

A REVIEW OF BOARD GENDER DIVERSITY AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study critically examined the relationship between board gender diversity and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Nigeria through a systematic review of empirical literature. The study was motivated by the increasing recognition of gender diversity as an important corporate governance mechanism and the persistent inconsistency in empirical evidence regarding its influence on CSR outcomes. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was adopted to ensure a transparent and rigorous synthesis of existing studies. Relevant peer-reviewed articles were retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using predefined search criteria, resulting in the inclusion of twenty-seven empirical studies that met the established eligibility requirements. The review revealed that board gender diversity generally contributes positively to CSR disclosure, sustainability reporting, environmental responsibility, corporate philanthropy, stakeholder engagement, and corporate accountability. However, these positive outcomes were found to depend largely on complementary governance mechanisms, including board independence, institutional quality, regulatory enforcement, ownership structure, and organizational culture. The findings further showed that the Nigerian literature is characterized by methodological limitations, including the predominance of cross-sectional designs, sector-specific investigations, and reliance on disclosure-based proxies that provide limited insight into actual CSR performance. The review concludes that board gender diversity should be regarded as an important governance resource whose effectiveness depends on the extent to which female directors participate meaningfully in strategic decision-making rather than their numerical representation alone. The study contributes to the corporate governance literature by providing an integrated synthesis of fragmented empirical evidence and identifying important theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps that offer valuable directions for future research and policy development aimed at strengthening sustainable corporate governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Board gender diversity, Corporate social responsibility, Corporate governance, Sustainability reporting, Nigerian firms, Inclusive leadership.

1.0 Introduction

Corporate governance has increasingly recognized board diversity, particularly gender diversity, as an important determinant of organizational effectiveness and sustainable value creation. The growing inclusion of women on corporate boards reflects the belief that diverse boards are better equipped to provide balanced judgement, strengthen oversight, improve organizational transparency, and enhance organizational legitimacy. In emerging economies such as Nigeria, where corporate governance reforms continue to evolve, board gender diversity has received considerable scholarly and policy attention because of its potential to promote accountability and sustainability-oriented leadership (Akpan et al., 2025). Nevertheless, much of the existing literature assumes that appointing women to corporate boards automatically improves governance outcomes, with limited consideration of the institutional and organizational conditions that determine whether female directors can influence strategic decisions. Consequently, board gender diversity should be viewed not merely as a question of equitable representation but as a governance mechanism whose effectiveness depends on the broader governance environment.

Interest in board gender diversity has intensified alongside the growing emphasis on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as organizations are increasingly evaluated not only by their financial performance but also by their environmental, social, and ethical responsibilities. This shift is particularly important in Nigeria, where corporations operate within communities facing significant developmental, environmental, and infrastructural challenges. As a result, firms increasingly undertake community development projects, environmental protection programmes, and educational initiatives to strengthen their legitimacy and sustain positive stakeholder relationships (Kolawole, 2024). Previous studies have suggested that governance characteristics, including board diversity, influence corporate commitment to CSR activities (Kolawole, 2024). However, attributing CSR performance primarily to board composition may oversimplify a governance process that is simultaneously shaped by organizational strategy, regulatory expectations, industry characteristics, and broader institutional influences.

The theoretical argument supporting board gender diversity is grounded in the expectation that directors with diverse backgrounds contribute broader professional experiences, different cognitive perspectives, and stronger ethical awareness to board deliberations. Empirical evidence from Nigerian listed companies generally supports this proposition by associating female board representation with stronger oversight, improved sustainability reporting, enhanced stakeholder engagement, and greater value creation (Ada et al., 2024; Akpan et al., 2025; Olayiwola et al., 2024). These findings suggest that gender-diverse boards may encourage more socially responsible corporate behaviour through greater sensitivity to stakeholder concerns and stronger commitment to ethical governance. Nevertheless, most of these studies establish statistical associations rather than clear causal relationships and often assume that female directors possess sufficient influence to shape board decisions. Such assumptions may not reflect organizational realities where women remain underrepresented or occupy largely symbolic positions, thereby limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully to governance processes.

Despite growing global recognition of gender diversity as a governance priority, female representation on corporate boards in Nigeria remains relatively modest. Women occupy approximately 31 percent of board positions among companies listed on the Nigerian Exchange NGX 30 (Michael, 2025), reflecting gradual progress but also the persistence of structural and socio-cultural barriers to senior leadership. Existing studies argue that limited female participation may weaken board independence, reduce ethical oversight, and diminish

organizational responsiveness to stakeholders (Adegbite & Nakajima, 2022; Okoye & Ezeani, 2023). While these concerns are important, many studies pay insufficient attention to other governance characteristics that may equally influence corporate behaviour. Likewise, patriarchal organizational cultures, restricted professional networks, and limited leadership development opportunities continue to constrain women's progression into board positions (Adeola & Oladimeji, 2023; Arowolo & Lawal, 2024). These realities suggest that improving governance requires more than increasing the numerical representation of women; organizations must also create institutional conditions that enable female directors to participate fully in strategic deliberations and corporate decision-making.

Empirical evidence on the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR in Nigeria remains inconclusive. Several studies report that greater female representation on corporate boards enhances CSR engagement through improved transparency, sustainability reporting, environmental responsibility, and stronger stakeholder relationships (Saidu & Umar, 2024; Sanyaolu et al., 2023; Olayiwola et al., 2024; Akpan et al., 2025; Ada et al., 2024). These findings support the view that gender-diverse boards promote more responsible corporate behaviour. However, much of this evidence is derived from specific sectors, particularly banking, manufacturing, and healthcare, thereby limiting the generalisability of the findings to the wider Nigerian corporate environment. Moreover, variations in research design, industry coverage, and the measurement of both board gender diversity and CSR have contributed to inconsistent empirical conclusions (Kolawole, 2024; Akinleye & Agbetuyi, 2025; Yusuf & Ojo, 2024).

In contrast, other studies question whether board gender diversity independently improves CSR outcomes. Evidence from the financial sector indicates that the relationship between female board representation and corporate performance or CSR is either weak or statistically insignificant (Aladejebi et al., 2026). These findings suggest that effective corporate governance cannot be explained solely by board gender composition, as governance outcomes are also influenced by factors such as board independence, regulatory quality, organizational culture, and the broader institutional environment (Hassan et al., 2024; Mustapha et al., 2025). Consequently, the inconsistent evidence reported across industries highlights the need for a more critical evaluation of the conditions under which board gender diversity contributes to responsible corporate behaviour.

These inconsistencies reveal important gaps in the existing literature. Much of the Nigerian evidence remains fragmented across sectors, while relatively few studies critically synthesise the available findings to explain why the reported relationships differ. Existing studies also devote limited attention to the methodological and theoretical differences that shape empirical outcomes, making it difficult to develop a coherent understanding of how board gender diversity influences CSR within the Nigerian corporate context. Addressing these shortcomings requires a comprehensive review that consolidates existing evidence, evaluates the strengths and limitations of previous studies, identifies unresolved issues, and highlights directions for future research.

This study, therefore, critically examines the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR in Nigeria by synthesising existing theoretical and empirical literature. Specifically, it evaluates the extent to which female board representation influences corporate accountability, sustainability initiatives, and stakeholder engagement while identifying methodological, conceptual, and contextual gaps that have contributed to the inconsistent findings reported in previous studies. By integrating evidence that has largely been examined in isolation, the study

provides a more balanced understanding of the governance conditions under which board gender diversity can contribute to responsible corporate behaviour.

