



An Open Access Journal Available Online

# Innovative Ways of Communicating Green Office Practice in Nigerian Universities For Sustainable Economic Growth

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**Received: 31.3.2024      Accepted: 04.6.2024**  
**Date of Publication: July 2024**

**Abstract:** As the world continues to face the challenges of environmental degradation and climate change, there is an increasing demand for sustainable practices in all sectors of society, including the education sector. Nigerian universities have a significant role in promoting sustainable development practices, including green office practices. The effective communication of these practices is crucial to driving sustainable behaviour among university staff and students. This research explores innovative methods for communicating green office practices in Nigerian universities that can contribute to sustainable economic growth. This study further identifies that green offices are being set up across Nigeria to enhance climate change education and communication, achieving sustainable economic growth and development. It also highlights the concept and numerous benefits of green offices across various higher education institutions in Nigeria. It concludes with a clarion call for the multi-stakeholder partnership to enhance green office practices and climate change communication across various Universities in Nigeria, thereby achieving sustainable economic growth.

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Communication, Economic Growth, Green Office, Higher Education.

## Introduction

Climate change, a pressing global challenge, has compelled societies, businesses, and educational institutions to re-evaluate their sustainability and environmental responsibility approaches. This phenomenon, attributed primarily to human activities, has led to widespread alterations in weather patterns, rising sea levels, and increased frequency of extreme weather events (IPCC, 2021). Climate change is one of the most significant challenges the planet is facing, and Nigeria, like many other countries, has been affected by the adverse

effects of climate change. Addressing climate change requires a multifaceted approach encompassing education, communication, and integrating sustainable practices across various sectors, including higher education and office environments. Therefore, climate change education, which higher education institutions should majorly champion, is vital to achieving sustainable economic growth in Nigeria (Anabaraonye, Okafor & Hope, 2018). It is needed by students, lecturers, farmers, musicians, poets, and individuals from all walks of life in Nigeria and beyond. Research has shown that green offices can effectively mitigate climate

change impacts, including flooding, erosion, drought, etc., and enhance sustainable economic growth by reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions. There is a growing need for flood risk awareness creation in flood-prone areas in Nigeria (Nwafor, 2021), and the green office is one of the tools for achieving this. Additionally, green offices are used as communication tools to educate individuals about sustainable practices and environmental stewardship. However, research on the use of green offices in climate change communication in Nigeria remains limited.

Green offices have become increasingly popular globally as organizations become more aware of their carbon footprint. Green buildings have been identified as a means of reducing carbon emissions, and they have attracted considerable interest from researchers and practitioners (Darby, 2017). Several scholars have explored the benefits of green offices, and their findings show they have significant benefits. Green offices reduce energy consumption, improve indoor air quality, increase employee productivity, reduce water consumption, and improve recycling and waste management practices (Darby, 2017). Green offices have also been identified as tools for climate change communication. Green buildings are seen as a visible symbol of an organization's commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. Therefore, green offices can be a powerful communication tool that can motivate employees and stakeholders to undertake sustainable practices (Borup, 2015).

Thus, effective communication is pivotal in raising awareness, shaping attitudes, and mobilizing action to mitigate climate change impacts. In recent years, studies have emphasized the importance of clear, compelling communication strategies to engage diverse audiences in understanding the complexities of climate change (Leiserowitz et al., 2020). These efforts are particularly crucial in educational settings, where knowledge dissemination and fostering environmental literacy are fundamental. A green office, marked by its commitment to sustainable practices, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and conscious resource utilization, epitomizes an organization's dedication to mitigating climate change (Jabbour et al., 2020). By integrating eco-friendly technologies, promoting a culture of sustainability, and fostering employee engagement, green offices demonstrate tangible steps toward reducing carbon footprints and inspiring broader societal change. The interconnectedness of climate change, communication, education, green office initiatives, higher education, and sustainable development underscores the necessity for cohesive strategies to address these challenges. This integration necessitates collaborative efforts, innovative approaches, and a shared commitment to create a more sustainable future for future generations. However, green offices face several challenges, including high construction and renovation costs, lack of awareness, conservative attitudes, and limited knowledge and expertise (Borup, 2015). Additionally, some scholars argue that green buildings may not be as effective in mitigating carbon emissions as initially believed, especially if the occupants are not engaged in sustainable practices (Kota & Pavlovic, 2018). In Nigeria, research on green offices remains limited, and there is a lack of information on the innovative use of green offices in climate change communication. However, some efforts have

been towards green building certification, such as the Nigerian Green Building Council (NGBC), which has been established to promote sustainable practices in the construction industry (Onifade et al., 2018). While much research has been conducted on green offices globally, there remains a gap in Nigerian universities' innovative use of green offices in climate change communication. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by exploring the benefits and challenges of green offices in Nigerian universities and their potential to contribute to climate change mitigation and communication.

