

# Determinants of Business Sustainability in MSMEs: A Systematic Literature Review

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## Abstract

An increasingly dynamic and competitive business environment in the digital era compels Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to develop adaptive strategies and capabilities to maintain their sustainability. However, many MSMEs still face challenges in integrating internal resources and external opportunities to achieve long-term resilience. Therefore, this study aims to systematically identify and synthesize the key determinants influencing MSME business sustainability, focusing on managerial, technological, and relational capabilities, as well as relevant external conditions. The research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol, analyzing publications indexed in the Scopus database from 2015 to 2025. The findings reveal that Knowledge Management Capability, Relational Capability, Digital Transformation, and Organizational Agility are critical internal factors enhancing innovation, operational efficiency, and business resilience. Meanwhile, external factors such as government policy support and strategic collaboration significantly strengthen MSME sustainability. The study concludes that integrating internal capabilities with external support creates a synergistic framework that is essential for ensuring the long-term success and competitiveness of MSMEs in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

**Keywords:** Knowledge Management Capability; Relational Capability; Digital Transformation; Business Sustainability; Government Policy Support.

## 1. Introduction

In the increasingly competitive digital era, business sustainability has become a central challenge for the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector. This research focuses on identifying and analyzing the determinants of MSME business sustainability in the context of digital transformation. MSMEs must not only adapt to technological advancements but also strengthen their knowledge and relational capabilities to maintain long-term competitiveness.

Previous studies have employed various approaches—such as quantitative surveys, case studies, and conceptual analyses—to explore factors influencing MSME sustainability. These studies have identified Knowledge Management Capability (KMC), Relational Capability (RC), and Digital Transformation (DT) as critical elements for enhancing innovation, efficiency, and resilience (Pham et al., 2025; Sultana et al., 2025; Iqbal et al., 2025). However, most prior research has examined these factors in isolation, resulting in fragmented insights and a limited understanding of their combined effects. Moreover, existing empirical approaches often lack methodological rigor in synthesizing evidence across contexts, limiting generalizability.



To address these limitations, this study proposes a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol. This method provides a comprehensive and replicable framework for integrating findings from diverse studies, enabling a deeper synthesis of the relationships among KMC, RC, DT, and MSME sustainability.

The main research problem lies in the limited understanding of how these three capabilities—knowledge, relational, and digital—interact synergistically to enhance MSME sustainability. Furthermore, the roles of organizational agility as a mediating factor and governance support as a moderating variable remain underexplored.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Knowledge Management Capability

Knowledge Management Capability (KMC) refers to an organization's ability to create, store, share, and utilize knowledge to enhance innovation and sustain competitive advantage. In the context of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), KMC acts as a strategic resource that supports organizational learning, operational efficiency, and long-term value creation (Ferraro et al., 2025). It integrates both explicit and tacit knowledge management, enabling firms to adapt to dynamic market changes, improve decision-making, and maintain competitiveness.

Empirical studies highlight the importance of KMC in fostering MSME innovation and performance. Carlsson & Nevzorova (2025) found that firms with higher KMC levels are more capable of adopting new technologies and responding to shifting consumer behaviors. Pham et al. (2025) emphasized that KMC enhances absorptive capacity, allowing organizations to leverage external knowledge effectively. However, prior research often examines KMC in isolation, neglecting its interaction with other strategic capabilities such as Relational Capability and Digital Transformation. This review aims to address this gap by systematically analyzing how KMC synergizes with other capabilities to support business sustainability in the digital era.

### 2.2. Relational Capability (RC)

Relational Capability (RC) is an organization's ability to build, maintain, and leverage relationships with external stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, strategic partners, and business communities. RC is crucial for creating competitive advantage through collaboration, knowledge exchange, and trust-building (Hasiara et al., 2025; Rajan Kumar et al., 2025). In MSMEs, strong relational networks enhance access to resources, facilitate co-innovation, and strengthen adaptability to market dynamics.

Recent studies indicate that RC significantly impacts MSME flexibility, innovation, and business performance. Tuffour et al. (2025) show that relational capability drives strategic orientation and collaborative problem-solving. Nevertheless, research on RC often focuses on individual outcomes without integrating how RC interacts with internal capabilities like KMC or technological transformation to influence long-term business sustainability. This study addresses this gap by exploring the synergistic role of RC alongside KMC and Digital Transformation in enhancing organizational resilience and sustainability.

### 2.3. Digital Transformation (DT)

Digital Transformation (DT) involves integrating digital technologies across all aspects of business operations, fundamentally changing how organizations deliver value to customers (Jabbour Al Maalouf et al., 2025). For MSMEs, DT is not merely technology adoption but also encompasses cultural, structural, and managerial shifts towards digital-oriented operations. DT enhances operational efficiency, accelerates innovation, and strengthens global competitiveness.

Empirical evidence shows that DT positively influences organizational agility and performance. George (2025) highlights that digital adoption enables rapid market response and process optimization, while Iqbal et al. (2025) stress that combining DT with human resource readiness is critical for success. However, many studies investigate DT in isolation, overlooking how it interacts with KMC and RC to enhance MSME sustainability. This review examines these interactions, aiming to provide an integrated understanding of DT's role in fostering long-term business resilience.

### 2.4. Organizational Agility

Organizational Agility refers to the ability of firms to quickly sense, respond, and adapt to environmental changes while maintaining efficiency and effectiveness. In MSMEs, agility bridges internal capabilities, such as knowledge management and relational networks, with sustainable business outcomes (Alake et al., 2024). It enables organizations to seize opportunities, mitigate risks, and remain competitive amid market volatility.

