Review of Multidisciplinary Research (RMR)
July – December 2026: 01-11

Artificial Intelligence Adoption, CSR, Green Finance, and Circular Economy Implementation: A Natural-Resource-Based View of Sustainable Industrial Transformation

Abimbola Serifat Oreoluwa[1], Stephen Alaba John[2], Grace Chioma Ofremu[3]

Article History:

Received: April 14, 2026
Accepted: July 15, 2026
Available Online: July 17, 2026

Keywords:

Artificial Intelligence
Circular Economy
CSR
Green Finance
Green Product Innovation
Green Supply Chain Management
Natural-Resource-Based View

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Abstract

Circular economy implementation has become a strategic priority for firms seeking to reduce resource dependence, minimize waste, improve environmental performance, and respond to stakeholder pressure for sustainable industrial transformation. Although artificial intelligence, corporate social responsibility, green finance, green product innovation, and green supply chain management have been examined in recent sustainability literature, their theoretical interconnections remain insufficiently integrated. This paper develops a conceptual framework explaining how artificial intelligence adoption, CSR orientation, and green finance jointly facilitate circular economy implementation through green product innovation and green supply chain management. Drawing on the natural-resource-based view, stakeholder theory, dynamic capabilities theory, and institutional theory, the paper argues that circular economy implementation requires the simultaneous development of technological intelligence, stakeholder responsiveness, financial capacity, and organizational reconfiguration. Artificial intelligence enables firms to monitor material flows, predict waste, improve resource efficiency, and support circular decision-making. CSR provides the normative and stakeholder-driven motivation for environmental responsibility, while green finance supplies the financial resources required for investment in circular technologies, product redesign, cleaner production, and reverse logistics. Green product innovation and green supply chain management are proposed as mediating mechanisms that translate technological, social, and financial drivers into circular economy practices. The framework also highlights the roles of access to finance, environmental governance, digital capability, and human capital as enabling conditions. The paper contributes to circular economy and sustainability management literature by integrating technology, finance, governance, and organizational capability perspectives into a unified theoretical model. It offers propositions for future empirical testing in manufacturing, SMEs, high-emission industries, textile, steel, semiconductor, and emerging economy contexts.

OPEN ACCESS

© 2026 The Authors, Published by iRASD. This is an Open Access article under the Creative Common Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0

Corresponding Author: stephenalaba.j@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The transition from linear production to circular economy has become a central concern in sustainability research and industrial policy. Traditional production models are based on extraction, production, consumption, and disposal, creating pressure on natural resources and increasing waste, emissions, and ecological degradation. Circular economy offers an alternative model by emphasizing resource efficiency, product life extension, recycling, reuse, remanufacturing, reverse logistics, and closed-loop systems. For firms operating in emerging and industrializing economies, circular economy

[1] Financial Management Analyst / Data Analyst, UCAM (Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia), Spain. Email: bimbolady09@yahoo.com
[2] Lecturer, Department of Banking and Finance, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. Email: stephenalaba.j@gmail.com
[3] Business Analyst, Department of Management, University of Hertfordshire, Mosquito Way, Hatfield, United Kingdom. Email: ezahgrace@gmail.com

implementation is not only an environmental necessity but also a strategic response to rising resource costs, regulatory pressure, stakeholder expectations, and global sustainability standards.

Recent studies suggest that artificial intelligence, green finance, corporate social responsibility, green innovation, and green supply chain management can support circular economy implementation. AI adoption can improve production intelligence, resource monitoring, demand forecasting, waste prediction, and process optimization (Ragmoun & Aloulou, 2026; Ramkumar et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2026). Green finance can reduce financial barriers to clean technology investment and sustainable business transformation (Sadiq et al., 2024; Vu et al., 2023). CSR can motivate firms to respond to stakeholder concerns and integrate environmental responsibility into strategic decision-making (Zhao et al., 2026). Green supply chain practices can improve environmental performance by reducing waste, improving energy efficiency, and encouraging supplier collaboration (Sadiq et al., 2024). However, the theoretical mechanisms connecting these drivers remain fragmented.