## Methodology

Data used for this study is derived from published works, including academic articles, journals, conference papers, textbooks, and internet materials. This chapter examined current progress with "innovative ways of communicating green offices practice in Nigerian universities for sustainable economic growth" through existing literature review and data collection from relevant agencies. This research mainly aimed to survey theoretical backgrounds and previous studies on the subject matter.

## Literature Review

### The Concept "Green Office"

A Green Office is an environmentally conscious workspace that promotes sustainable business practices to reduce businesses' negative environmental impact, including excessive greenhouse gas emissions. A green office aims to minimize waste, reduce energy consumption, and promote renewable energy sources. Generally, the aim is to reduce the negative environmental impact and promote sustainability in the workplace. The concept of green offices has been around for some time. However, interest in this area has increased significantly due to growing environmental concerns and awareness of sustainable practices' potential impact and cost savings. In the view of Ayodeji, Anabaraonye, Olisah, and Onwuzurike (2023), a green office refers to a workspace that embraces environmentally conscious practices in its daily operations, design principles, and choice of materials. As described by the US Environmental Protection Agency, these offices prioritize minimizing their environmental footprint by emphasizing energy efficiency, preserving natural resources, and curbing waste generation (EPA, 2022). Additionally, as highlighted by Filho et al. (2019), green and sustainability offices serve as dedicated spaces within higher education institutions, fostering coordinated efforts toward sustainable development initiatives.

One key aspect of a green office is the efficient use of resources, such as energy and water. This can be achieved through various measures, such as installing energy-efficient lighting and equipment, using renewable energy sources, and reducing waste and water use. A study by Kota and Pavlovic (2018) found that employees perceive these measures to have benefits such as cost savings, improved working conditions, and feeling good about being part of an environmentally responsible organization. These measures are also enhancers of sustainable economic growth.

Another important aspect of a green office is using sustainable materials and products. This includes using recycled and renewable materials in building construction and sourcing

environmentally friendly products for use in the office, such as stationery and cleaning products. Installing green roofs and walls contributes significantly to a building's sustainability. Borup (2015) argues that the design of green buildings is key to their success, and finding ways to incorporate sustainable materials into the design can help to ensure the long-term sustainability of a building. In addition to reducing the environmental impact of the workplace, a green office can also benefit employees. Several studies have noted the positive effects of green workspaces on employee productivity, health, and well-being. Darby (2017) found that green workspaces positively impact employee creativity, with green design elements such as indoor plants and natural light contributing to this effect. Furthermore, Onifadeet. al. (2018) highlighted how the green office process in Nigeria enhances indoor air quality, thermal comfort, visual comfort, noise control, and access to daylight. The presence of nature in the workplace has also been found to affect employee well-being positively.

A green office can also be important to a company's sustainability strategy. By reducing their environmental impact, companies can improve their brand image and reputation, demonstrate their commitment to sustainability to customers and stakeholders, and potentially attract and retain environmentally conscious employees. In addition, green office practices can result in long-term cost savings through efficiency gains and waste reduction. Effective communication is an essential element of a green office. This can involve providing employees with regular updates on the company's sustainability initiatives and engaging them in greening efforts. Educating employees about green practices and encouraging them to participate in sustainability initiatives can further improve the sustainability of a workplace.

While there are many potential benefits to implementing a green office, there can also be challenges. These often relate to costs and competing priorities, meaning that some companies may struggle to justify the initial expenses of sustainable initiatives. Additionally, implementing green practices can be complex and time-consuming and may require the cooperation of multiple departments. Companies must have a clear sustainability strategy to overcome these challenges, with concrete goals and targets. This can help to ensure that resources are allocated effectively and that sustainability initiatives are integrated into all aspects of a company's operations.

#### Climate Change Communication for Green Office Initiatives

Climate change communication refers to disseminating information about climate change effectively and engagingly. This includes educating the public about the science of climate change, highlighting its impacts, and promoting efforts to mitigate and adapt to its effects. Climate change communication has become increasingly important in recent years as the need for urgent action to address the climate crisis has become more pressing.

One key aspect of climate change communication is translating complex scientific concepts into accessible language. Effective communication means presenting scientific information in a way that is easy to understand and engaging for a lay audience. This can be challenging given the complexity of climate science, but it is essential for ensuring public understanding and support for climate action. Pidgeon

and Fischhoff (2011) note that effective communication must involve understanding the target audience and tailoring communications to their needs and values to engage them better.