Studies demonstrate that agility is a critical mediator between strategic capabilities and performance. Singh et al. (2024) show that agile organizations can adapt strategies and resource allocation rapidly, improving innovation and resilience. Nonetheless, research often focuses on agility as an independent factor without systematically examining how it mediates the effects of KMC, RC, and DT on business sustainability. This gap motivates the current review to investigate agility as a mediator in the relationship between strategic capabilities and sustainable outcomes in MSMEs.

### 2.5. Governance Support

Governance Support encompasses regulatory, policy, and institutional mechanisms that facilitate MSME growth and transformation. It includes digital infrastructure, managerial training, and innovation incentives (Manolchev et al., 2024). Effective governance ensures alignment between organizational strategy, policies, and operational practices, enhancing the impact of internal capabilities.

Evidence suggests that governance support moderates the relationship between internal capabilities and organizational performance. Dvorsky et al. (2024) emphasize that regulatory and policy support accelerates digital adoption and strengthens business resilience in emerging markets. However, few studies systematically analyze governance as a moderating factor within the interaction of KMC, RC, and DT in MSMEs. This review addresses this gap by evaluating governance support as a moderator in achieving sustainable business outcomes.

### 2.6. Business Sustainability

Business Sustainability is the ability of organizations to achieve balanced economic, social, and environmental performance over the long term. Sustainable MSMEs prioritize not only short-term profits but also reputation, social responsibility, and innovation for long-term value creation (Mazhar et al., 2024; De Angelis, 2024). The Triple Bottom Line framework (profit, people, planet) serves as a key foundation for sustainable business practices.

Research demonstrates that the integration of KMC, RC, and DT significantly contributes to MSME sustainability by enhancing efficiency, innovation, and adaptability. Nevertheless, there is limited systematic evidence on how these capabilities interact synergistically with agility and governance support to achieve holistic sustainability. This review seeks to synthesize existing studies to clarify these relationships and provide practical and theoretical insights for MSME sustainability in the digital era.

### 3. Methods

In this section, you need to describe the proposed method step by step. Explanations accompanied by equations and flow diagrams as illustrations will make it easier for readers to understand your research.

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to comprehensively analyze studies examining the synergy between Knowledge Management Capability, Relational Capability, and Digital Transformation in fostering Business Sustainability in SMEs. The research design follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure a transparent, systematic, and replicable literature selection process.

Data were collected through searches of reputable academic databases, such as Scopus. Selected articles were published between 2015 and 2025 to ensure relevance to the SME context and current dynamics of digital transformation. The search keywords included: “knowledge management capability,” “relational capability,” “digital transformation,” “organizational agility,” “governance support,” and “business sustainability in SMEs.”

Article selection was based on the following inclusion criteria:

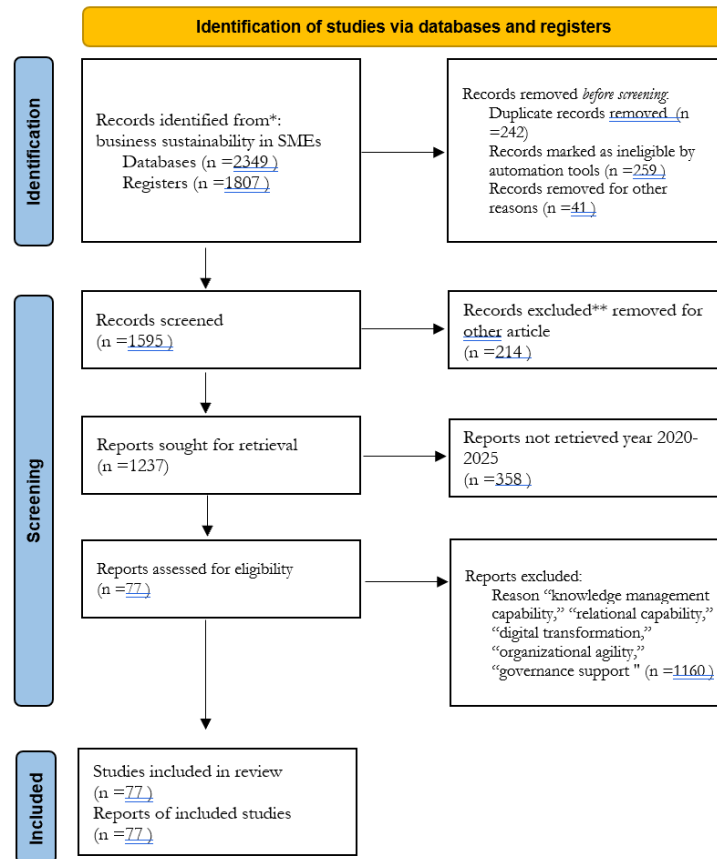
- a) Published in reputable international or national journals.
- b) Clear research methodology.
- c) Focus on SMEs or equivalent organizations in the context of business sustainability.
- d) Discuss the relationship between organizational capabilities and business sustainability.

Articles that did not meet these criteria, such as conceptual studies lacking empirical support or those irrelevant to the topic, were excluded from the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic synthesis approach, grouping findings according to the following main themes:

- a) The role of Knowledge Management Capability in supporting innovation and efficiency in SMEs.
- b) The contribution of Relational Capability to collaboration and business sustainability.
- c) The impact of Digital Transformation on competitiveness and organizational agility.
- d) The role of Governance Support in strengthening the relationships among these variables.

Selected studies were compared to identify relationship patterns, research gaps, and recent trends in the literature. The results of this systematic analysis are expected to provide in-depth insights into how the synergy of knowledge, relational, and digital capabilities strengthens SME business sustainability, serving as a foundation for future research directions and policy development.