The circular economy literature often treats technological, financial, social, and supply chain factors as separate determinants. Technology-oriented studies focus on AI, big data analytics, and digital platforms. Finance-oriented studies examine green finance, financial inclusion, and access to finance. CSR studies emphasize legitimacy, stakeholder expectations, and social responsibility. Supply chain studies focus on green procurement, reverse logistics, and environmental collaboration. Although each stream provides valuable insight, fewer theoretical studies explain how these streams interact to produce circular economy implementation. This creates a conceptual gap because circular transformation is not driven by a single factor. It requires technological intelligence, financial capacity, stakeholder legitimacy, innovation capability, and supply chain coordination.

This paper develops a theoretical framework explaining how AI adoption, CSR, and green finance jointly influence circular economy implementation through green product innovation and green supply chain management. The framework is grounded in the natural-resource-based view, stakeholder theory, dynamic capabilities theory, and institutional theory. The natural-resource-based view explains how firms achieve strategic advantage through pollution prevention, product stewardship, and sustainable development capabilities (Hart, 1995). Stakeholder theory explains why firms respond to social, regulatory, customer, investor, and community expectations (Freeman, 1984). Dynamic capabilities theory explains how firms sense sustainability opportunities, seize green innovation possibilities, and reconfigure resources toward circular business models (Teece et al., 1997). Institutional theory explains how regulatory, normative, and cognitive pressures shape organizational adoption of sustainability practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

The proposed framework also integrates insights from education, governance, entrepreneurship, and development studies. Digital pedagogy, teacher development, academic leadership, and workforce upskilling are relevant because circular economy requires new skills, digital literacy, and sustainability-oriented human capital (Abdulla et al., 2023; Alemán de la Garza et al., 2019; Chakravarti, 2022; Chakravarti & Stevenson, 2022). Corporate governance, IFRS adoption, audit quality, and information transparency are relevant because circular economy claims require credible reporting and accountability (Ahmed et al., 2024; Mohammad, 2015, 2017). Environmental governance, e-government, clean energy, women empowerment, food security, and livelihood research indicate that circular economy implementation must be understood within broader institutional and socio-economic systems (Ahmad et al., 2023; Bhatti et al., 2025; Hussain et al., 2021; Shen et al., 2025).

The contribution of this paper is threefold. First, it integrates AI adoption, CSR, green finance, green product innovation, and green supply chain management into a single theoretical model of circular economy implementation. Second, it advances the natural-resource-based view by showing that circular economy capabilities are created through the interaction of digital intelligence, stakeholder responsibility, and financial resources. Third, it extends circular economy research in emerging economy contexts by incorporating governance, human capital, access to finance, and institutional support as enabling conditions. The paper is conceptual and offers propositions for future empirical testing across manufacturing firms, SMEs, high-emission sectors, and emerging economies.

2. Conceptual Background

2.1. Circular Economy Implementation

Circular economy implementation refers to the adoption of organizational practices that reduce waste, extend product life cycles, improve resource productivity, recover materials, redesign products, and create closed-loop systems. It involves changes in product design, procurement, production, logistics, consumption, and post-consumption recovery. Unlike general environmental management, circular economy requires systemic transformation because firms must rethink how products are designed, how resources are sourced, how waste is treated, and how value is recovered after use.

Circular economy implementation is particularly difficult in emerging economies because firms often face resource constraints, weak environmental infrastructure, limited access to green finance, low technological readiness, and fragmented supply chains. SMEs and firms in traditional manufacturing sectors may recognize the importance of circularity but lack the financial, technical, and managerial capabilities required to implement it. Studies on circular economy implementation through AI adoption, CSR, and green finance suggest that circular transformation depends on the interaction of technological, social, and financial factors (Zhao et al., 2026). This implies that circular economy implementation should be conceptualized as a capability-building process rather than a simple environmental practice.

Circular economy also connects with broader sustainability and development issues. Research on ecological footprint, natural resource rents, clean energy, renewable energy transition, and green economy indicates that resource efficiency is central to environmental sustainability (He et al., 2025; Ragmoun, 2023, 2024). Studies on clean cooking fuel, food insecurity, and sustainable livelihoods further show that circular and sustainable resource use is not only a firm-level issue but also a household and community-level concern (Ahmad et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2025). Thus, circular economy implementation should be viewed as part of a broader sustainability transition.

2.2. Artificial Intelligence Adoption

Artificial intelligence adoption refers to the use of intelligent digital systems that support learning, prediction, automation, optimization, and decision-making. In the context of circular economy, AI can help firms analyze material flows, detect inefficiencies, predict equipment failure, optimize energy use, monitor waste, forecast demand, improve product design, and support reverse logistics. AI can also enable real-time environmental monitoring and support data-driven decisions in production and supply chain systems.