Another important aspect of climate change communication is the need to raise awareness of the impacts of climate change on the environment and people's daily lives. This can involve highlighting the effects of extreme weather events, such as heat waves and floods, as well as climate change's economic, social, and health impacts. For instance, a study by Robinson and Ohler (2017) found that communicating the potential health benefits of climate action can effectively engage the public in climate change issues. In addition to raising awareness, climate change communications must promote and support action to address the issue. This can involve promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency, and conservation efforts, limiting greenhouse gas emissions and supporting adaptation efforts to address the impacts of climate change. Effective communication can be crucial in inspiring people to take action and support positive climate outcomes (Maibach et al., 2014).

Climate change communication must also be ongoing and sustained. Climate change is a complex and multi-faceted issue that requires a long-term strategy to engage and educate the public. This involves creating a dialogue with audiences and promoting regular and consistent messaging about the importance of addressing climate change. Studies have shown that regularity and consistency can improve climate change communication's perceived salience, trust, and efficacy (Van Der Linden et al., 2017). The media plays a crucial role in climate change communication. News articles, social media, and other forms of media shape perceptions and knowledge about climate change. Ensuring accurate and balanced coverage of climate change issues is important, as misinformation can be particularly damaging (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). For instance, studies have shown that false information about climate change can hurt people's acceptance of the issue and may impede support for climate action (Mykleby & Thorson, 2018). Successful climate change communication must also consider how to engage diverse audiences. Climate change affects different populations differently depending on their geographic location, economic status, and cultural background. Effective communication must consider these differences and be culturally relevant and accessible to diverse audiences to promote equitable solutions to the climate crisis. Moreover, it is important to establish a trusted communication source to help reduce misinformation and ensure accurate information is being spread. This can include using trusted experts in the field, such as scientists or politicians. Studies have shown that source credibility is important in shaping perceptions of climate change (Lee et al., 2013). Also, effective climate change communication can help mobilize businesses to implement environmentally sustainable practices, which can play a pivotal role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change communication targeted at businesses can also increase awareness of the economic benefits of sustainable business practices, such as cost savings resulting from energy efficiency improvements (Griskevicius et al., 2010).

Climate change communication in a green office context can involve educating employees and stakeholders about the importance of sustainability, promoting energy-efficient practices and renewable energy sources, and showcasing the positive impact of sustainable business practices. By engaging employees in sustainable practices, businesses can reduce their carbon footprint, lower costs, and improve their overall environmental performance. Such green practices can also improve corporate image and reputation, providing a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Shafer et al., 2021), thereby enhancing sustainable economic growth in Nigeria.

Effective communication about climate action in green offices requires understanding the needs and values of the target audience. This means developing messages that resonate with employees and stakeholders personally rather than simply presenting scientific or technical information. Studies have shown that relatable, personal stories can effectively engage employees in climate action and promote sustainable practices within the workplace (Lazarus et al., 2020). Another key aspect of effective climate change communication in a green office context is the promotion of responsible consumption and waste management practices. This can involve encouraging employees to reduce waste, reuse and recycle materials, and responsibly dispose of hazardous materials. Such practices can ultimately improve efficiency and reduce costs while minimizing environmental impact. In addition, recycling and reuse can reduce the carbon footprint associated with waste disposal (Vitale et al., 2018).

Green office practices also involve reducing energy consumption and promoting renewable energy sources. Climate change communication in this context can involve educating employees about ways to conserve energy, such as turning off lights and unplugging electronics when not in use or upgrading to energy-efficient equipment. Education about renewable energy sources, such as solar panels or wind power, can also be an effective tool for promoting energy efficiency in the workplace (Griskevicius et al., 2010). Communication about the importance of sustainability can also shape employee behavior in other areas of their lives. Studies have shown that climate change education in the workplace can positively impact consumer behaviour outside of work, resulting in more sustainable and responsible consumer choices (Brent et al., 2010). Poetry has been identified as one of the valuable tools for climate change education, enhancing sustainable economic growth in Nigeria (Anabaraonye, Nji & Hope, 2018).

As part of climate change communication in a green office context, employers can provide information on alternative transportation options, such as cycling or walking, and the benefits of choosing greener modes of transportation (Vitale et al., 2018). Internally, green offices can encourage innovation and collaboration among employees by encouraging feedback and suggestions for sustainable practices. Regularly seeking employee input on environmental initiatives can lead to new, more effective green practices while promoting employee engagement (Shafer et al., 2021). Effective communication about climate action in a green office context can also involve collaboration and partnership with other organizations that share common sustainability goals. Joining collaborative networks, such as a local green business network, can help

businesses share best practices, increase exposure, and leverage resources for its environmental programs and initiatives (Shafer et al., 2021).