The study is significant for scholars, policymakers, regulators, and corporate leaders seeking to strengthen governance practices and sustainable business performance in Nigeria. It extends the corporate governance and CSR literature by critically consolidating empirical evidence that has previously produced divergent conclusions and by demonstrating that the influence of board gender diversity depends not only on the presence of female directors but also on the organizational and institutional environments within which boards operate. The study further identifies methodological weaknesses and neglected research areas requiring future empirical investigation. Ultimately, it reinforces the view that inclusive governance structures, when supported by sound governance practices and enabling institutional conditions, can strengthen corporate accountability, improve sustainability practices, enhance corporate reputation, and foster stronger relationships with stakeholders.

2.0 Conceptual Review

2.1 Board Gender Diversity and Corporate Governance

Board gender diversity refers to the representation of both women and men on a company's board of directors and is commonly measured by the proportion or percentage of female directors, although some studies employ diversity indices that capture the balance of gender representation. Within contemporary corporate governance discourse, board gender diversity has become an important indicator of inclusive leadership because it reflects the extent to which organizations draw on diverse knowledge, professional experience, and perspectives when making strategic decisions. In Nigeria, increasing attention to board gender diversity has been driven by corporate governance reforms and growing demands for greater accountability, transparency, and equitable participation in corporate leadership.

Existing literature generally argues that gender-diverse boards enrich boardroom deliberations, broaden strategic perspectives, strengthen oversight functions, and improve governance effectiveness (Olayiwola et al., 2024). Similarly, Akinleye and Agbetuyi (2025) contend that boards with greater female representation exhibit stronger monitoring capabilities, higher ethical sensitivity, and improved transparency, thereby enhancing sustainability practices. Although these arguments have strengthened support for board diversity within corporate governance, they often imply that the mere presence of women on corporate boards automatically improves governance outcomes. Such a position pays insufficient attention to other determinants of board effectiveness, including board independence, directors' expertise, leadership quality, organizational culture, and decision-making processes.

The authors of the present study argue that board gender diversity should be understood as a strategic governance resource rather than simply a demographic characteristic or an instrument for achieving representational equity. Its contribution to governance depends largely on whether organizations create an environment in which female directors are able to participate meaningfully in board deliberations, influence strategic decisions, and contribute their professional expertise. Consequently, gender diversity complements, rather than substitutes for, other governance mechanisms required for effective corporate oversight.

2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability (CSR)

CSR refers to the voluntary integration of social, environmental, and ethical considerations into organizational operations and stakeholder relationships. While CSR was traditionally associated with philanthropy and charitable donations, it has evolved into a strategic component of corporate governance that influences organizational reputation, stakeholder confidence, risk management, and long-term value creation. In the Nigerian business environment, CSR commonly encompasses community development projects, environmental

conservation initiatives, educational support programmes, employee welfare, and other activities intended to improve the well-being of host communities and strengthen corporate legitimacy.

Kolawole (2024) emphasizes the growing importance of CSR, particularly in industries such as oil and gas, banking, and manufacturing, where corporate activities have significant environmental and social consequences. Closely related to CSR is the concept of corporate sustainability, which encourages organizations to pursue economic performance while simultaneously fulfilling their environmental and social responsibilities. Sustainability reporting has therefore become an increasingly important mechanism through which organizations communicate their commitment to responsible business practices and long-term value creation.

Consistent with this perspective, Ada et al. (2024) argue that governance characteristics, including board composition and gender diversity, influence the extent of sustainability initiatives and CSR disclosures. Although this relationship is widely acknowledged, previous studies frequently assume that improvements in sustainability performance arise primarily from board diversity, with limited consideration of institutional pressures, organizational strategy, industry characteristics, and regulatory expectations. Such an interpretation may overstate the independent contribution of gender diversity while understating the complex governance environment within which CSR decisions are made.

The authors of the current study therefore contend that CSR and corporate sustainability should be viewed as multidimensional governance outcomes arising from the interaction of several organizational factors. Board gender diversity represents one important contributor to responsible corporate behaviour, but its effectiveness depends on complementary governance structures, ethical leadership, organizational commitment, and institutional support.

2.3 Board Gender Diversity, CSR, and Stakeholder Engagement

The relationship between board gender diversity and CSR is commonly explained by the proposition that female directors bring broader stakeholder perspectives, stronger ethical judgement, and greater sensitivity to social and environmental issues into corporate decision-making. This perspective suggests that greater female representation encourages boards to adopt policies that promote sustainability, transparency, and responsible business conduct. Supporting this position, Akpan et al. (2025) argue that Nigerian firms with female board representation are more likely to engage in CSR activities and sustainability reporting, while Saidu and Umar (2024) contend that female directors strengthen stakeholder engagement by encouraging broader participation in community-focused initiatives and promoting greater responsiveness to stakeholder expectations.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the governance benefits of board gender diversity, they also tend to attribute socially responsible behaviour primarily to gender composition. Such an interpretation risks overlooking the diversity of competencies, professional experiences, leadership styles, and decision-making capabilities that exist among both male and female directors. Likewise, stakeholder engagement is influenced by a broader set of organisational factors, including transparency, ethical leadership, communication practices, corporate values, and governance quality. Consequently, improvements in CSR should not be viewed as automatic outcomes of female board representation alone but as products of an enabling governance environment in which directors are empowered to influence strategic decisions effectively.

In the opinion of the authors of the present study, the contribution of female directors should be evaluated based on their expertise, independence, professional judgement, and ability to shape board deliberations rather than on assumptions associated with gender. Similarly,

meaningful stakeholder engagement depends on governance systems that encourage accountability, openness, and sustained dialogue with stakeholders, with board gender diversity serving as an important facilitating mechanism rather than the sole determinant of responsible corporate behaviour.

2.4 Institutional Challenges to Board Gender Diversity in Nigeria

Despite increasing recognition of the governance benefits associated with board gender diversity, its practical implementation within Nigerian organisations continues to be constrained by institutional and structural challenges. Long-standing cultural expectations, organisational traditions, and unequal access to senior leadership opportunities have historically limited female participation in corporate boardrooms. Although governance reforms and advocacy initiatives have encouraged greater inclusion, progress has remained relatively slow.

Akinleye and Agbetuyi (2025) argue that meaningful board gender diversity requires supportive regulation alongside organisational commitment to inclusive leadership development and merit-based board appointments. While this recommendation provides an important policy direction, it places considerable emphasis on regulatory intervention without sufficiently addressing the broader organisational and societal barriers that continue to restrict women's advancement into corporate leadership. Sustainable progress requires more than compliance with governance codes; it also depends on deliberate investment in leadership development, mentoring, succession planning, equitable career progression, and organisational cultures that value diversity as a strategic asset rather than a regulatory obligation.

Accordingly, the authors of this study maintain that improving board gender diversity requires an integrated governance approach in which regulatory support, organisational commitment, leadership development, and cultural transformation operate simultaneously. Without these complementary conditions, increases in female board representation may remain largely symbolic and may not produce the governance improvements frequently reported in the literature.

2.5 Conceptual Synthesis

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that board gender diversity, corporate governance, Corporate Social Responsibility, and stakeholder engagement are closely interconnected concepts within the broader governance framework. Existing literature generally supports the view that gender diverse boards contribute positively to organisational accountability, sustainability initiatives, ethical decision-making, and stakeholder relationships. However, much of the literature presents these relationships as direct and largely unconditional, giving relatively limited attention to the institutional, organizational, and contextual factors that determine whether board diversity translates into improved governance outcomes.