The strategic value of AI lies in its ability to transform large volumes of operational and environmental data into actionable knowledge. Research on AI capabilities, sustainable innovation, and SME resilience shows that AI can support organizational adaptability and innovation (Ragmoun & Aloulou, 2026). Studies on machine learning and digital marketing transformation suggest that intelligent systems can also reshape customer engagement and market responsiveness (Ramkumar et al., 2022). Research on big data analytics capabilities, strategic flexibility, and organizational resilience further supports the idea that data-driven capabilities improve the ability of firms to adapt to uncertainty (Ramkumar et al., 2022).

However, AI adoption alone is not sufficient for circular economy implementation. Firms must possess managerial capability, digital skills, environmental awareness, and strategic commitment to use AI for sustainability rather than only cost reduction or market expansion. Digital education and workforce upskilling are therefore important because employees and managers need the ability to interpret AI-generated insights and apply them to circular decision-making (Chakravarti, 2022; Chakravarti & Stevenson, 2022). Without human capital and organizational learning, AI may remain a technical tool rather than a sustainability capability.

2.3. Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility refers to a firm's commitment to ethical, social, environmental, and stakeholder-oriented responsibilities beyond narrow financial performance. CSR is important for circular economy implementation because circular practices often require firms to respond to stakeholder expectations regarding waste reduction, responsible sourcing, product safety, emissions,

and sustainable consumption. Stakeholder theory suggests that firms must consider the interests of customers, employees, suppliers, communities, regulators, investors, and future generations (Freeman, 1984).

CSR can motivate firms to adopt circular practices by creating moral, reputational, and strategic pressure for environmental responsibility. A firm with strong CSR orientation is more likely to invest in green product innovation, collaborate with suppliers, reduce waste, disclose environmental performance, and adopt sustainable business models. Circular economy implementation can therefore be interpreted as an operational expression of CSR. Instead of treating CSR as symbolic reporting, the circular economy approach translates responsibility into product design, production processes, and supply chain systems.

CSR also depends on governance and reporting credibility. Studies on corporate governance, IFRS adoption, financial reporting quality, audit committee characteristics, and information asymmetry show that transparency and accountability are central to stakeholder trust (Ahmed et al., 2024; Mohammad, 2015, 2017). If firms make CSR and circular economy claims without reliable disclosure, stakeholders may perceive these claims as greenwashing. Therefore, CSR must be supported by governance mechanisms that strengthen the credibility of sustainability practices.

2.4. Green Finance

Green finance refers to financial resources, products, services, and investment mechanisms that support environmentally sustainable activities. It includes green credit, green bonds, sustainability-linked loans, climate finance, renewable energy finance, carbon finance, green investment funds, and environmentally responsible banking. Green finance is critical for circular economy implementation because circular transformation often requires high upfront investment in cleaner technologies, product redesign, recycling systems, digital infrastructure, and supply chain restructuring.

Finance is a major barrier for firms, especially SMEs and firms in emerging economies. Even when managers recognize the need for circular economy practices, they may lack the financial resources to implement them. Access to finance therefore becomes a key condition for converting sustainability intentions into action. The relationship between green finance and sustainability is supported by research on green finance, natural resource rents, environmental regulation, and climate change mitigation (Sadiq et al., 2024). Studies on financial inclusion, eco-innovation, globalization, and ecological footprint further indicate that finance affects ecological outcomes through innovation and structural transformation (Vu et al., 2023).

Green finance is also linked with public governance and institutional quality. Environmental governance can shape green finance through taxonomies, disclosure requirements, green lending rules, subsidies, and environmental risk assessment. E-government and public sector governance can improve transparency and policy implementation (Bhatti et al., 2025). Secure property rights and institutional quality can also improve investment confidence and long-term green investment (Bhatti et al., 2024). Thus, green finance should be understood as both a financial and institutional mechanism.

2.5. Green Product Innovation and Green Supply Chain Management

Green product innovation refers to the development or improvement of products that reduce environmental impact across their life cycle. This may include recyclable materials, energy-efficient designs, modular products, biodegradable packaging, longer product durability, and reduced resource intensity. Green product innovation is central to circular economy because circularity begins at the design stage. Products that are difficult to repair, reuse, recycle, or disassemble create barriers to circular systems.