The study selection process followed the PRISMA methodology, beginning with the identification phase, where 2,349 records were obtained from databases and registries. Before screening, 875 records were removed for the following reasons:

- Duplicates (242)
- Marked as ineligible by automated tools (259)
- Removed for other reasons (41)

After elimination, 1,807 records remained for further screening. During screening, 214 records were excluded due to prior use in other articles, leaving 1,595 reports requested for retrieval. However, 1,237 reports from the 2020–2025 period could not be retrieved. Subsequently, from 77 reports assessed for eligibility, 1,160 were excluded because they did not contain terms such as “knowledge management capability,” “relational capability,” “digital transformation,” “organizational agility,” and “governance support,” which aligned with the inclusion criteria.

Ultimately, 77 studies met the criteria and were included in the final review. This systematic selection process ensures that only relevant and high-quality studies were analyzed in this research.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

In this section, the author needs to explain the hardware and software used, the dataset sources, the initial data analysis, the results, and the results analysis/discussion. Presenting the results with pictures, graphs, and tables is highly recommended. Formulas or evaluation measuring tools also need to be included here. There must be discussion/analysis, and you can't just rewrite the results in sentence form, but you need to provide an explanation of their relationship to the initial hypothesis. In addition, this section needs to discuss and elaborate on important findings.

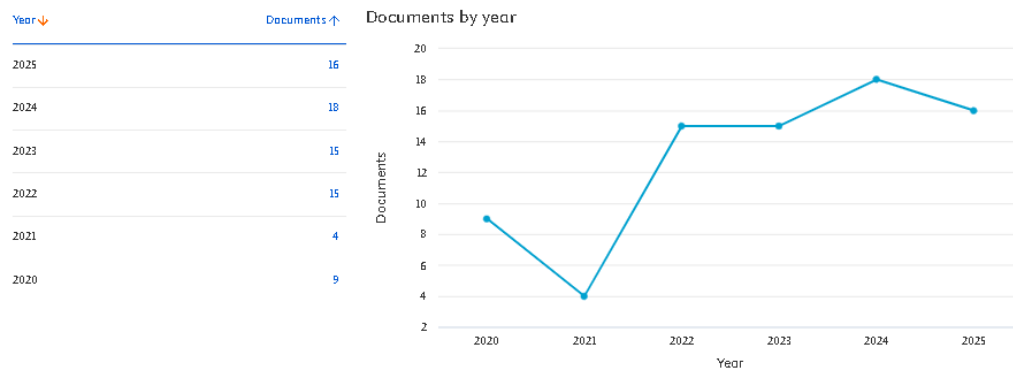


Figure 1. Publication Trends on Business Sustainability in SMEs (2020–2025)

This figure illustrates the yearly number of publications addressing the synergy of knowledge management capability, relational capability, and digital transformation in the context of SME business sustainability. A sharp increase is observed from 2022 onwards, indicating growing scholarly attention to integrating organizational capabilities for sustainable SME performance.

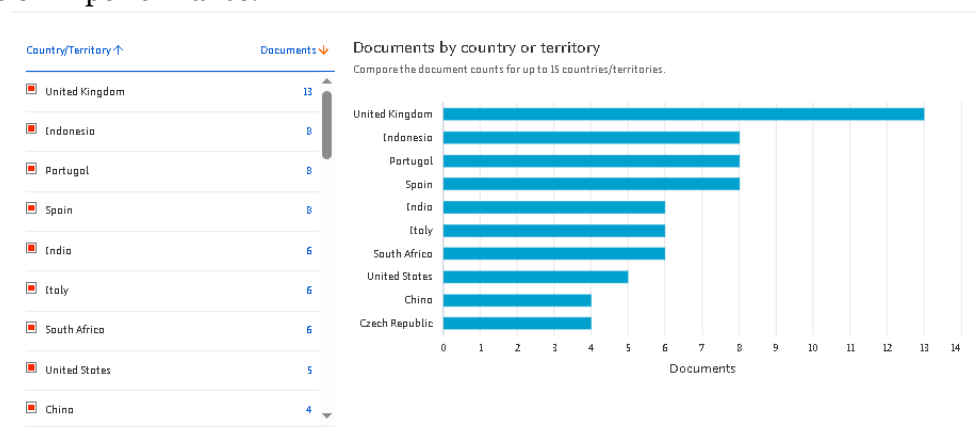


Figure 2. Publication distribution by country.

This figure shows the distribution of publications on knowledge management capability, relational capability, digital transformation, and business sustainability in SMEs by country. The United Kingdom leads with 13 publications, followed by Indonesia, Portugal, and Spain with 8 publications each, while other countries, including India, Italy, South Africa, the United States, China, and the Czech Republic, contributed fewer publications. This distribution demonstrates that the topic has gained global attention across both developed and developing countries.

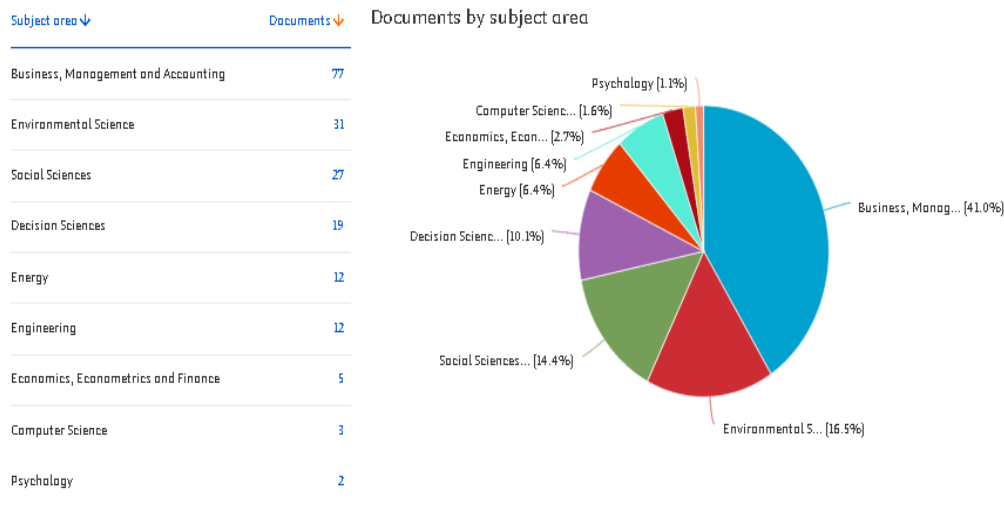


Figure 3. Distribution of research fields.

