implement CE strategies [80]. This mirrors findings from similar studies in developing regions, where the financial challenges of transitioning to CE have been well documented [81].

Regulatory Enforcement: Although regulatory frameworks such as the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) Act exist to govern waste management in Nigeria, enforcement is weak. 65% of respondents cited insufficient regulatory enforcement as a major barrier, a finding that aligns with previous studies on waste management in developing countries [82]. Weak regulatory oversight enables construction firms to continue relying on unsustainable practices without facing significant penalties. This lack of enforcement has been highlighted in global studies as a critical obstacle to achieving sustainability in the construction sector [83]. Effective regulatory enforcement, as seen in countries like Sweden and the Netherlands, has played a key role in their successful adoption of CE principles [84]. Thus, strengthening Nigeria's regulatory capacity could significantly drive improvements in waste management.

Limited Technical Expertise: The study found that 54% of respondents identified a lack of technical expertise as a key barrier to implementing CE principles. This aligns with research from other developing countries, where a lack of technical know-how and expertise in sustainable design and material recovery frequently hinders CE adoption [85]. Many construction professionals in Nigeria are unfamiliar with advanced construction practices such as design for disassembly or lifecycle assessment, which are central to CE

strategies. This gap underscores the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives and training programs to equip construction professionals with the necessary skills to implement CE strategies effectively [86].

Infrastructure Limitations: A critical barrier highlighted in this study was the lack of infrastructure to support recycling and material recovery. 63% of respondents indicated that the absence of recycling facilities and material recovery plants was a major impediment to waste management optimization. This is consistent with findings from previous research, which suggests that infrastructure deficits in developing countries severely limit the ability to process construction waste for reuse [87]. For instance, while metals are commonly recycled due to established supply chains and facilities, materials like concrete and wood often end up in landfills due to the absence of processing plants [88]. Improving infrastructure is, therefore, a key priority for enabling circular economy adoption in Nigeria's construction sector.

G. Policy and Practical Recommendations

This study identifies key policy and practical recommendations to improve waste management and promote circular economy (CE) principles in Nigeria's construction industry:

1. Financial Incentives: Providing tax breaks, subsidies, or low-interest loans can encourage sustainable practices. Notably, 85% of respondents supported such measures. Japan's Subsidy for Recycling Facilities has successfully incentivized investments in recycling technologies, significantly reducing construction waste [89]. A similar approach in Nigeria could offset the costs of transitioning to CE practices.
2. Regulatory Reforms and Enforcement: Strengthened regulatory frameworks and better enforcement are essential. Increased funding for NESREA and stricter penalties for non-compliance could ensure adherence to waste management laws. For example, recycling quotas and landfill diversion targets in the Netherlands have driven CE adoption [90]. Nigeria could implement similar policies to promote compliance.
3. Capacity Building and Training: Bridging the technical knowledge gap is crucial. Collaborative capacity-building programs by the government, industry, and educational institutions can provide training on sustainable design, waste minimization, and CE principles. In South Africa, such initiatives have significantly improved waste reduction and recycling efforts [91]. Similar efforts in Nigeria could equip professionals with the skills to implement CE strategies.

H. Potential Impacts of Optimized Waste Management Strategies

Optimizing waste management in Nigeria's construction industry through circular economy (CE) principles offers substantial environmental, economic, and social benefits. Environmentally, increased recycling of materials like steel and aluminum can lower greenhouse gas emissions, conserve energy, and reduce reliance on landfills, mitigating the sector's environmental footprint and contributing to climate change efforts [92].

Economically, CE adoption can reduce costs by decreasing reliance on expensive virgin materials. A study by Adams et al. (2017) revealed that firms implementing CE strategies in construction save up to 30% on material costs, a crucial advantage amid rising raw material prices in Nigeria [93].

Socially, improved waste management reduces health risks linked to improper disposal. Recycling and material recovery can decrease pollution near construction sites and landfills, leading to better public health outcomes for nearby communities [94].

I. Comparative Analysis with Global Best Practices

The findings of this study highlight the need for Nigeria's construction industry to align with global best practices in waste management and circular economy adoption. Countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden, and Japan have made significant strides in integrating CE principles into their construction sectors through a combination of strong regulatory frameworks, financial incentives, and robust infrastructure. In Sweden, for example, the implementation of circular procurement policies has played a pivotal role in promoting material recovery and reuse in the construction industry [95]. Similarly, Japan's Building Materials Recycling Law has mandated the recycling of key construction materials, resulting in higher recycling rates and reduced landfill use [96].

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive evaluation of waste management practices in Nigeria's construction industry, with a focus on the potential for circular economy (CE) principles to enhance sustainability. The findings highlight a significant gap between awareness and implementation. While many construction firms recognize the importance of CE, they face challenges such as financial constraints, weak regulatory enforcement, limited technical expertise, and inadequate recycling infrastructure. As a result, unsustainable practices like landfilling and open dumping remain prevalent. Financial barriers, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), emerged as one of the most critical obstacles to CE adoption, with over 70% of respondents citing cost constraints as a key issue. The absence of recycling infrastructure and material recovery

facilities further limits large-scale adoption, especially for materials like concrete and wood, which require more complex processing.

Despite these challenges, the study identifies several opportunities to optimize waste management and promote CE principles. Financial incentives such as tax breaks, subsidies, and low-interest loans could ease cost burdens and encourage investment in sustainable waste management practices. Stricter regulatory enforcement, coupled with penalties for non-compliance, could promote greater accountability. Capacity-building and technical training initiatives would also equip construction professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to implement CE practices effectively.

The integration of digital technologies, such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), and strategies like modular construction offer additional opportunities for reducing waste. BIM allows for better material tracking, waste prediction, and optimized resource use, while modular construction minimizes material waste during production and assembly. To achieve a transition to circular economy practices, Nigeria's construction industry requires collaboration between government, industry stakeholders, and educational institutions. Supportive policies, financial incentives, and investments in recycling infrastructure will be essential to drive this shift.

The successful adoption of CE principles will yield significant environmental, economic, and social benefits. These include reduced waste generation, lower costs for construction firms, improved public health through reduced pollution, and the creation of new economic opportunities in the recycling and waste management sectors. By embracing circular economy principles, Nigeria’s construction industry can align with global sustainability goals, conserve natural resources, and contribute to a more sustainable future.

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