The authors of the present study therefore argue that board gender diversity should be understood as one component of an integrated corporate governance system rather than an independent driver of CSR. The effectiveness of gender diverse boards depends on complementary governance mechanisms, including board independence, leadership quality, organizational culture, ethical values, regulatory support, and meaningful stakeholder engagement. Examining these concepts collectively provides a more balanced understanding of how inclusive governance contributes to responsible corporate behaviour and sustainable organizational performance within the Nigerian business environment. This perspective also provides an appropriate conceptual foundation for evaluating the empirical evidence reviewed in the subsequent sections of this study.

3.0 Theoretical Review

Theoretical perspectives provide the intellectual foundation for understanding the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR. Within the corporate governance literature, these theories seek to explain how gender diversity on corporate boards shapes organisational strategies, ethical decision-making, and sustainability practices. In Nigeria, growing interest in CSR and inclusive governance has encouraged scholars to examine this relationship through different theoretical lenses. However, many existing studies rely on these theories in a largely descriptive manner without critically assessing whether they adequately capture the institutional realities of Nigerian corporations. While the theoretical arguments suggest that diverse boards can improve managerial decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and transparency in CSR initiatives, the extent to which these outcomes occur in practice remains open to debate because governance structures and regulatory institutions continue to evolve (Hassan et al., 2024; Sanyaolu et al., 2023). The authors of the present study contend that these theories should be interpreted alongside the unique governance and cultural environment of Nigeria rather than being applied uncritically.

One of the most frequently applied frameworks in this area is stakeholder theory. The theory argues that firms have responsibilities not only to shareholders but also to employees, customers, host communities, and the wider society. Previous studies have used this perspective to argue that women directors are more attentive to stakeholder interests because they often bring broader perspectives and place greater emphasis on ethical and social concerns. Although studies in Nigeria report that firms with higher female representation on their boards are more committed to CSR and sustainability practices, these conclusions often assume a direct relationship without giving sufficient attention to other organisational factors that may influence CSR decisions, such as corporate culture, ownership structure, and regulatory pressure (Akosile & Obele, 2024; Gbadebo, 2024). The authors of this study argue that while stakeholder theory provides a useful explanation, it does not fully account for the complex institutional conditions that shape corporate behaviour in Nigeria.

Legitimacy theory offers another important perspective by explaining CSR as a means through which organisations secure social acceptance within their operating environment. According to this theory, firms seek to align their activities with societal expectations to maintain their licence to operate. Existing studies argue that the inclusion of women on corporate boards strengthens organisational legitimacy because it projects an image of fairness, inclusiveness, and sound governance. These studies further suggest that such legitimacy encourages greater investment in CSR activities and improved disclosure practices. However, much of this literature tends to assume that symbolic changes in board composition automatically translate into meaningful CSR performance, an assumption that may not always reflect organisational realities. Evidence from Nigerian financial institutions indicates that board diversity can improve transparency and accountability, yet these studies rarely distinguish between genuine commitment to social responsibility and CSR undertaken primarily to enhance corporate image (Sanyaolu et al., 2023). The authors of the present study therefore believe that legitimacy theory explains only part of the relationship between board diversity and CSR.

Resource dependence theory also provides an important explanation for the association between board diversity and CSR. The theory views corporate boards as valuable organisational resources that provide expertise, experience, networks, and legitimacy needed for organisational success. Prior studies argue that gender diverse boards broaden the range of knowledge and perspectives available to firms, thereby improving their ability to respond to social and environmental challenges. Within the Nigerian corporate environment, researchers have linked the presence of women directors with stronger sustainability initiatives,

environmental reporting, and community development programmes (Ada et al., 2024; Akinleye & Agbetuyi, 2025). While these findings are valuable, they often overlook whether women directors possess sufficient influence within boardrooms to shape strategic decisions. Merely increasing female representation does not necessarily guarantee that their knowledge and experience will translate into improved CSR outcomes. The authors of this study therefore argue that the effectiveness of board diversity depends not only on representation but also on the quality of participation and the decision-making environment within the board.

Gender socialisation theory has also been used to explain differences in leadership behaviour between male and female directors. The theory suggests that women are generally socialised to be more collaborative, ethical, and socially conscious, characteristics that may influence governance practices and CSR engagement. Several Nigerian studies conclude that female directors are more likely to advocate for stronger CSR disclosure and sustainability reporting, thereby contributing positively to responsible corporate conduct (Akosile & Obele, 2024; Mustapha et al., 2025). Although these studies provide useful insights, they tend to generalise behavioural characteristics across all women directors and pay limited attention to differences arising from professional background, experience, or organisational context. The authors of the current study maintain that leadership behaviour is shaped by a combination of individual competence, organisational culture, and institutional influences rather than gender alone.

In a nutshell, these theoretical perspectives provide valuable insights into the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR, yet none offers a complete explanation on its own. Stakeholder theory highlights responsiveness to stakeholder interests, legitimacy theory explains the pursuit of social acceptance, resource dependence theory focuses on the strategic value of diverse expertise, and gender socialisation theory examines behavioural influences on governance decisions. Nevertheless, previous studies often apply these theories in isolation, resulting in fragmented explanations of the relationship between board diversity and CSR in Nigeria. The authors of the present study argue that a more comprehensive understanding requires integrating these theoretical perspectives while recognizing the influence of Nigeria's institutional, regulatory, and cultural environment. Such an approach provides a stronger basis for explaining how board gender diversity can contribute to ethical governance, sustainable development, and meaningful corporate social responsibility.

4.0 Methodology

This study adopted a systematic literature review (SLR) guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework to synthesise empirical evidence on the relationship between board gender diversity and corporate social responsibility (CSR) among Nigerian firms (Figure 1). The PRISMA framework was adopted because it provides a transparent, rigorous, and reproducible approach to identifying, screening, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant literature while minimizing selection bias. Since the objective of the study was to integrate empirical findings rather than statistically pool effect sizes, a qualitative narrative synthesis was employed.

4.1 Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted between January and February 2026 using three major scholarly databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected because of their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed research in accounting, corporate governance, finance, sustainability, and business studies. The search strategy combined keywords and Boolean operators as follows: ("board gender diversity" OR "female directors" OR "women on boards") AND ("corporate social responsibility" OR CSR OR "CSR disclosure") AND (Nigeria OR Nigerian firms). Additional manual searches of the reference

lists of eligible studies were undertaken to identify relevant publications that may not have appeared in the electronic database search.

4.2 Eligibility Criteria

Studies were included if they were published in peer-reviewed journals; were written in English; reported empirical evidence; examined board gender diversity together with CSR or CSR disclosure; focused on Nigerian firms or generated findings directly applicable to the Nigerian corporate environment. Studies were excluded if they were conference papers, books, book chapters, dissertations, reports, or editorials; investigated board diversity without CSR outcomes; examined CSR without board gender diversity; were duplicate publications; or lacked sufficient methodological information or relevance to the review objective.

4.3 Study Selection

The study selection followed the PRISMA four-stage process comprising identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Duplicate records were removed before titles and abstracts were screened against the eligibility criteria. Potentially relevant studies were subsequently subjected to full-text assessment. Disagreements regarding study eligibility were resolved through repeated assessment of the inclusion criteria. The selection process resulted in **277** records initially identified. Following duplicate removal and title/abstract screening, **90** articles remained for full-text assessment. After excluding studies that failed to satisfy the eligibility criteria, **27** empirical studies were retained for the final review.