In addition to temporal and geographic trends, the disciplinary focus of the publications is presented in Figure 3. The majority of studies are concentrated in Business, Management, and Accounting (77 publications, 41.0%), reflecting a managerial and accounting perspective on organizational strategy and sustainability. Environmental Science ranks second (31 publications, 16.5%), highlighting the integration of sustainability and environmental considerations. Social Sciences contribute 27 publications (14.4%), underscoring the importance of social factors and interpersonal relationships in building organizational capabilities. Decision Sciences (19 publications, 10.1%) emphasizes data-driven decision-making and digital innovation, while Energy and Engineering (12 publications each, 6.4%) illustrate the link between technology, energy efficiency, and sustainable business practices. Smaller contributions from Economics, Econometrics, and Finance (5 publications), Computer Science (3 publications), and Psychology (2 publications) demonstrate the multidisciplinary nature of research on SME sustainability, combining economic, technological, social, and environmental dimensions.

Overall, the analysis of publication trends, geographic distribution, and disciplinary focus suggests that research on the synergy between knowledge management, relational capability, and digital transformation is increasingly recognized as critical for SME sustainability. The findings highlight the need for further empirical studies to explore the interactions among these capabilities and provide actionable insights for SMEs aiming to enhance performance, competitiveness, and long-term resilience in the digital era.

Table 1. Articles that meet the criteria of the multicriteria method, their authors, and research focus

NO	Article title	Authors	Article Focus	Adhesion
1	Exploring the prioritisation of biodiversity amongst small- to medium-sized enterprise leaders with strong bigger-than-self value orientation	Herbert, S. et al.	How SME leaders, who possess a "bigger-than-self" value orientation.	Its integration of leadership values with practical decision-making for sustainability
2	Market transformations as collaborative change: Institutional co-evolution through	Market transformations as collaborative change: Institutional co-	How market transformations occur through collaborative efforts in the context of small	Integration of entrepreneurship with institutional theory

		evolution through	business entrepreneurship	
3	Reaching for net zero: The impact of an innovative university-led business support programme on carbon management strategy and practices of small and medium-sized enterprises	Mazhar, M. U. et al.	The study examines the ways in which this program helps SMEs adopt practices aimed at achieving net-zero carbon emissions, thereby enhancing their overall environmental sustainability.	The adherence of this research lies in its integration of academic support and practical business strategies, highlighting how university-led initiatives can facilitate the adoption of sustainable practices within SMEs
4	Assessing people-driven factors for circular economy practices in small and medium-sized enterprise supply chains: Business strategies and environmental perspectives	Sawe, F. B. et al.	People-driven factors contribute to circular economy practices in SMEs.	This highlights the importance of relational capabilities and knowledge management in implementing circular economy practices within SMEs.
5	Industry 4.0 and the Small Business: Something Behind the Technology - a Literature Review	Lopes, J. D.	Provides insights into the role of technology in enhancing efficiency and sustainability in SMEs	This is relevant for understanding digital transformation and agility within the context of SME.
6	Contractual networks: an organizational model to reduce the competitive disadvantage of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Europe's less developed regions	Pastore, P. et al.	Contractual networks can reduce competitive vulnerability and enhance SME performance.	This highlights the importance of collaboration and synergy in business sustainability for SMEs
7	Immediate return in circular economy: Business-to-consumer product return information sharing framework to support sustainable manufacturing in small and medium enterprises	Kamal, M. M. et al.	The information-sharing framework enhances sustainability practices in SMEs.	Relevant for digital transformation and sustainability through information and knowledge management.
8	A BWM approach to determinants of sustainable entrepreneurship in small and medium-sized enterprises	Mendes, A. C. S. et al.	Determining the factors influencing sustainable entrepreneurship in SMEs.	Illustrates the importance of agility and relational capabilities in driving sustainable entrepreneurship.
9	Debt capital access procedures for small	Tuffour, J. et al.	Financial knowledge influences access to	Emphasizes the significance of