Green supply chain management refers to the integration of environmental considerations into procurement, production, logistics, supplier collaboration, distribution, and reverse logistics. It requires firms to work with suppliers and customers to reduce waste, recover materials, improve energy efficiency, and ensure responsible sourcing. Research on green supply chain practices and environmental performance in the semiconductor sector shows that supply chain practices can improve environmental outcomes when supported by energy efficiency and green human resource management

(Sadiq et al., 2024). Studies on green innovation and competitive advantage also suggest that green innovation becomes more effective when firms have access to finance and supportive organizational conditions (Ali et al., 2024).

Green product innovation and green supply chain management are treated in this paper as mediating mechanisms. AI, CSR, and green finance may create potential for circular transformation, but this potential becomes visible through product redesign and supply chain restructuring. Therefore, circular economy implementation requires both innovation in what firms produce and transformation in how products and materials move through the value chain.

3. Theoretical Foundations

The natural-resource-based view provides the central theoretical foundation of this paper. Hart (1995) argues that firms can develop competitive advantage by building capabilities related to pollution prevention, product stewardship, and sustainable development. Circular economy implementation aligns closely with this theory because it requires firms to reduce waste, redesign products, manage environmental impacts across the value chain, and develop sustainable capabilities. AI adoption, CSR, and green finance can be viewed as strategic resources that enable firms to build circular economy capabilities.

Stakeholder theory explains the social and normative drivers of circular economy implementation. Firms operate within networks of stakeholders who increasingly demand environmental responsibility, transparency, ethical production, and sustainable consumption. CSR reflects the firm's response to these expectations. Circular economy implementation therefore becomes a way to satisfy stakeholder demands by reducing environmental harm and demonstrating long-term responsibility (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholder theory also explains why firms need credible reporting and governance mechanisms to avoid accusations of symbolic sustainability or greenwashing.

Dynamic capabilities theory explains how firms transform resources into adaptive capabilities. According to this perspective, firms must sense opportunities and threats, seize strategic opportunities, and reconfigure resources in response to environmental change (Teece et al., 1997). AI adoption helps firms sense inefficiencies and sustainability opportunities. Green finance helps firms seize circular investment opportunities. CSR helps firms align strategic priorities with stakeholder expectations. Green product innovation and green supply chain management represent reconfiguration processes through which firms redesign products, processes, and relationships.

Institutional theory explains the role of regulatory, normative, and cognitive pressures in circular economy implementation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; North, 1990). Firms adopt circular practices not only because of internal resources but also because of external pressures from governments, industry standards, investors, customers, and professional norms. Environmental governance, public sector governance, corporate reporting standards, and sustainability disclosure systems shape whether firms adopt circular practices substantively or symbolically. Thus, institutional support is essential for converting circular economy from a voluntary initiative into a mainstream business model.

4. Conceptual Framework and Propositions

The proposed framework positions AI adoption, CSR, and green finance as three primary drivers of circular economy implementation. AI adoption provides technological intelligence, CSR provides stakeholder-oriented motivation, and green finance provides investment capacity. Green product innovation and green supply chain management are proposed as mediators that translate these drivers into circular economy implementation. Access to finance, environmental governance, digital capability, and human capital are treated as enabling conditions.

4.1. AI Adoption and Circular Economy Implementation

AI adoption can support circular economy implementation by improving the quality, speed, and accuracy of sustainability-related decision-making. Firms can use AI to track material flows, detect waste patterns, predict resource needs, optimize production schedules, forecast demand, and identify opportunities for reuse and recycling. These capabilities are especially valuable in industries with complex production systems and supply chains.

AI also supports circular economy by enabling predictive maintenance and product life extension. When machines and products are monitored intelligently, firms can reduce breakdowns, extend asset life, and minimize waste. AI can also support reverse logistics by predicting product returns, classifying recyclable materials, and optimizing collection networks. Therefore, AI adoption is expected to have a positive influence on circular economy implementation.

Proposition 1: AI adoption positively influences circular economy implementation by improving resource monitoring, waste prediction, process optimization, and circular decision-making.

4.2. CSR and Circular Economy Implementation

CSR orientation provides the ethical and stakeholder-driven motivation for circular economy implementation. Firms with strong CSR orientation are more likely to recognize environmental responsibility as part of their strategic identity. Such firms are also more likely to respond to stakeholder pressure for waste reduction, responsible sourcing, product safety, climate action, and environmental disclosure.