4.4 Quality Appraisal

To enhance the credibility of the review, each eligible study was assessed using four quality indicators adapted from systematic review practice: clarity of research objectives; appropriateness of research design; adequacy of measurement of board gender diversity and CSR variables; and transparency of data analysis and reporting. Only studies demonstrating acceptable methodological quality across these criteria were included in the final synthesis.

4.5 Data Extraction and Synthesis

A standardized data extraction form was developed to ensure consistency in recording information from each study. Extracted information included authors, publication year, sample characteristics, industry, research design, measures of board gender diversity, CSR indicators, analytical techniques, and principal findings. Given the methodological diversity of the included studies, a narrative thematic synthesis was adopted rather than a meta-analysis. The extracted evidence was organized into thematic categories to identify recurring patterns, areas of consensus, inconsistencies, contextual influences, and research gaps regarding the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR in Nigerian firms.

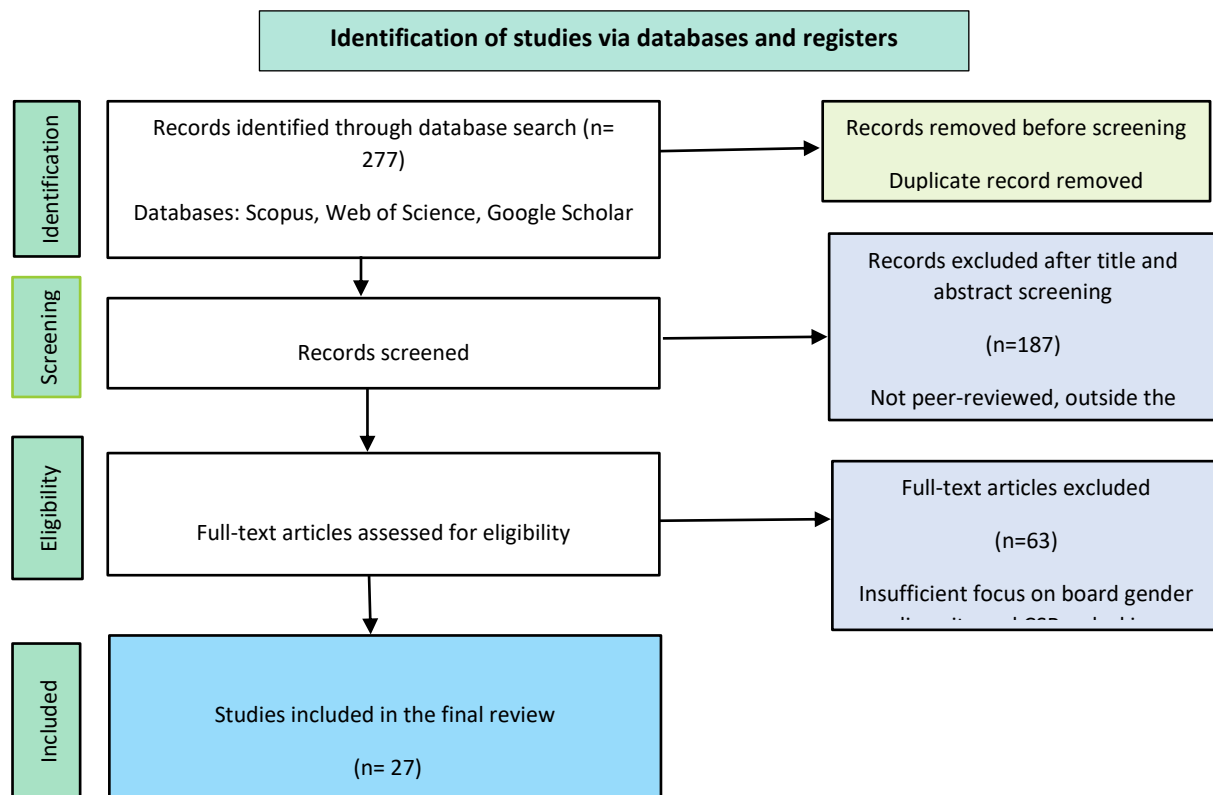


Figure 1: PRISMA Framework

*No duplicates were identified across databases after the initial search and duplication process.
Source: Adapted from Page et al. (2021). PRISMA 2020 statement: an undated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, 372, n71.

5.0 Results of Empirical Review

5.1 Board Gender Diversity and CSR Disclosure Practices

Empirical evidence on the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR disclosure in Nigeria has grown considerably over the last decade, reflecting increasing attention to corporate governance reforms and stakeholder expectations. Most Nigerian studies argue that the inclusion of women on corporate boards broadens the range of perspectives available during strategic decision-making, thereby encouraging greater attention to social and environmental accountability. However, the evidence is far from uniform. While some studies report that gender-diverse boards are associated with more extensive CSR disclosures, others suggest that the observed relationship is influenced by firm-specific characteristics such as firm size, profitability, ownership structure, and industry affiliation rather than board composition alone. Consequently, the existing body of literature indicates that board gender diversity should not be viewed as an independent driver of CSR reporting but as one governance mechanism whose effectiveness depends on the broader institutional and organizational context (Adebayo & Olajide, 2022; Akinleye & Fasina, 2023).

Several Nigerian empirical studies have concluded that companies with greater female representation on their boards tend to provide more comprehensive CSR disclosures because women directors often promote transparency, ethical conduct, and stakeholder engagement.

For example, Adebayo and Olajide (2022) found that board gender diversity significantly enhanced the quality of sustainability reporting among listed manufacturing firms, arguing that female directors strengthened board oversight over nonfinancial reporting. Similarly, Akinleye and Fasina (2023) reported a positive association between female board participation and environmental and social disclosures among Nigerian deposit money banks. Although these studies provide valuable support for stakeholder and resource dependence theories, they largely interpret the positive statistical association as evidence of governance effectiveness without sufficiently examining whether female directors possess meaningful influence within board deliberations. In many Nigerian firms, women remain a numerical minority, raising questions about whether their presence reflects genuine participation in strategic governance or merely compliance with evolving governance expectations.

Notwithstanding these positive findings, other Nigerian studies present a different perspective by demonstrating that board gender diversity does not always translate into improved CSR disclosure. Olayinka and Adegbe (2022) observed that the impact of female directors became statistically insignificant after controlling for firm size and profitability, suggesting that financially stronger firms may possess greater resources for sustainability reporting regardless of board composition. Likewise, Bello and Yusuf (2024) argued that variations in CSR disclosure are better explained by governance quality, board independence, and regulatory pressure than by gender diversity alone. These findings expose an important limitation within much of the Nigerian literature, where researchers frequently emphasize statistical significance while paying limited attention to contextual factors that shape board effectiveness. The predominance of cross-sectional research designs further restricts the ability to establish whether improvements in CSR disclosure arise directly from increased female representation or from broader governance reforms occurring simultaneously.

The reviewed empirical evidence suggests that board gender diversity has the potential to enhance CSR disclosure practices in Nigeria; however, its influence is largely conditioned by the strength and effectiveness of the corporate governance structures within which female directors perform their oversight responsibilities. Rather than treating female representation as an end in itself, organizations should focus on creating inclusive boards where women participate meaningfully in strategic decision-making, committee leadership, and sustainability oversight. From the perspective of the present study, the mixed empirical evidence demonstrates that board gender diversity is a necessary but insufficient condition for improving CSR disclosure. This inconsistency underscores the need for further empirical investigation using more robust analytical techniques and contemporary data to determine whether board gender diversity continues to influence CSR disclosure practices among Nigerian listed companies under evolving corporate governance and sustainability reporting frameworks (Adebayo & Olajide, 2022; Bello & Yusuf, 2024).