#### Benefits of Green Office Adoption in Nigerian Universities

Many businesses have started adopting green office practices to reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to global efforts towards climate change mitigation. In Nigeria, where the effects of climate change have been heavily felt, green offices are becoming increasingly important, especially in higher education institutions. This study will explore the benefits and positive impacts of green offices in Nigeria, particularly in higher education institutions.

One of the significant benefits of green offices in Nigeria is that they reduce the negative environmental impact on higher education institutions. Green offices help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the waste generated, and the overall energy consumption. By promoting energy-efficient practices, adopting renewable energy sources, and minimizing waste, Nigerian higher education institutions can contribute to global efforts towards climate change mitigation (Ibidunni et al., 2018). Another benefit of green offices in Nigeria is that they promote environmental awareness and educate people about climate change issues. Green offices encourage employees and students to participate in environmentally friendly practices and show them the importance of making sustainable choices. Green offices in higher education institutions can help raise awareness about environmental responsibility, leading to a more environmentally conscious generation of leaders and members of society (Adelekan & Ehinola, 2019).

Green offices in Nigeria have a positive impact on health and well-being. Environmental pollution has been a significant health problem in Nigeria, leading to many severe health complications. A study by Oke et al. (2016) shows that green offices help to improve indoor air quality and create a healthy, comfortable, and productive workspace. Green offices with proper ventilation can help reduce the spread of airborne diseases, allergies, and other respiratory issues, making the workplace safer and healthier for employees and students. Green offices help to reduce operation costs and improve the bottom line. By promoting energy-efficient practices and minimizing waste generation, Nigerian higher education institutions can reduce the cost of utilities and maintenance. Adopting renewable energy sources like solar power for electricity in green offices can also help to reduce operational costs, leading to savings for the institution (Ibidunni et al., 2018).

Green offices in Nigerian higher education institutions foster innovation and collaboration. Green offices encourage employees and students to think creatively and outside the box. By fostering creativity and innovation, green offices can help develop new sustainable practices, products, and services that can solve environmental challenges. Collaborating with other players in the green space can also help Nigerian higher education institutions achieve more significant environmental objectives (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2019). Green offices help to boost the reputation of higher education institutions. Sustainable practices are becoming increasingly important for institutions and are now a criterion for evaluating institutions. Adopting green office practices can help Nigerian higher education institutions improve their ratings and put them in a

better position to compete both locally and globally (Adelekan & Ehinola, 2019).

Thus, green offices have numerous benefits and positive impacts in Nigerian higher education institutions, including promoting environmental awareness and education, improving indoor air quality for better health, reducing operational costs and carbon footprints, fostering innovation and collaboration, and enhancing the institution's reputation. Green offices will also help to enhance sustainable economic growth in Nigerian higher education institutions. To achieve significant success in green office adoption, Nigerian higher education institutions may need to collaborate with stakeholders, leverage legislative and regulatory frameworks, and share best practices within the industry.

#### **Modes of Communicating Green Offices Practice in Nigeria Universities**

The green office practices in Nigerian higher education institutions provide environmental, economic, and social benefits. However, to realize these benefits, it is essential to communicate the progress in adopting green office practices. The following are important modes of communicating green offices in Nigerian higher education institutions.

**Reports:** Nigerian higher education institutions can communicate green office practices through sustainability reports, which provide an overview of the institution's environmental and sustainable initiatives. The reports can be developed annually to provide an update on the institution's progress toward achieving its sustainability goals (Ibidunni et al., 2018).

**Websites:** Nigerian higher education institutions can use their websites to communicate their green office practices to a wider audience. The website can showcase the institution's sustainable practices, information on green policies and practices, and the latest advancements in green technologies (Adelekan & Ehinola, 2019).

**Social Media:** Nigerian higher education institutions can use social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to communicate and engage with their stakeholders on green office practices and achievements. Social media platforms are interactive and allow dialogue and the sharing of ideas on best practices for sustainability (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2019).

**Newsletters:** Nigerian higher education institutions can develop newsletters distributed to students, faculty members, and other stakeholders to provide updates on institutional initiatives towards green office practices. Newsletters can highlight successes, upcoming events, and other relevant information (Ibidunni et al., 2018).

**Workshops and Seminars:** Nigerian higher education institutions can organize workshops and seminars to educate faculty members, students, and other stakeholders on green office practices. This mode of communication provides a hands-on approach to green office practices, and attendees can have an opportunity to ask questions and engage with experts in the field (Adelekan&Ehinola, 2019).