	and medium-sized enterprises in an emerging economy: does financial knowledge matter?		debt capital for SMEs.	knowledge and relational capabilities in accessing resources for business sustainability.
10	Greening the business: How ambidextrous companies succeed in green innovation through sustainable development	Cancela, B. L. et al.	Green innovation succeeds through an ambidextrous approach in sustainable development.	Describes how relational capabilities and knowledge management can support green innovation and sustainability in SMEs.
11	Unlocking the potential: the influence of sustainable finance solutions on the long-term sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises	Kato, A. I. et al.	Sustainable financial solutions enhance the long-term sustainability of SMEs.	Highlights the importance of sustainable finance in supporting business sustainability in SMEs.
12	Exploring Knowledge Management Enablers Towards Attaining Sustainability Goals in Vietnamese Family Businesses	Pham, C. M. et al.	Knowledge management contributes to achieving sustainability goals in family businesses.	Relevant for understanding the synergy of knowledge management in the context of business sustainability.
13	Sustainability as a driver for value creation: A business model analysis of small and medium enterprises in the Italian wine sector	Broccardo, L., & Zicari, A.	Sustainability practices enhance value creation in the business models of SMEs.	Emphasizes the role of sustainability in business models and digital transformation in SMEs.
14	Impact of digital marketing capabilities on market performance of small to medium enterprise agro-processors in Harare, Zimbabwe	Chinakidzwa, M., & Phiri, M.	Digital marketing capabilities have a positive impact on SME market performance.	Describes the importance of digital transformation in enhancing SME business performance.
15	Growing a greener future: A bibliometric analysis of green innovation in SMEs	Sabando-Vera, D. et al.	Green innovation is a key focus in the business sustainability of SMEs.	Highlights the significance of green innovation and sustainability in SME business strategies.
16	Untangling circularity: Transitioning to a regional circular economy in the clothing and textile sector in England	Manolchev, C. et al.	The transition to a circular economy enhances sustainability in the apparel sector.	Relevant for digital transformation and sustainability through circular economy practices in SMEs.

17	Transforming small and medium-sized enterprises to address the climate emergency: The case for values-based engagement	Hampton, S. et al.	Value-based approaches improve SME responsiveness to climate change.	Illustrates the importance of values and synergy in business sustainability and leadership.
18	Social media integration: An opportunity for SMEs' sustainability	Bruce, E. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Social media integration supports sustainability and competitiveness in SMEs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Emphasizes the role of digital transformation in supporting SME business sustainability.
19	Measuring sustainable transformation of small and medium-sized enterprises using management systems standards	Carlsson, R., & Nevzorova, T.	<input type="checkbox"/> The application of standards enhances sustainable transformation in SMEs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Relevant for understanding how management systems support sustainability within the SME context.
20	Toward holistic corporate sustainability—Developing employees' action competence for sustainability in small and medium-sized enterprises through training	Schröder, S. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Training improves employee action competency in sustainability.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highlights the importance of employee engagement and knowledge management in business sustainability.
21	Digital transformation and innovation, dynamic capabilities to strengthen the financial performance of Mexican SMEs: a sustainable approach	Valdez-Juárez, L. E. et al.	Digital transformation and innovation improve financial performance in SMEs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Emphasizes the interaction between digital transformation and sustainability in enhancing SME business performance.
22	So ... are family firms more sustainable? On the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of family SMEs	Herrero, I. et al.	Family businesses are more sustainable in economic, social, and environmental aspects.	Illustrates the role of family business structure in sustainability.
23	Systems resilience and SME multilevel challenges: A place-based conceptualization of the circular economy	Howard, M. et al.	Location-based understanding enhances system resilience in the implementation of a circular economy in SMEs.	Emphasizes the importance of local context in sustainability and digital transformation.
24	Determinants for competitiveness in the context of international integration pressure: Case of small and medium enterprises in an emerging economy—Vietnam	Le Thanh, T. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Determinants enhance the competitiveness of SMEs under global integration pressures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Illustrates the importance of adaptability and agility in an international context for SME business sustainability.
25	Effect of Selected Determinants on the	Dvorsky, J. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Gender influences decision-making and	<input type="checkbox"/> Highlights how social factors

	Sustainability of SMEs: Does Gender Matter?		sustainability in SME management.	influence knowledge management and sustainability.
26	Green export strategies and SMEs export performance: mediating roles of innovation, readiness, and activities	Singh, V. K. et al.	Green export strategies improve SME export performance through innovation and readiness.	Supports the idea that innovation and digital transformation are key to sustainability and competitiveness in SMEs.
27	Exploring the effect of financial technology on the sustainability of small and medium enterprises in Mogadishu, Somalia	Elmi, M. A. et al.	Financial technology enhances SME sustainability by facilitating access to capital.	Highlights the role of technology in supporting business sustainability through access to resources.
28	Voluntary sustainability assurance in small and medium-sized entities: The role of country origin in Europe	Somoza, A.	Sustainability insurance has a positive impact on SME performance based on the country of origin.	Illustrates how the country context can influence sustainability practices in SMEs.
29	Energy management to foster a circular economy business model for sustainable development in an agricultural SME	Cavicchi, C. et al.	Efficient energy management enhances circular economy business models in agricultural SMEs.	Highlights the importance of energy management in the context of sustainability and digital transformation.
30	Green business process management for business sustainability: A case study of manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from Germany	Sohns, T. M. et al.	The implementation of green process management improves business sustainability in SMEs.	☐ Relevant for understanding process management practices in supporting sustainability in SMEs
31	What does sustainability mean for small and medium enterprises: A systematic literature review	Zaman, M. et al.	☐ Sustainability is defined through various dimensions affecting SMEs.	Provides a framework for understanding the concept of sustainability in the context of SMEs.
32	Can organizational size moderate the relationship between sustainability-driven financial management and business competitiveness?	Campos, V. et al.	☐ Organizational size affects the relationship between sustainable financial management and business competitiveness.	Illustrates how organizational size can influence adaptability and business sustainability in SMEs.
33	Analyzing determinants of environmental conduct in small and medium-sized	Fonseca, J. P. C. et al.	☐ Sociotechnical approaches help understand the factors influencing	Highlights the importance of knowledge and social