5.2 Board Gender Diversity and ESG/Sustainability Reporting

Empirical evidence from Nigeria increasingly suggests that board gender diversity has become an important governance mechanism influencing the quality and breadth of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) or sustainability reporting. However, the findings remain far from unanimous. Several Nigerian studies argue that female directors broaden board deliberations by introducing diverse perspectives, stronger ethical sensitivity, and greater attention to stakeholder interests, thereby encouraging more transparent sustainability disclosures. These studies generally report a positive and statistically significant relationship between female board representation and sustainability reporting quality, particularly among listed firms operating in environmentally sensitive sectors. Nevertheless, many of these investigations rely on cross-sectional datasets and measure board gender diversity merely by

the proportion of female directors, an approach that overlooks the influence, expertise, committee membership, and decision-making power of women on corporate boards (Aifuwa & Embele, 2022; Ogbeide et al., 2023).

Conversely, other Nigerian studies report weak, insignificant, or inconsistent associations between board gender diversity and ESG disclosure, suggesting that the mere presence of women on corporate boards does not automatically translate into improved sustainability reporting. These findings have been attributed to the relatively low representation of women on Nigerian boards, cultural and institutional barriers that limit their participation in strategic decisions, and the persistence of symbolic appointments rather than substantive inclusion. Such studies challenge the assumption that gender diversity alone is sufficient to improve disclosure practices and argue that the effectiveness of female directors depends largely on board independence, organizational culture, regulatory enforcement, and the broader corporate governance environment. Consequently, the inconsistent evidence indicates that board composition should be examined alongside complementary governance attributes rather than in isolation (Adebayo & Olowookere, 2023; Nwobu et al., 2024).

Beyond the mixed statistical evidence, Nigerian empirical literature also reveals important methodological limitations. Most existing studies focus predominantly on listed deposit money banks and manufacturing firms, leaving sectors such as technology, agriculture, healthcare, and small and medium-sized enterprises relatively unexplored. Furthermore, sustainability reporting is frequently measured through disclosure indices derived from annual reports without assessing the credibility, completeness, or materiality of the disclosed information. This emphasis on disclosure quantity rather than reporting quality may explain why some studies report positive relationships while others find insignificant effects. In addition, relatively few Nigerian studies explicitly adopt internationally recognized ESG frameworks or examine the implications of recent sustainability reporting reforms, thereby limiting the comparability of findings across studies (Olayinka & Temitope, 2022; Aifuwa & Embele, 2022).

From the foregoing empirical evidence, it is apparent that while board gender diversity has considerable potential to strengthen ESG and sustainability reporting in Nigeria, existing research has not conclusively established the magnitude or consistency of this relationship. The current body of evidence is constrained by sectoral concentration, simplified measures of gender diversity, and methodological differences that make generalization difficult. It is therefore the position of this study that future empirical investigations should move beyond simply counting female directors to examining their influence, professional competence, leadership roles, and participation in key governance committees. Such an approach is more likely to provide a realistic understanding of how board gender diversity contributes to meaningful sustainability reporting within the evolving Nigerian corporate governance landscape.

5.3 Board Gender Diversity and Corporate Philanthropy and Community Engagement

Recent empirical evidence from Nigeria increasingly suggests that board gender diversity extends beyond improving financial oversight to shaping firms' commitment to corporate philanthropy and community engagement. Although most Nigerian studies have examined CSR, sustainability reporting, and voluntary disclosure rather than philanthropy as a standalone construct, these dimensions largely encompass corporate donations, community development initiatives, stakeholder welfare, and social investments. For example, Musa et al. (2022) found that firms with greater female representation on corporate boards demonstrated stronger CSR engagement, arguing that women directors tend to broaden board deliberations by giving greater attention to stakeholder expectations and societal welfare. Likewise, Jatau et al. (2023)

reported that gender diverse boards significantly enhanced voluntary corporate disclosures, implying greater accountability and transparency in communicating community-related initiatives. These findings support the argument that gender diversity strengthens the governance processes through which firms recognize and respond to their social responsibilities.

Despite these encouraging findings, the Nigerian empirical literature does not present a completely consistent picture. While Akosile and Obele (2024) reported that female board representation exerted a significant positive influence on CSR disclosure among listed consumer goods companies, Kajola et al. (2023) observed that board gender diversity had no statistically significant effect on CSR practices within Nigerian oil and gas firms. These contrasting outcomes suggest that the influence of women directors may depend on contextual factors such as industry characteristics, board dynamics, ownership structure, or the extent to which female directors participate meaningfully in strategic decision-making. Consequently, it may be misleading to assume that merely increasing the numerical representation of women on boards will automatically translate into stronger corporate philanthropy or community engagement. Instead, the quality of board participation and the organizational environment appear to determine whether gender diversity produces substantive governance outcomes.

Further evidence indicates that gender-diverse boards are more likely to promote broader sustainability and stakeholder-oriented governance practices that indirectly reinforce community engagement. Iyoha et al. (2023) demonstrated that gender heterogeneity positively influenced the sustainability performance of quoted manufacturing firms in Nigeria, while Onu et al. (2024) found that board gender diversity strengthened the relationship between sustainability reporting and value creation among listed non-financial firms. Similarly, Saidu and Umar (2024) reported a positive association between gender diversity and CSR expenditure in Nigerian deposit money banks. Although these studies did not directly measure philanthropic expenditure or community development projects, they provide convincing empirical support for the view that female board participation encourages long-term stakeholder orientation, ethical accountability, and greater responsiveness to societal needs, which are central objectives of corporate philanthropy and community engagement.

Taken together, the available empirical evidence from Nigeria provides substantial, though not unequivocal, support for a positive relationship between board gender diversity and corporate philanthropy and community engagement. Nevertheless, an important limitation remains: most existing studies rely on CSR disclosure indices or sustainability reporting as proxies for actual philanthropic activities, leaving limited evidence from direct measures such as charitable donations, educational support, healthcare interventions, and host community development programmes. Furthermore, relatively few studies have investigated how board gender diversity influences philanthropic decision-making across different sectors of the Nigerian economy. This gap justifies further empirical investigation, particularly using direct indicators of corporate philanthropy and community engagement, to determine whether gender diverse boards genuinely influence the allocation of corporate resources toward sustainable community development.

5.4 Board Gender Diversity and Environmental Responsibility

Empirical evidence from Nigeria increasingly recognizes board gender diversity as a governance mechanism capable of shaping firms' environmental responsibility, although the reported outcomes remain far from unanimous. Recent studies have shifted attention from the mere presence of female directors to the quality of environmental decisions and disclosures that boards produce. For instance, Augustine and Udeh (2023) found that board gender diversity exerts a significant positive influence on environmental disclosure among listed oil

and gas firms, suggesting that female directors strengthen board oversight and encourage greater environmental accountability. Similarly, Ezeigbo et al. (2024) reported that board diversity improves environmental sustainability reporting among listed consumer goods firms in Nigeria, arguing that diverse boards are more responsive to stakeholder concerns and sustainability initiatives. While these findings support the resource dependence and stakeholder perspectives of corporate governance, they rely predominantly on disclosure indices, which may not always reflect firms' actual environmental performance or commitment (Augustine & Udeh, 2023; Odum, 2023).