Circular economy implementation can be understood as an operational form of CSR. While CSR expresses commitment to social and environmental responsibility, circular economy translates that commitment into product redesign, resource recovery, recycling, and sustainable supply chain practices. Therefore, CSR is expected to positively influence circular economy implementation.

Proposition 2: CSR orientation positively influences circular economy implementation by increasing stakeholder responsiveness, environmental responsibility, and organizational commitment to sustainable production.

4.3. Green Finance and Circular Economy Implementation

Green finance is essential because circular economy implementation often requires significant investment. Firms may need to purchase new equipment, redesign products, train employees, develop recycling systems, improve data infrastructure, and restructure supply chains. These investments may be difficult for firms with limited financial resources. Green finance reduces this barrier by providing targeted financial support for sustainable transformation.

Green finance also signals institutional support for sustainability. When banks, investors, and governments provide financial incentives for circular practices, firms are more likely to adopt them. Green finance therefore contributes both directly, by providing capital, and indirectly, by legitimizing circular investment.

Proposition 3: Green finance positively influences circular economy implementation by reducing financial constraints and enabling investment in circular technologies, product redesign, and reverse logistics.

4.4. Mediating Role of Green Product Innovation

Green product innovation is a central pathway through which AI adoption influences circular economy implementation. AI can generate insights about product use, material efficiency, customer preferences, waste patterns, and design weaknesses. However, these insights contribute to circular economy only when they are translated into product innovation. Products must be designed for durability, repairability, recyclability, disassembly, and resource efficiency.

Green product innovation also connects CSR and green finance with circular economy. CSR motivates firms to design products that reduce environmental harm, while green finance provides resources for research, development, testing, and commercialization. Therefore, green product innovation is expected to mediate the relationship between AI adoption, CSR, green finance, and circular economy implementation.

Proposition 4: Green product innovation mediates the relationship between AI adoption and circular economy implementation by translating digital intelligence into circular product design.

Proposition 5: Green product innovation mediates the relationship between CSR and circular economy implementation by converting stakeholder responsibility into environmentally responsible products.

Proposition 6: Green product innovation mediates the relationship between green finance and circular economy implementation by enabling investment in product redesign, eco-design, and resource-efficient innovation.

4.5. Mediating Role of Green Supply Chain Management

Green supply chain management is another important mechanism. Circular economy requires firms to collaborate with suppliers, logistics partners, customers, recyclers, and regulators. Firms cannot implement circularity alone because materials, products, and waste move across organizational boundaries. Supplier selection, green procurement, reverse logistics, recycling partnerships, and environmental collaboration are therefore essential.

AI adoption can improve supply chain visibility and coordination. CSR can motivate firms to ensure responsible sourcing and supplier accountability. Green finance can fund supply chain restructuring, clean logistics, and recycling systems. Therefore, green supply chain management mediates the effects of AI adoption, CSR, and green finance on circular economy implementation.

Proposition 7: Green supply chain management mediates the relationship between AI adoption and circular economy implementation by improving supply chain visibility, material tracking, and reverse logistics.

Proposition 8: Green supply chain management mediates the relationship between CSR and circular economy implementation by translating stakeholder responsibility into supplier collaboration and responsible sourcing.

Proposition 9: Green supply chain management mediates the relationship between green finance and circular economy implementation by enabling investment in clean logistics, supplier upgrading, and material recovery systems.

4.6. Enabling Role of Access to Finance, Governance, and Human Capital

Access to finance is a key enabling condition because firms with limited financial capacity may fail to implement circular practices even when they possess strong environmental intentions. Research on green innovation and competitive advantage indicates that access to finance can strengthen the effect of green innovation on firm outcomes (Ali et al., 2024). Therefore, access to finance is expected to strengthen the relationship between green finance and circular economy implementation.

Environmental governance also strengthens circular economy implementation by creating regulatory pressure, policy incentives, disclosure requirements, and institutional accountability. Governance studies show that public sector effectiveness, environmental administration, corporate reporting, and secure property rights shape sustainable investment and organizational behavior (Bhatti et al., 2025; Hussain et al., 2024; Hussain et al., 2021). Human capital and digital capability are also important because employees must possess the skills required to use AI, implement green innovation, and manage circular supply chains (Abdulla et al., 2023; Chakravarti, 2022; Dhivya et al., 2023).

Proposition 10: Access to finance strengthens the relationship between green finance and circular economy implementation.