	enterprises: A sociotechnical approach		environmental behavior in SMEs.	management in supporting SME sustainability.
34	Women in management and sustainable development of SMEs: Do relational environmental management instruments matter?	Graafland, J.	<input type="checkbox"/> Relational environmental management contributes to the sustainable development of women-managed SMEs.	Describes the role of gender and relational capabilities in business sustainability.
35	The effects of financial and technology literacy on the sustainability of Indonesian SMEs: Mediating role of supply chain practice	Hamdana et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial and technological literacy influences SME sustainability through supply chain practices.	Emphasizes the importance of literacy in supporting sustainability practices and collaboration in SMEs.
36	Promoting SMEs' effectiveness through innovative communication strategies and business-IT alignment	Ajibade, P., & Mutula, S.	<input type="checkbox"/> Innovative communication strategies enhance IT effectiveness and engagement in SMEs.	Stresses the importance of communication and technology in supporting SME sustainability and growth.
37	Business resilience and growth strategy transformation post crisis	Bachtiar, N. K. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Business resilience and growth strategy transformation are crucial after a crisis.	Relevant for understanding how SMEs adapt and survive in challenging situations to maintain sustainability.
38	Networking capability, entrepreneurial marketing, competitive advantage, and marketing performance	Dhamera, V. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Network and entrepreneurial marketing capabilities enhance competitive advantage and marketing performance in SMEs.	Highlights the role of knowledge management and relational capabilities in SME business sustainability.
39	Sustainable business practices in SMEs: a retrospective insight on catalysts and hurdles	Iqbal, U. P. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability practices in SMEs are influenced by various inhibiting and driving factors.	Describes the challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainability practices in SMEs.
40	The interplay between smart technologies, business sustainability, and environmental sustainability: An empirical analysis of SMEs	Rajan Kumar, V. K. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Smart technology contributes to business and environmental sustainability in SMEs.	Emphasizes the importance of technology in supporting sustainability and business growth in SMEs.
41	Investigating green jobs and sustainability in	de Andrade, R. D. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Green jobs contribute to sustainability beyond	Highlights the role of innovation and sustainability

	SMEs: Beyond business operations		conventional business operations.	in creating jobs within SMEs.
42	An Economic Prognostic Study To Examine the Productivity of Agricultural SMEs of Central Europe During the Covid-19 Crisis	Imran, A. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> SME agricultural productivity is significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis.	Relevant for understanding the impact of crises on SME sustainability and competitiveness.
43	Synergizing board dynamics, sustainability, and business performance in SMEs	Barriga, R. H. & Escandon-Barbosa, D.	<input type="checkbox"/> Synergistic board dynamics contribute to the sustainability and business performance of SMEs.	Highlights the importance of leadership in achieving business sustainability.
45	Digital transformation and sustainability in SMEs: A systematic review	Mula, A. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital transformation influences sustainability practices in SMEs.	Describes the relationship between digital transformation and sustainability in the context of SMEs.
46	The role of social media marketing in enhancing sustainability in SMEs: Evidence from Bangladesh	Al Mamun, A. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Social media marketing enhances sustainability practices in SMEs.	Stresses the role of social media in supporting sustainability and business growth in SMEs.
47	The impact of innovation and entrepreneurship on SMEs' performance in Nigeria	Akinboade, O. A. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Innovation and entrepreneurship positively contribute to SME performance.	Describes the importance of innovation in improving competitiveness and business sustainability in SMEs.
48	The role of technology in transforming SMEs towards sustainability: Evidence from the Indian textile industry	Ranjan, J. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology plays a critical role in the transformation towards sustainability in the textile industry.	Highlights the role of technology in supporting sustainability and innovation in the SME sector.
49	Determinants of environmental sustainability in small and medium-sized enterprises: Evidence from Portugal	Santos, J. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental sustainability determinants in SMEs vary and are interrelated.	Describes the importance of relational capabilities and knowledge management in SME business sustainability.
50	The impact of strategic management on the sustainability of SMEs: A conceptual framework	Houghton, K. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic management enhances sustainability through better decision-making.	Highlights the importance of strategy in supporting business sustainability in SMEs.
51	The role of leadership in promoting sustainable practices in small and	Silva, R. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership influences the adoption of	Describes how leadership can drive

	medium enterprises: A systematic review		sustainability practices in SMEs.	sustainability in SMEs.
52	The influence of e-commerce on SMEs' sustainability: A study in the context of the retail sector	Kalyani, M. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> E-commerce enhances sustainability by expanding markets and operational efficiency.	Stresses the importance of digital transformation in supporting business sustainability in SMEs.
53	Being pro-environmentally oriented SMEs: Understanding the entrepreneur's explicit and implicit power motives	Handrito, R. P. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Explicit and implicit power motives influence environmental orientation in SMEs.	Highlights the role of motivation in sustainability and environmentally friendly practices in SMEs.
54	Social media adoption in SMEs sustainability: evidence from an emerging economy	Amoah, J. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Social media adoption contributes to SME sustainability through enhanced customer engagement.	Describes the importance of digital transformation in supporting business sustainability in SMEs.
55	Strategic decision-making in small and medium enterprises in South Africa	van Wyk, I.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic decision-making processes influence sustainability and growth in SMEs.	Highlights the importance of strategy in SME business sustainability.
56	A strategic framework for developing sustainable value propositions	Yeboah, A. Y. O. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic frameworks enhance the development of sustainable value propositions in SMEs.	Emphasizes the importance of strategy and innovation in supporting business sustainability in SMEs.
57	Impact of Industry 5.0 Readiness on Sustainable Business Growth of Marine Food Processing SMEs in Thailand	Madhavan, M. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry 5.0 readiness positively influences sustainable business growth.	Highlights the role of technology in supporting sustainability and growth in the SME sector.
58	Circular economy in Italian SMEs: A multi-method study	Mura, M. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> The adoption of a circular economy improves sustainability and efficiency in SMEs.	Describes the importance of circular economy practices in SME business sustainability.
59	Investment and financing behaviours in the financial crisis: The sustainable implications for SMEs	Nguyen, H. H. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Investment and financing behaviors are influenced by financial crises, impacting sustainability.	Highlights the impact of crises on sustainability practices and financial management in SMEs.
60	Entrepreneurial orientation and business outcomes:	George, W.	<input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurial orientation positively correlates with	Highlights the role of entrepreneurship