More recent Nigerian evidence presents a less straightforward relationship between female board representation and environmental responsibility. Esosa and Osarobo (2024), examining listed oil and gas firms, reported that board gender diversity had a negative but statistically insignificant relationship with environmental sustainability reporting. The authors attributed this outcome partly to the limited numerical representation of women on corporate boards, which may restrict their capacity to influence strategic environmental decisions despite their presence. This finding challenges the assumption that appointing women to boards automatically translates into stronger environmental governance. Rather than dismissing the value of gender diversity, the study highlights the persistence of structural and institutional barriers that prevent female directors from exercising meaningful influence over environmental policy. This suggests that board inclusiveness should be evaluated in terms of participation and decision-making authority rather than numerical representation alone (Esosa & Osarobo, 2024).

Evidence from manufacturing and consumer goods firms reinforces the argument that contextual governance factors moderate the effectiveness of board gender diversity. Ladini et al. (2024) found that board gender diversity contributes positively to environmental disclosure when ownership structures promote effective governance and managerial accountability. Likewise, Ezeigbo et al. (2024) argued that gender diverse boards encourage broader consideration of environmental sustainability issues, although the magnitude of the relationship depends on complementary governance mechanisms and organizational commitment to sustainability reporting. These studies collectively indicate that board gender diversity rarely operates in isolation. Instead, its influence is strengthened or weakened by factors such as ownership concentration, board independence, institutional quality, and corporate governance culture. Consequently, inconsistent empirical findings across Nigerian studies may reflect differences in governance environments rather than contradictions in the theoretical value of female board participation (Ezeigbo et al., 2024; Ladini et al., 2024).

Collectively, the Nigerian empirical literature provides persuasive but inconclusive evidence that board gender diversity enhances environmental responsibility. Although the dominant trend points toward improved environmental disclosure and sustainability reporting, the presence of contrary findings demonstrates that gender diversity alone cannot guarantee stronger environmental outcomes. The current study therefore argues that the effectiveness of female board participation should be assessed beyond symbolic representation by considering the extent to which women influence board deliberations, strategic environmental decisions, and corporate accountability. This perspective addresses an important gap in the existing literature, which has concentrated largely on disclosure practices while paying comparatively little attention to whether gender-diverse boards generate substantive improvements in firms' environmental responsibility.

5.5 Governance and Institutional Moderators of the Gender Diversity-CSR Relationship

Empirical evidence from Nigeria increasingly suggests that the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR is neither automatic nor uniform. Rather, its effectiveness depends on the quality of governance structures and the institutional environment within which firms operate. Recent Nigerian studies indicate that female representation on corporate boards tends to strengthen CSR engagement because women directors often promote broader stakeholder considerations, ethical accountability, and long-term sustainability. However, these positive outcomes are considerably weakened where governance systems are characterized by weak oversight, poor regulatory compliance, and symbolic appointments that limit women's participation in strategic decision-making. Consequently, governance mechanisms should not be viewed merely as control systems but as contextual conditions that determine whether gender diversity translates into meaningful CSR outcomes or remains largely ceremonial (Musa et al., 2022; Erin et al., 2022).

Corporate governance variables such as board independence, audit committee effectiveness, board expertise, and ownership structure have emerged as important moderators of the gender diversity and CSR relationship in Nigeria. While Musa et al. (2022) reported that firms with higher female board representation generally demonstrate stronger CSR commitment, the study also implies that board diversity alone cannot guarantee socially responsible behaviour because governance quality shapes how board members influence strategic decisions. Similarly, Erin et al. (2022) argued that board gender diversity contributes positively to sustainability reporting quality only when supported by effective governance mechanisms, including competent audit committees and transparent reporting structures. These findings challenge the simplistic assumption that increasing the number of women on corporate boards automatically enhances CSR performance. Instead, they suggest that governance quality provides the institutional platform through which the knowledge, values, and monitoring capacity of female directors can be translated into responsible corporate actions.

Beyond internal governance mechanisms, broader institutional conditions also shape the effectiveness of gender-diverse boards in advancing CSR. Empirical evidence from Nigeria demonstrates that institutional strength, regulatory quality, and enforcement capacity significantly enhance the contribution of women directors to sustainability-related disclosures. For example, research by Olayinka, et al. (2022) found that institutional strength positively moderates the association between board gender diversity and energy disclosure, indicating that stronger regulatory environments encourage female directors to exercise greater influence on environmental accountability. Likewise, Kabara et al. (2023) showed that compliance with corporate governance regulations strengthens the relationship between board diversity and voluntary disclosure, suggesting that external institutional pressures reinforce internal governance practices. These studies collectively imply that institutional quality does not merely coexist with board diversity but actively determines whether gender diversity produces measurable CSR outcomes.

Although the recent Nigerian literature provides convincing evidence on the moderating role of governance and institutions, several important gaps remain. Most studies focus on sustainability reporting, voluntary disclosure, or environmental reporting as proxies for CSR, leaving limited evidence on broader social and community dimensions of CSR. Furthermore, existing studies frequently examine governance variables independently, with little attention to the interaction among governance quality, institutional effectiveness, and board gender diversity within integrated analytical frameworks. Another limitation is the concentration of empirical investigations on listed non financial firms, thereby restricting the generalisability of findings across sectors. In the opinion of the present authors, future studies should adopt

multidimensional governance measures, incorporate institutional variables simultaneously, and examine how governance reforms influence the capacity of female directors to shape CSR decisions in different sectors of the Nigerian economy. Such an approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the institutional conditions under which gender diversity generates sustainable corporate value.

5.6 Contextual Outcomes of Gender Diversity: Reputation, Stakeholder Trust, and Corporate Accountability

Studies from Nigeria have increasingly shifted attention from the direct financial consequences of board gender diversity to its broader governance outcomes, particularly corporate reputation, stakeholder trust, and accountability. Rather than treating female board representation as a symbolic governance requirement, recent studies have examined whether it improves the quality of corporate interactions with stakeholders through greater transparency and responsible disclosure. Jatau et al. (2023) found that female representation on boards and board committees significantly strengthened voluntary corporate disclosure among Nigerian listed firms, suggesting that gender-diverse boards are more inclined toward openness and accountability. Similarly, Oyerogba et al. (2024) argued that stronger governance structures, including board characteristics that promote diversity, improve the quality of sustainability reporting, thereby enhancing corporate legitimacy. While these studies establish a positive association between gender diversity and disclosure quality, they largely infer improvements in corporate reputation and stakeholder confidence from reporting practices rather than measuring these outcomes directly, leaving an important empirical gap in the Nigerian literature.

Evidence linking gender diversity with stakeholder trust has also emerged through studies that investigate CSR and sustainability disclosures. Akosile and Obele (2024) reported that female board members and women possessing professional expertise significantly enhanced CSR disclosure among listed consumer goods firms. Likewise, Onu et al. (2024) demonstrated that board gender diversity strengthened the relationship between sustainability reporting and value creation, implying that stakeholders attach greater credibility to firms whose governance structures reflect diversity and inclusiveness. Nevertheless, these studies tend to interpret stakeholder trust through disclosure behaviour and market value rather than through direct stakeholder perceptions. Consequently, although the findings suggest that gender-diverse boards improve organizational credibility, they do not conclusively establish whether investors, customers, employees, and host communities actually develop higher levels of trust because of increased female participation on corporate boards.