Proposition 11: Environmental governance strengthens the relationship between CSR and circular economy implementation by increasing regulatory and stakeholder pressure for environmental accountability.

Proposition 12: Digital capability and sustainability-oriented human capital strengthen the relationship between AI adoption and circular economy implementation by improving the effective use of digital technologies for sustainability.

5. Theoretical Contributions

This paper contributes to circular economy literature by integrating AI adoption, CSR, green finance, green product innovation, and green supply chain management into a unified theoretical framework. Previous studies have often examined these variables separately. This paper argues that circular economy implementation is best understood as the outcome of interaction among technological

intelligence, stakeholder responsibility, financial resources, innovation capability, and supply chain coordination.

The paper also extends the natural-resource-based view by explaining how digital and financial resources contribute to pollution prevention, product stewardship, and sustainable development capabilities. AI adoption supports environmental sensing and operational optimization. Green finance enables investment in sustainable transformation. CSR strengthens stakeholder legitimacy and strategic commitment. Green product innovation and green supply chain management convert these resources into circular economy practices.

Another contribution is the integration of governance and transparency into circular economy theory. Corporate governance, IFRS adoption, audit quality, public governance, and environmental disclosure are important because circular economy claims require credibility. Without transparent governance, circular economy practices may be symbolic rather than substantive. This paper therefore connects sustainability management with accounting, reporting, and institutional accountability.

The paper further contributes by incorporating human capital and digital education into the circular economy discussion. AI and green technologies require employees, managers, and entrepreneurs who possess digital competence, sustainability awareness, and innovation capability. Digital pedagogy, teacher development, workforce upskilling, and Education 4.0 are therefore relevant to circular economy implementation because they shape the human capabilities needed for sustainable industrial transformation.

Finally, the paper contributes to emerging economy sustainability research. Many firms in emerging economies face financial constraints, weak governance, limited technological readiness, and informal supply chains. By including access to finance, environmental governance, digital capability, and human capital as enabling conditions, the framework provides a context-sensitive explanation of circular economy implementation.

6. Practical and Policy Implications

The framework has important implications for managers, policymakers, financial institutions, universities, and sustainability regulators. Managers should treat circular economy implementation as a strategic transformation rather than a compliance exercise. AI systems should be used not only for productivity and cost reduction but also for waste prediction, resource optimization, product redesign, and circular supply chain coordination. CSR should be embedded in operations through measurable circular practices rather than limited to reporting and philanthropy.

Financial institutions should design green finance products that directly support circular economy practices. These may include loans for recycling systems, renewable energy adoption, green product development, clean production equipment, reverse logistics, and supplier upgrading. Green finance should be accessible not only to large corporations but also to SMEs, because SMEs often face the strongest financial barriers to circular transformation.

Policymakers should strengthen environmental governance by developing circular economy regulations, green finance taxonomies, sustainability disclosure requirements, and incentives for resource-efficient production. Public agencies should also support e-government platforms that improve transparency, monitoring, and access to sustainability programs. Stronger governance can reduce greenwashing and encourage firms to adopt substantive circular practices.

Universities and training institutions should support circular economy implementation by developing skills in AI, data analytics, sustainability management, green entrepreneurship, and supply chain transformation. Digital pedagogy and workforce upskilling can help firms build the human capital required for circular industrial transformation. Educational institutions can also support industry through applied research, training, and innovation partnerships.

7. Future Research Agenda

Future empirical research can test the proposed framework using firm-level data from manufacturing, SMEs, textile, steel, semiconductor, retail, and service sectors. PLS-SEM or CB-SEM can be used to

examine the relationships among AI adoption, CSR, green finance, green product innovation, green supply chain management, and circular economy implementation. Such studies can also test access to finance, environmental governance, and digital capability as moderators.

Future research may also use fsQCA to identify different configurations that lead to circular economy implementation. For example, some firms may achieve circularity through strong AI and green supply chain capability, while others may achieve it through CSR, green finance, and governance pressure. This configurational approach is useful because circular economy implementation may occur through multiple pathways rather than one universal model.

Longitudinal studies are also needed because circular economy implementation is a gradual process. Firms may first adopt green finance, then invest in technology, then redesign products, and later restructure supply chains. Longitudinal research can examine how circular capabilities evolve over time and how firms overcome barriers at different stages.