	Evidence from agro-dealers in Dodoma City, Tanzania		business outcomes in SMEs.	in sustainability and growth in the SME sector.
61	Impact of Government Support, Business Style, and Entrepreneurial Sustainability on Business Location of SMEs in South Africa's Mpumalanga Province	Ogujiuba, K. K. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Government support and business style influence sustainability and the location of SMEs.	Describes the role of external support in SME business sustainability.
62	The process supporting the emergence of the environmental innovation capabilities within small businesses: An empirical investigation	Ferraro, G. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal processes support the emergence of environmental innovation capabilities in SMEs.	Highlights the importance of innovation and knowledge management in SME business sustainability.
63	Can we count on the commitment of European SMEs to achieve SGD12? An exploratory study of business sustainability	Gomes, S., & Pinho, M.	<input type="checkbox"/> SMEs' commitment to global sustainability goals varies and is influenced by various factors.	Relevant for understanding how SMEs can contribute to global sustainability.
64	Sustaining SMEs through Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Exploring opportunities and challenges	Manyaga, M. B. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Local knowledge plays an essential role in sustainability and SME development.	Highlights the role of local knowledge in supporting SME sustainability.
65	Circular economy business models as progressive business models: Evidence from circular start-ups	De Angelis, R.	<input type="checkbox"/> Circular business models promote innovation and sustainability in startups.	Describes the importance of innovation in implementing circular business models for sustainability.
66	Business Model Innovation and SMEs' Resilience: Technological Roadmap in Nigeria	Alake, O. R. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Business model innovation contributes to the resilience and growth of SMEs in Nigeria.	Highlights the importance of innovation in supporting sustainability and adaptation in SMEs.
67	Integrating Circular Economy, Digital Economy, and Social Protection Policies To Drive Green Business Innovation: Insights From Indonesia's Culinary SMEs	Megawati, S. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy integration supports green business innovation in the culinary sector.	Stresses the importance of policies in supporting sustainability and innovation in SMEs.
68	Investigating the direct and indirect effects of accounting practices on business information and entrepreneurial growth in the supporting regions of Indonesia's new capital city	Hasiara, L. O. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Good accounting practices support entrepreneurial growth and business information.	Describes the importance of accounting practices in supporting sustainability and growth in SMEs.

69	Key Drivers of ERP Implementation in Digital Transformation: Evidence from Austro-Ecuadorian	Llivosaca-Villazhañay, J. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Key factors in ERP implementation support digital transformation in SMEs.	Relevant for understanding how digital transformation can be enhanced through good management systems.
70	Challenges of change facing entrepreneurs and Kuwaiti SMEs	Al Bazie, N., & Braganza, A.	<input type="checkbox"/> Change challenges impact sustainability and innovation in SMEs in Kuwait.	Highlights the challenges in sustainability and innovation in SMEs within specific contexts.
71	Conscious or Indifferent - Concerns on Digitalisation and Sustainability Among SMEs in Industry 4.0	Tick, A. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of digitalization and sustainability varies among SMEs.	Provides insights into the challenges and awareness in digital transformation and sustainability.
72	Boosting Green Innovation on Corporate Performance: Managerial Environmental Concern's Moderating Role	Le, T. T. & Govindan, K.	<input type="checkbox"/> Managerial environmental concern enhances the relationship between green innovation and corporate performance.	Describes the role of leadership in driving green innovation and sustainability in SMEs.
73	Confluence of Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Digitalization in SMEs	Avelar, S. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable entrepreneurship relies on innovation and digitalization for growth.	Highlights the relationship between innovation, digitalization, and sustainability in the context of SMEs.
74	Transformational Leadership, Innovation, and Performance of SMEs in Europe	Jabbour Al Maalouf, N. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Transformational leadership enhances innovation and performance in SMEs.	Relevant for understanding how leadership can influence business sustainability and innovation in SMEs.
75	Does the Transition to a Circular Economy Contribute to Business Resilience and Transformation? Evidence from SMEs	Perramon, J. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> Transitioning to a circular economy improves resilience and business transformation.	Highlights the importance of implementing a circular economy to support sustainability and resilience in SMEs.
76	The Impact of IT Capability and Organizational Learning on Halal Food SMEs' Performance	Wijaya, L. I. et al.	<input type="checkbox"/> IT capabilities and organizational learning enhance performance in halal food SMEs.	Describes the importance of information technology and knowledge management in SME business sustainability.

77	Exploring the influence of digital transformation on the sustainability of SMEs in the hospitality sector	Rahman, M. et al.	□ Digital transformation contributes to sustainability in the hospitality sector.	Stresses the importance of technology in supporting sustainability and innovation in the SME sector.
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Source: data processed, 2025

Based on the 77 studies above, the following research questions can be formulated regarding the determinants of business sustainability:

RC.1 How do Knowledge Management Capability (KMC) and Relational Capability (RC) influence business sustainability in SMEs, particularly in Indonesia?

Literature indicates that both Knowledge Management Capability (KMC) and Relational Capability (RC) consistently play a significant role in enhancing business sustainability by improving innovation potential, operational efficiency, and access to external resources (Barriga & Escandon-Barbosa, 2024; Herrero et al., 2024; Le & Govindan, 2024; Madhavan et al., 2024). In the context of Indonesian SMEs, KMC is often informal, with tacit knowledge residing with the owner and lacking digitization, which hinders the full potential for innovation. However, through interventions such as collective learning and the development of digital Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), SMEs can significantly reduce costs and improve product quality for both local and export markets.