Another important strand of Nigerian evidence connects gender diversity with corporate accountability through ethical governance and sustainability practices. Egbunike et al. (2023) found that gender heterogeneity contributed positively to the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability performance among Nigerian manufacturing firms, while Areneke et al. (2023) showed that female directorship significantly improved ethical corporate governance disclosure in Nigeria's highly patriarchal business environment. These findings reinforce the argument that women directors often encourage stronger oversight, greater ethical sensitivity, and improved accountability mechanisms. However, the empirical evidence is not entirely uniform. Some studies indicate that the influence of gender diversity varies across industries and governance contexts, suggesting that institutional factors, board independence, ownership concentration, and regulatory compliance may either strengthen or weaken the accountability benefits associated with female representation. This suggests that board gender diversity alone cannot guarantee accountable governance unless supported by complementary governance structures.

Together, the contemporary Nigerian literature provides convincing evidence that gender diversity contributes positively to disclosure quality, sustainability reporting, ethical governance, and broader accountability, all of which are important foundations for corporate reputation and stakeholder confidence. However, the existing body of work remains largely disclosure-oriented and governance-based, with relatively limited attention given to directly measuring contextual outcomes such as organizational reputation, stakeholder trust, and public confidence. In the opinion of the present authors, this represents a significant empirical limitation because these contextual outcomes are the mechanisms through which gender-diverse boards ultimately create long-term organizational value. Future Nigerian studies should therefore move beyond conventional disclosure proxies by incorporating stakeholder perception surveys, reputational indices, and multidimensional accountability measures that can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gender diversity influences corporate legitimacy and sustainable organizational performance.

6.0 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that board gender diversity has emerged as an important corporate governance mechanism with the potential to improve CSR outcomes among Nigerian listed firms. Across the empirical evidence reviewed, a consistent pattern is observed in which firms with greater female representation on their boards generally exhibit stronger CSR disclosure, more comprehensive sustainability reporting, improved environmental responsibility, and enhanced stakeholder engagement. These findings align with the propositions of stakeholder theory and resource dependence theory, which suggest that diverse boards possess broader knowledge, richer perspectives, and greater sensitivity to stakeholder interests than homogeneous boards. However, the review also reveals that the relationship is neither universal nor automatic. While several studies reported statistically significant positive associations, others found weak or insignificant effects after accounting for firm characteristics and governance variables. This indicates that board gender diversity should not be viewed as an isolated determinant of CSR performance but rather as one component of a broader governance architecture that shapes responsible corporate behaviour.

A notable finding emerging from the review is that the effectiveness of board gender diversity depends largely on the quality of corporate governance and institutional arrangements within which female directors operate. The evidence consistently suggests that women directors exert greater influence where boards are characterised by independence, effective committees, transparent reporting systems, and supportive organisational cultures. Conversely, in organisations where female appointments are largely symbolic or where governance structures remain weak, the expected governance benefits of gender diversity become considerably diminished. This finding challenges the long-standing assumption that increasing the numerical representation of women on corporate boards is sufficient to improve corporate accountability. Instead, it underscores the importance of meaningful participation, decision-making authority, professional competence, and leadership opportunities for female directors if organisations are to realise the governance advantages associated with board diversity.

The findings further reveal important methodological and contextual limitations within the existing Nigerian literature. Most empirical studies rely heavily on cross sectional research designs and measure board gender diversity primarily through the proportion of female directors, with relatively little attention given to the quality of their participation, professional expertise, committee memberships, or influence over strategic decisions. Similarly, CSR performance is frequently assessed using disclosure indices rather than direct measures of actual corporate social and environmental performance. Consequently, positive disclosure outcomes may not necessarily reflect substantive improvements in environmental stewardship,

community development, or ethical corporate conduct. The concentration of empirical evidence within the banking, manufacturing, and oil and gas sectors also limits the generalisability of existing findings to other industries. These methodological weaknesses help explain the inconsistencies observed across previous studies and indicate that current evidence should be interpreted with appropriate caution.

Taken together, the findings suggest that board gender diversity contributes to sustainable corporate governance by strengthening transparency, accountability, ethical decision making, and stakeholder orientation, but its impact is contingent upon complementary governance and institutional conditions. The review therefore reinforces the argument that organisations should move beyond compliance-driven approaches to board diversity by creating environments in which women actively participate in strategic governance and influence key corporate decisions. For researchers, the findings highlight the need for future studies to adopt more robust longitudinal designs, incorporate multidimensional measures of board effectiveness, and directly examine outcomes such as stakeholder trust, corporate reputation, community impact, and environmental performance. Such approaches would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which board gender diversity creates long-term organisational and societal value within the Nigerian corporate environment.

7.0 Implications of the Findings

The synthesis of the literature on board gender diversity and CSR in Nigeria carries several important implications for corporate governance practice, regulatory policy, and academic research. First, the findings reinforce the growing recognition that inclusive governance structures can strengthen corporate accountability and sustainability performance. The evidence suggesting that gender-diverse boards are associated with improved CSR disclosure, stakeholder engagement, and ethical oversight implies that increasing female representation in corporate leadership may enhance the effectiveness of governance mechanisms in Nigerian firms. For corporate organizations, this highlights the strategic value of diversity in board composition, not merely as a matter of social equity but as a governance practice that can contribute to improved transparency, stronger monitoring, and more responsible corporate behaviour.

Second, the findings have important implications for regulators and policymakers responsible for strengthening corporate governance frameworks in Nigeria. Regulatory institutions such as the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria continue to promote governance reforms aimed at improving board effectiveness and corporate accountability. The evidence linking gender diversity with improved CSR practices suggests that governance codes and regulatory guidelines may benefit from encouraging greater female participation in corporate boards. Policies that support inclusive leadership, professional development opportunities for women, and transparent board appointment processes could help strengthen governance quality and promote socially responsible corporate conduct across Nigerian firms.

Third, the findings highlight important managerial implications for corporate leaders and board members. Organizations seeking to enhance their sustainability performance and stakeholder legitimacy may benefit from adopting more inclusive governance structures that incorporate diverse perspectives in strategic decision-making. Gender-diverse boards may facilitate more balanced deliberations on ethical issues, environmental responsibilities, and community engagement initiatives. Consequently, firms that prioritize diversity within their leadership structures may be better positioned to respond to evolving stakeholder expectations and integrate CSR initiatives into their long-term corporate strategies.

8.0 Future Research Directions

Despite the expanding empirical literature, several critical areas warrant further scholarly attention to deepen understanding of the relationship between board gender diversity and CSR in Nigeria. Future research should extend beyond publicly listed firms to include small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), privately owned firms, and family businesses, which constitute a significant portion of the Nigerian corporate landscape. Broadening the empirical scope in this manner would enhance the generalizability of findings and provide a more comprehensive view of governance practices. Additionally, the adoption of robust longitudinal research designs is essential to capture temporal changes in board composition and CSR practices, thereby enabling a more comprehensive assessment of how female representation influences corporate strategy, sustainability reporting, and stakeholder engagement over time. Comparative sectoral analyses across industries such as oil and gas, banking, manufacturing, and telecommunications are also necessary to account for variations in regulatory pressures and stakeholder expectations, and to determine whether the effects of gender diversity on CSR are context-dependent.

Moreover, future studies should strengthen theoretical integration by incorporating perspectives from governance and organizational theories, including stakeholder orientation, leadership diversity, and institutional frameworks, to better explain the mechanisms linking gender diversity to CSR outcomes. Greater attention should also be paid to moderating variables such as board independence, ownership structure, institutional pressure, and regulatory enforcement, which may condition this relationship. Methodologically, there is a need to complement dominant quantitative approaches with qualitative and mixed-method designs, including interviews with directors, executives, regulators, and stakeholders. Such approaches would yield deeper insights into boardroom dynamics, ethical deliberations, and decision-making processes, thereby advancing a more holistic understanding of how female directors shape CSR strategies and contribute to sustainable corporate governance in Nigeria.

