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Peer Review

Review of: "Circular Economy Approaches as Support for Business Transformation Towards Excellence"

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This paper investigates the adoption of circular economy practices in Romanian SMEs and explores their relationship with organizational excellence based on a survey of 52 companies. The topic is relevant and timely, particularly in the context of increasing policy and market pressure for sustainable transformation in emerging economies. The manuscript is clearly structured and easy to follow, moving logically from literature review to empirical analysis.

The study provides a useful descriptive overview of how companies perceive circular economy principles and sustainability. The results highlight important practical constraints, especially the lack of qualified personnel, financial limitations, and insufficient know-how, which are convincingly discussed (pp. 9–10). The paper also succeeds in showing that Romanian SMEs are generally open to circular approaches but remain at an early stage of implementation. This distinction between willingness and capability is well captured and represents one of the strengths of the manuscript.

However, the analytical depth of the paper is limited. The research remains largely descriptive, and the relationship between circular economy and organizational excellence is more assumed than rigorously demonstrated. Although correlation analysis and ANOVA are applied, these methods are not clearly linked to explicitly formulated research hypotheses. As a result, the statistical analysis does not fully support a strong explanatory framework and appears somewhat detached from the conceptual discussion.

The methodological approach raises additional concerns. The sample size is relatively small (52 companies), and the use of snowball sampling introduces potential bias, limiting the generalizability of the findings. While this type of sampling can be acceptable for exploratory research, the manuscript does not sufficiently emphasize this limitation or adjust the scope of its conclusions accordingly.

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Furthermore, although the questionnaire structure is presented (pp. 6–7), there is no information regarding its validation or reliability. The absence of testing procedures (e.g., pilot testing, internal consistency measures) weakens the robustness of the data and makes it difficult to assess the accuracy of the measured constructs.

The interpretation of results is generally coherent but at times overly general. Statements regarding “growing awareness” or “emerging commitment” are not always supported by deeper or comparative analysis. The figures (Figures 1–4, pp. 8–11) present relevant data, but their analytical potential is not fully exploited, as they are mostly described rather than critically interpreted.

The conclusions are aligned with the results, but they tend to overstate the implications of the findings given the methodological limitations. A more cautious interpretation would strengthen the overall credibility of the study.

In its current form, the manuscript addresses an important topic and provides useful initial insights, but it requires substantial improvement in terms of methodological rigor and analytical clarity.

Recommendation: Reconsider after major revision.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.