**Posters and Signage:** Posters and signage can communicate green office practices in Nigerian higher education institutions. The signs can be placed around the institution to remind students, faculty, and staff members of the importance of green practices, how to implement those practices, and the

consequences of not adhering to the green agenda (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2019).

#### **Innovative Ways of Communicating Green Offices Practice in Nigeria Universities**

Innovative climate change communication strategies can be used to promote green office adoption in higher education institutions in Nigeria. Below are some recommendations:

**i) Virtual Reality (VR) technology:** VR technology in climate change communication can be a useful tool to promote green office adoption. This technology can help stakeholders visualize the impact of their actions on the environment and initiate a sense of urgency to implement sustainable practices (Dutta, Li, & Law, 2019).

**ii) Visual Communication:** Videos, infographics, and images can be powerful communication tools to promote green office adoption and sustainability practices. Institutions can use these channels to showcase the benefits of green practices through case studies, personal stories, and timely topics. Environmental photography with numerous green entrepreneurial opportunities is identified as a valuable visual tool in climate change communication in the green offices in Nigeria (Okolo, Orji & Anabaraonye,2023).

**iii) Gamification** is an innovative approach using game-based incentives to promote sustainable practices. This approach can be applied to promote green office adoption by introducing challenges and games that reward employees for implementing sustainable office practices (Vriens, Vinnemeier, & Sloot, 2019).

**iv)Storytelling:** Storytelling can be used to create a connection between employees and the environment. This approach allows for a better understanding of sustainability issues and promotes sustainable practices. Stories can be shared through video messages or in-person storytelling sessions (O'Neill, 2017).

**v)Social media campaigns:** Social media campaigns can effectively communicate green office adoption practices. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook can be used to share pictures, videos, and other content related to green office practices. User engagement can help spread the message about adopting sustainable office practices (Marino et al., 2019). Using hashtags, social media challenges, and campaigns can drive engagement around sustainable practices and create a sense of community.

**vi)Mobile applications:** Mobile applications can promote green office adoption practices. These applications can inform employees about best practices for sustainability and track their progress in implementing them. This approach makes it easy for employees to access information about sustainable office practices anytime and anywhere (Prajapati & Shah, 2018).

**vii)Green Curriculum:** Incorporating a green curriculum can include environmental studies courses, green office training modules, and sustainable living workshops to help students internalize the importance of environmental sustainability and how to impact the environment positively.

**viii) Green Office Workshops:** Establishing workshops, seminars, and training programs to educate and engage participants on the importance of green practices is an innovative solution to promoting eco-friendly practices in higher education institutions.

**ix) Green Office Campaigns:** Educational institutions must create campaigns designed to promote green office adoption by students, staff, and faculty. The campaigns can be designed to create sustainability awareness or incentivize those implementing sustainable practices. Campaigns can be promoted through various channels, and the message can be reinforced at multiple touchpoints.

**x) Green Financing:** Green financing will go a long way towards enhancing climate change communication and green office practices for sustainable economic growth in Nigeria. Scholars have also identified the role of multilateral organizations such as the World Bank Group towards green financing, thereby enhancing green entrepreneurship and green office practices in Nigeria (Anabaraonye, Ezuma, Emone, Olisah & Ewa, 2023).

## Conclusion

The urgency of addressing climate change has prompted the global community to re-evaluate sustainability practices, and Nigeria, like many other nations, has felt the impacts. Embracing green offices within Nigerian universities offers a promising avenue for mitigating these effects and fostering environmental stewardship. The multifaceted approach demands integrating green practices and effective communication strategies to ensure these initiatives resonate across various stakeholders. Green offices, recognized for their potential to reduce carbon footprints and enhance environmental responsibility, bring forth numerous benefits, from cost savings to fostering employee well-being and innovation. However, challenges persist, including high initial costs and the necessity for behavioural engagement to maximize their effectiveness. Communication plays a pivotal role in advancing green office initiatives, necessitating accessible, engaging, and regular dissemination of information. Leveraging various communication modes like reports, websites, social media, newsletters, workshops, and visual aids proves crucial in engaging stakeholders and fostering a culture of sustainability. Moreover, innovative communication methods, such as virtual reality, visual storytelling, gamification, social media campaigns, mobile applications, and green curriculum integration, present exciting opportunities to amplify the impact of green office practices in Nigerian universities. These strategies educate, inspire action, and facilitate behavioural change toward sustainable practices. Ultimately, the successful integration of green offices in Nigerian higher education institutions requires a collaborative effort, leveraging diverse communication channels, embracing innovative strategies, and fostering a collective commitment to a sustainable future.

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