9.0 Conclusion

This study concludes that board gender diversity has considerable potential to strengthen Corporate Social Responsibility in Nigeria by enhancing transparency, ethical leadership, sustainability reporting, environmental accountability, stakeholder engagement, and responsible corporate governance. Nevertheless, the evidence demonstrates that these benefits are neither automatic nor solely dependent on increasing the number of women on corporate boards. Rather, the effectiveness of gender diversity is shaped by the quality of corporate governance structures, institutional support, and the extent to which female directors exercise meaningful influence over strategic decisions. The review therefore reinforces the need for organizations to move beyond symbolic representation by promoting inclusive governance environments that fully utilize the expertise and leadership of women directors. It also highlights the necessity for future research to adopt more rigorous methodologies and broader measures of CSR performance to provide a deeper understanding of how board gender diversity contributes to sustainable organisational performance and long-term corporate value creation within the Nigerian context.

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APPENDIX

Based on the 27 empirical studies included in the systematic review, the following represents the synthesis table:

Authors (Year)	Sample Characteristics	Industry	Research Methodology	Measure of CSR	Measure of Board Gender Diversity	Principal Findings
Adebayo & Olajide (2022)	Listed manufacturing firms in Nigeria	Manufacturing	Panel regression	Sustainability reporting index	Proportion of female directors	Board gender diversity significantly improved sustainability reporting. Positive effect became insignificant after controlling for firm
Olayinka & Adegboye (2022)	Nigerian listed firms	Mixed industries	Panel regression	CSR index	Female board representation	

Authors (Year)	Sample Characteristics	Industry	Research Methodology	Measure of CSR	Measure of Board Gender Diversity	Principal Findings
Aifuwa & Embele (2022)	Listed firms	Cross- industry	Panel regression	Sustainability reporting quality	Female board proportion	characteristics. Board diversity improved sustainability reporting quality.
Erin, Adegboy e & Bamigbo ye (2022)	Nigerian listed firms	Cross- industry	Panel analysis	data Sustainability reporting quality	Board composition including gender diversity	Governance quality strengthened sustainability reporting.
Musa et al. (2022)	Quoted manufacturing firms	Manufacturing	Panel analysis	CSR disclosure/performance	Percentage of women directors	Gender diversity significantly enhanced CSR performance.
Olayinka , Adegboy e & Bamigbo ye (2022)	Nigerian firms	Energy sector	Panel regression	Energy disclosure	Female directors	Institutional strength enhanced the influence of female directors on disclosure.
Adebayo & Olowookere (2023)	Listed companies	Cross- industry	Panel regression	Sustainability reporting	Female board representation	Board diversity positively influenced sustainability reporting but governance factors

Authors (Year)	Sample Characteristics	Industry	Research Methodology	Measure of CSR	Measure of Board Gender Diversity	Principal Findings
Akinleye & Fasina (2023)	Listed deposit money banks	Banking	Ex post facto/panel	CSR disclosure index	Female directors on board	also mattered. Positive relationship between gender diversity and CSR disclosure.
Areneke et al. (2023)	Nigerian listed firms	Cross-industry	Panel regression	Ethical governance disclosure	Female directorship	Female directors significantly enhanced ethical disclosure. Gender-diverse boards significantly improved sustainability performance.
Egbunike et al. (2023)	Quoted manufacturing firms	Manufacturing	Panel regression	Corporate sustainability performance	Gender heterogeneity index	Positive influence of gender diversity on sustainability performance.
Iyoha et al. (2023)	Quoted manufacturing firms	Manufacturing	Panel regression	Sustainability performance	Gender heterogeneity	Gender diversity significantly improved voluntary disclosure.
Jatau, Ekoja & Nyahas (2023)	Nigerian listed firms	Cross-industry	Panel analysis	Voluntary corporate disclosure	Female board representation	Board gender diversity
Kajola et al. (2023)	Listed oil and gas companies	Oil and Gas	Panel regression	CSR practices	Female directors	

Authors (Year)	Sample Characteristics	Industry	Research Methodology	Measure of CSR	Measure of Board Gender Diversity	Principal Findings
Sanyaolu et al. (2023)	Financial institutions	Financial Services	Panel regression	Sustainability reporting	Board diversity	showed no significant influence on CSR practices. Board diversity positively influenced sustainability reporting.
Ada, Nwankwo & Okafor (2024)	Listed & manufacturing firms	Manufacturing	Panel regression	Sustainability reporting	Board diversity (including gender)	Board diversity significantly enhanced sustainability reporting. Organisational culture strengthened the effectiveness of gender-diverse boards.
Akosile & Obele (2024)	Nigerian service firms	Services	Survey/Regression	CSR disclosure	Gender-diverse board	Board gender diversity significantly improved CSR performance.
Akpan, Otung & Nsentip (2025)	Listed healthcare firms	Healthcare	Panel regression	CSR performance	Female board representation	Gender diversity positively influenced CSR
Hassan, Bello & Garba (2024)	Nigerian listed firms	Cross-industry	Panel regression	CSR disclosure	Female directors and board independence	

Authors (Year)	Sample Characteristics	Industry	Research Methodology	Measure of CSR	Measure of Board Gender Diversity	Principal Findings
Kolawole (2024)	Oil and gas companies	Oil and Gas	Panel analysis	CSR expenditure	Governance characteristics including diversity	disclosure, especially with stronger governance. CSR expenditure depended on governance quality rather than gender diversity alone.
Ladini et al. (2024)	Listed manufacturing firms	Manufacturing	Panel regression	Environmental disclosure	Board gender diversity	Ownership concentration moderated the positive effect of gender diversity. Governance attributes jointly improved ESG disclosure.
Nwobu, Oyoh & Owolabi (2024)	Nigerian listed firms	Cross-industry	Panel regression	ESG disclosure	Board gender diversity	Gender-diverse boards positively influenced corporate philanthropy.
Ogunleye & Akinyemi (2024)	Nigerian firms	Cross-industry	Quantitative survey	Corporate philanthropy	Board diversity	Board gender diversity
Olayiwola, Adeyemi	Consumer goods firms	Consumer Goods	Panel regression	CSR disclosure	Female board	

Authors (Year)	Sample Characteristics	Industry	Research Methodology	Measure of CSR	Measure of Board Gender Diversity	Principal Findings
& Olatunji (2024)					representation	significantly enhanced CSR disclosure. Gender diversity strengthened the sustainability reporting–value creation relationship.
Onu, Suleima n Ngwu (2024)	Listed non-financial firms	Non-financial	Panel regression	Sustainability reporting and value creation	Female directors	Governance practices improved sustainability reporting quality. Positive association between board gender diversity and CSR. Gender-diverse boards significantly improved environmental sustainability reporting.
Oyerogba et al. (2024)	Listed financial institutions	Financial Services	Panel regression	Sustainability reporting quality	Board characteristics including gender diversity	
Saidu & Umar (2024)	Listed deposit money banks	Banking	Panel regression	CSR expenditure/CSR performance	Female board representation	
Akinleye & Agbetuyi (2025)	Listed oil and gas firms	Oil Gas	Panel regression	Environmental sustainability reporting	Board diversity	