Relational Capability (RC) is also essential in Indonesia, as SMEs that build strong partnerships with suppliers, digital platforms, or business communities show enhanced sustainability performance. Despite this, limited access to formal networks and a lack of institutional trust remain significant challenges for SMEs. Comparatively, in developed countries like the UK, where KMC and RC are supported by well-established research-industry infrastructure and business networks, the impact of these capabilities is quickly observed (Perramon et al., 2024). In Southern European countries (Portugal, Spain), similar results are seen when local policies foster collaboration among SMEs. In developing countries like India and China, the effects of KMC/RC on sustainability depend heavily on the scale of government intervention and the availability of digital platforms, reflecting patterns similar to those in Indonesia, albeit with variations in institutional capacity (Avelar et al., 2024; Kato et al., 2024; Manyaga et al., 2024; Megawati et al., 2024; Valdez-Juárez et al., 2024).

RC 2 What is the role of digital transformation (DT) and organizational agility in enhancing business sustainability in SMEs, and how does this vary across different countries?

Evidence from the studies reviewed suggests that organizational agility and digital transformation (DT) play a key mediating role: KMC and RC enhance an organization’s ability to adopt technology and respond to market changes rapidly, which in turn strengthens business sustainability (Avelar et al., 2024; Bachtiar et al., 2023; Herbert et al., 2023; Valdez-Juárez et al., 2024). In Indonesia, digital transformation among SMEs accelerates market access (e-commerce), supply chain efficiency, and customer data utilization. However, this adoption is often partial, constrained by challenges such as digital literacy, capital limitations, and inadequate infrastructure (e.g., unreliable connectivity in remote areas).

Agility in Indonesian SMEs tends to emerge in units that have adopted at least basic technology and have strong relational networks; these SMEs are able to pivot business models more quickly during disruptions (e.g., the pandemic). In contrast, SMEs in developed countries like the UK and the US, with broader access to digital solutions and financing, show stronger mediation, with KMC more rapidly mediated by DT and Agility to drive sustainability. Meanwhile, in countries like India and several African nations, the results are similar to Indonesia—digital adoption increases agility, but dependence on external support makes the

mediation inconsistent without strong policy interventions (Bachtiar et al., 2023; Gomes & Pinho, 2023; Herbert et al., 2023; Imran et al., 2023).

RC.3 How does governance support (public policies, incentives, training, and digital infrastructure) affect the relationship between internal capabilities (KMC, RC, DT) and business sustainability in SMEs in Indonesia?

The review of the articles confirms that governance support—including public policies, incentives, training, and digital infrastructure—plays a critical moderating role in the relationship between Knowledge Management Capability (KMC), Relational Capability (RC), Digital Transformation (DT), and business sustainability. Strong governance support significantly amplifies the positive impact of internal capabilities on sustainability outcomes (Bachtiar et al., 2023; Cancela et al., 2023; Gomes & Pinho, 2023; Herbert et al., 2023; Imran et al., 2023). In Indonesia, initiatives by local governments and ministries, such as digitalization training, facilitating access to financing, and product certification, have proven to increase SMEs' capacity to leverage knowledge and networks. However, the uneven implementation of these initiatives across regions has resulted in heterogeneous outcomes—some SME clusters are rapidly transforming, while others lag due to limited access to resources and policy support. For example, SMEs in urban areas like Jakarta have better access to training programs and financial support compared to those in remote regions, where infrastructure and digital literacy remain significant barriers.

In comparison, countries with integrated pro-SME policies, such as China and several European nations, provide strong governance support that accelerates technology adoption, fosters industry-academia collaboration, and facilitates access to sustainable markets. This support enhances the synergies of organizational capabilities, leading to quicker sustainability outcomes. For instance, the "Made in China 2025" initiative and the EU's Digital Single Market have significantly supported SMEs' digital adoption and innovation. In contrast, in countries with weak governance or limited public resources, like some parts of India and Africa, governance support tends to be insufficient, preventing the full realization of the potential of KMC, RC, and DT. Therefore, for Indonesian SMEs, strengthening governance support through integrated policies, digital training subsidies, and network facilitation is essential to ensure that internal capabilities can be fully leveraged to achieve business sustainability.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on key factors influencing Business Sustainability in SMEs, it can be concluded that the sustainability of SMEs is highly determined by the organization's ability to manage knowledge and build strong relationships with external partners. These capabilities serve as strategic foundations for enhancing innovation, efficiency, and competitiveness, especially when supported by organizational agility and effective digital transformation. The review confirms that agility and digital transformation mediate the relationship between internal capabilities and business sustainability. SMEs that quickly adapt to market changes and adopt digital technologies are proven to be more resilient in crises and have a higher chance of long-term survival.

Furthermore, governance support plays a critical moderating role in strengthening these relationships. Government policies, digital training, and easier access to financing and markets significantly enhance the effectiveness of knowledge management and relational capability at the SME level. Cross-country comparisons show that SMEs in countries with strong governance support, such as the UK, Portugal, and China, more rapidly integrate digital transformation and achieve business sustainability compared to SMEs in developing countries

like Indonesia and India, which face challenges related to infrastructure and digital literacy. Therefore, strengthening governance support through inclusive policies, equitable digitalization, and stakeholder collaboration is essential for ensuring that Indonesian SMEs can thrive in the dynamic digital economy.

However, this study has some limitations, particularly in the scope of studies included, which mostly focus on SMEs in developing countries. Future research could expand to include a wider range of case studies from both developed and developing countries, as well as explore the specific mechanisms by which governance support influences internal capabilities in SMEs. Such research would further deepen our understanding of how policy frameworks can drive SME sustainability globally.

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