Comparative studies across countries and sectors would also strengthen the literature. Emerging economies differ in institutional quality, financial development, digital infrastructure, environmental regulation, and human capital. Future studies may compare South Asia, ASEAN, MENA, GCC, BRICS, and OECD contexts to examine how institutional conditions shape circular economy implementation.

Future research should also examine the role of education and workforce skills. AI and circular economy technologies require trained employees and sustainability-oriented managers. Studies can examine whether digital pedagogy, Education 4.0 readiness, and workforce upskilling improve firms' ability to implement AI-enabled circular practices.

8. Conclusion

This paper developed a theoretical framework explaining how AI adoption, CSR, and green finance support circular economy implementation through green product innovation and green supply chain management. The central argument is that circular economy implementation is not driven by technology, responsibility, or finance alone. It emerges from the interaction of technological intelligence, stakeholder orientation, financial capacity, innovation capability, and supply chain coordination.

The paper draws on the natural-resource-based view, stakeholder theory, dynamic capabilities theory, and institutional theory to explain the mechanisms through which firms transform resources into circular economy practices. AI adoption improves sensing, prediction, and optimization. CSR creates stakeholder-driven motivation for environmental responsibility. Green finance provides the resources needed for circular investments. Green product innovation and green supply chain management translate these drivers into practical circular economy implementation.

The framework also emphasizes the importance of access to finance, environmental governance, digital capability, and human capital. These conditions are particularly important in emerging economies, where firms often face resource constraints, weak institutions, and limited technological readiness. By integrating technology, finance, governance, education, and sustainability perspectives, the paper provides a theoretical foundation for future research and practical action toward sustainable industrial transformation.

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest w.r.t the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

The authors used artificial intelligence (AI) solely for English language editing and to improve the readability of this manuscript. All scientific content, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions were developed and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final version of the article.

References

Abdulla, A., Fenech, R., Kinsella, K., Hiasat, L., Chakravarti, S., White, T., & Rajan, P. B. (2023). Leadership Development in Academia in the Uae: Creating a Community of Learning. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *45*(1), 96-112. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2022.2116667

Ahmad, T. I., Kiran, K., & Alamgir, A. (2023). Households' Clean Cooking Fuel Poverty: Testing the Energy-Ladder Hypothesis in the Case of Bangladesh. *iRASD Journal of Energy & Environment*, *4*(1), 42-55. https://doi.org/10.52131/jee.2023.0401.0034

Ahmed, D. M., Azhar, Z., & Mohammad, A. J. (2024). The Role of Corporate Governance on Reducing Information Asymmetry: Mediating Role of International Standards for Accounting (Ias, Ifrs). *Kurdish Studies*, *12*(1), 1734-1745.

Alemán de la Garza, L., Anichini, A., Antal, P., Beaune, A., Crompton, H., & Tsinakos, A. (2019). Rethinking Pedagogy: Exploring the Potential of Digital Technology in Achieving Quality Education.

Ali, S., Degan, M., Omar, A., & Mohammad, A. J. (2024). Just Go Green: The Effect of Green Innovation on Competitive Advantage with the Moderating Role of 'Access to Finance'. *Brazilian Journal of Operations & Production Management*, *21*(2), 1815. https://doi.org/10.14488/BJOPM.1815.2024

Bhatti, M. A., Hussain, A., Ahmad, T. I., & Nawaz, M. A. (2025). E-Government Development and Its Role in Enhancing Government Effectiveness and Public Sector Governance. *Review of Applied Management and Social Sciences*, *8*(1), 375-389. https://doi.org/10.47067/ramss.v8i1.467

Bhatti, M. A., Ibraheem, R., Hussain, A., & Ahmad, T. I. (2024). Bridging the Digital Divide or Widening the Gap. *Internet Penetration and Economic Growth in 85 Developing Countries. Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3474-3484. https://doi.org/10.52131/pjhss.2024.v12i4.2476

Chakravarti, S. (2022). A Case Study on the United Arab Emirates (Uae) as a Digital Economy Exemplar:. In L. Reis, L. C. Carvalho, C. Silveira, & D. X. Brasil (Eds.), *Advances in Finance, Accounting, and Economics* (pp. 38-53). IGI Global.

Chakravarti, S., & Stevenson, R. R. (2022). Experiences of Educators in Imparting Digital Education and 21st Century Skills to Modern Students:. In I. R. Management Association (Ed.), *Research Anthology on Remote Teaching and Learning and the Future of Online Education* (pp. 1721-1736). IGI Global.

Dhivya, D. S., Hariharasudan, A., Ragmoun, W., & Alfalih, A. A. (2023). Elsa as an Education 4.0 Tool for Learning Business English Communication. *Sustainability*, *15*(4), 3809. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043809

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review*, *48*(2), 147. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101

Freeman, R. E. (1984). Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach. *Pitman*.

Hart, S. L. (1995). A Natural-Resource-Based View of the Firm. *The Academy of Management Review*, *20*(4), 986. https://doi.org/10.2307/258963

He, S., Alhamdi, F. M., Paramaiah, C., Hanif, S., & Nawaz, M. A. (2025). Role of Blue Economy and Green Economy in Economic Growth: Evidence from Pakistan. *Natural Resources Forum*, *49*(3), 3280-3291. https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-8947.70009

Hussain, A., Bhatti, M. A., Ahmad, T. I., & Nawaz, M. A. (2024). The Role of Secure Property Rights in Driving Economic Growth: A Review of Recent Evidence. *Current Trends in Law and Society*, *4*(1), 119-129. https://doi.org/10.52131/ctls.2024.0401.0040

Hussain, M. S., Nawaz, M. A., Ahmad, T. I., & Bhatti, M. A. (2021). Environmental Governance and Green Energy: An Administrative Toolkit to Reduce Environmental Degradation. *iRASD Journal of Management*, *3*(3), 329-338. https://doi.org/10.52131/jom.2021.0303.0049

Mohammad, A. J. (2015). Audit Committee Characteristics Improving Financial Reporting Quality among Malaysian Listed Companies. *European Journal of Social Science Review*, *1*(2), 18-28.

Mohammad, A. J., & Ahmed, D. M. . (2017). The Impact of Audit Committee and External Auditor Characteristics on Financial Reporting Quality among Malaysian Firms. *Research Journal of Finance and Accounting*, *8*(13), 9–16.

North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (1 ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Ragmoun, W. (2023). Ecological Footprint, Natural Resource Rent, and Industrial Production in Mena Region: Empirical Evidence Using the Sdm Model. *Heliyon*, *9*(9), e20060. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20060

Ragmoun, W. (2024). Unveiling the Strategic Impact of Big Data Analytics Capabilities in the Saudi Arabian Banking Sector: An Explorative Approach. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*. https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-11-2023-0443

Ragmoun, W., & Aloulou, W. J. (2026). Artificial Intelligence Capabilities, Sustainable Innovation and Smes' Resilience: A Serial-Parallel Mediation Model of Dynamic and Digital Platform Capabilities. *Sustainability*, *18*(9), 4320. https://doi.org/10.3390/su18094320

Ramkumar, G., Othman, B., Malviya, B., Mohamma, A. J., Narayana, M. S., & Verma, D. (2022, 2022-4-28). A Conceptual Analysis on the Impact of Machine Learning Towards on Digital Marketing Transformation. 2022 2nd International Conference on Advance Computing and Innovative Technologies in Engineering (ICACITE),

Sadiq, M., Nawaz, M. A., Sharif, A., & Hanif, S. (2024). Bridging Green Supply Chain Practices and Environmental Performance in Chinese Semiconductor Sector: With the Role of Energy Efficiency and Green Hrm. *International Journal of Production Economics*, *277*, 109381. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2024.109381

Shen, Z., Wei, S.-Y., Nawaz, M. A., & Ahmad, T. I. (2025). Mitigating Food Insecurity through Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Slf): Fresh Global Evidence. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, *32*(8), 926-941. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2025.2573417

Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic Capabilities and Strategic Management. *Strategic Management Journal*, *18*(7), 509-533. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199708)18:7<509::AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z

Vu, T. L., Paramaiah, C., Tufail, B., Nawaz, M. A., Thi My Xuyen, N., & Huy, P. Q. (2023). Effect of Financial Inclusion, Eco-Innovation, Globalization, and Sustainable Economic Growth on Ecological Footprint. *Engineering Economics*, *34*(1), 46-60. https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ee.34.1.32402

Zhao, J., Ragmoun, W., Dong, Z., Nawaz, M. A., & Sattarov, A. (2026). Circular Economy Implementation through Ai Adoption, Csr and Green Finance: The Mediating Role of Green Product Innovation and Green Supply Chain. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, *33*(2), 2432-2447. https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.70289