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Corruption, Governance and Entrepreneurship: Institutional Barriers to Sustainable Economic Growth

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Abstract

This article analyses corruption, governance and entrepreneurship as interrelated dimensions of sustainable economic growth. Its central thesis is that entrepreneurship cannot contribute fully to sustainable development when institutional environments are weakened by corruption, lack of trust, poor governance and distorted incentives. Entrepreneurship requires not only individual initiative, innovation and knowledge, but also transparent institutions, ethical norms, effective governance, social trust and communicative infrastructures that enable responsible value creation.

The article integrates classical and contemporary theories of entrepreneurship, governance, knowledge management, innovation and sustainable development with empirical and theoretical studies by Marcin W. Staniewski and his co-authors. Particular attention is given to corruption as an institutional barrier to savings and development, the role of innovation, management and governance in sustainable growth, ethical aspects of entrepreneurship, socioeconomic factors influencing student entrepreneurship, family communication and entrepreneurial self-efficacy, self-esteem and achievement motivation, human resource management and innovativeness, knowledge management, and digital consumer value creation through WhatsApp.

The first part presents corruption as a structural distortion of entrepreneurial incentives. The second part discusses governance as the institutional condition of sustainable entrepreneurship. The third part analyses entrepreneurship as a form of responsible value creation requiring ethical foundations. The fourth part examines knowledge management and innovativeness as organizational responses to institutional uncertainty. The fifth part analyses socioeconomic and family determinants of entrepreneurial agency. The sixth part discusses digital communication and consumer value creation as communicative dimensions of entrepreneurial ecosystems. The article concludes that sustainable economic growth requires a governance framework that protects institutional trust, supports ethical entrepreneurship, reduces corruption and enables knowledge-based innovation.

Keywords: *corruption; governance; entrepreneurship; sustainable growth; institutional trust; ethics; innovation; knowledge management; entrepreneurial self-efficacy; consumer value creation.*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is frequently described as one of the main engines of economic growth. It creates new firms, introduces innovations, generates employment, mobilizes knowledge and transforms market structures. However, entrepreneurship does not develop in a vacuum. Its social and economic effects depend on institutional conditions. The same entrepreneurial energy that can generate innovation and productive growth

may also be redirected toward rent-seeking, corruption, manipulation and unproductive activity if governance structures reward such behaviour. For this reason, corruption and governance must be placed at the centre of any analysis of sustainable economic growth.

Classical entrepreneurship theory emphasizes creativity, innovation and opportunity recognition. Schumpeter interpreted the entrepreneur as the agent of new combinations and creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1934). Drucker later



understood entrepreneurship as a disciplined practice of innovation that can be learned and managed (Drucker, 1985). Kirzner emphasized alertness to opportunity, while Knight connected entrepreneurship with uncertainty and risk-bearing (Knight, 1921; Kirzner, 1973). Yet these theories must be supplemented by institutional analysis. Opportunity recognition and innovation do not automatically produce sustainable growth. They require rules, trust, fairness and governance.

Corruption represents one of the most destructive institutional barriers to entrepreneurship and sustainable development. Abu and Staniewski's empirical investigation of the effect of corruption on domestic savings in Nigeria shows that corruption influences economic behaviour and weakens development conditions (Abu and Staniewski, 2022). Domestic savings are not only financial aggregates; they express confidence in institutions, expectations about the future and trust in the economic order. Where corruption is widespread, individuals and firms may reduce formal participation, avoid long-term commitments and redirect resources toward defensive or informal strategies.

The importance of governance is emphasized by Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski, who connect sustainable growth with innovation, management and governance (Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski, 2022). This connection is crucial because sustainable growth cannot be achieved through entrepreneurship alone. It requires institutional coordination. Innovation creates new possibilities, management organizes resources, and governance provides legitimacy, accountability and direction. Without governance, entrepreneurship may become opportunistic; without innovation, governance may become static; without management, both remain ineffective.

Entrepreneurship also has an ethical dimension. Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk argue that entrepreneurship must be interpreted ethically because entrepreneurial decisions affect persons, organizations and institutions (Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk, 2015). Corruption shows what happens when ethics is removed from economic action. It transforms entrepreneurship from value creation into extraction. It weakens trust, increases transaction costs and undermines the legitimacy of markets.

At the same time, institutional barriers do not affect all entrepreneurs in the same way. Socioeconomic background, family communication, self-efficacy, self-esteem and achievement motivation influence whether individuals perceive entrepreneurship as feasible and legitimate. Staniewski and Szopiński's study on Polish students shows that socioeconomic factors influence entrepreneurial attitudes (Staniewski and Szopiński, 2013). Staniewski, Awruk, Leonardi and Słomski demonstrate that family communication influences entrepreneurial success through entrepreneurial self-efficacy, while family determinants influence success through self-esteem and achievement motivation (Staniewski et al., 2025; Staniewski et al., 2024). These findings indicate that institutional trust interacts with psychosocial readiness.

Knowledge management and innovativeness also matter. Staniewski's work on knowledge management, from concept to practice, demonstrates that knowledge becomes valuable when translated into organizational action (Staniewski, 2002). His work on human resource management in the aspect of innovativeness shows that innovation depends on people and organizational practices that activate creativity (Staniewski, 2011). In corrupt environments, knowledge and innovation may be weakened because institutions reward informal access rather than productive capability.

Finally, contemporary entrepreneurship is increasingly communicative and digital. Cruz-Cárdenas, Guadalupe-Lanas, Zabelina, Palacio-Fierro, Velín-Fárez and Staniewski show that WhatsApp use enables consumers to create relational, emotional, functional and social value (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2019). This insight is important because entrepreneurial ecosystems depend not only on formal institutions but also on communication, networks and trust.

The aim of this article is to analyse corruption, governance and entrepreneurship as interrelated factors in sustainable economic growth. It argues that corruption is not merely a legal or moral problem, but an institutional barrier that changes the direction of entrepreneurship. Sustainable growth requires governance structures that support ethical entrepreneurship, knowledge-based innovation and communicative value creation.

Corruption as a Structural Distortion of Entrepreneurial Incentives

Corruption is often treated as an external disturbance of economic life, but it should be understood more deeply as a structural distortion of incentives. It changes the rules under which entrepreneurs act. Instead of rewarding innovation, competence, responsibility and productive risk-taking, corruption rewards access, informal privilege, manipulation and the ability to exploit institutional weakness. In this sense, corruption does not simply reduce economic efficiency; it changes the moral and institutional meaning of entrepreneurship.

Abu and Staniewski's empirical investigation of corruption and domestic savings in Nigeria provides a strong foundation for this argument. Their study shows that corruption affects domestic savings and thereby weakens development conditions (Abu and Staniewski, 2022). Savings are important because they provide resources for investment, entrepreneurship and long-term economic growth. When corruption weakens trust in institutions, individuals may become less willing to save within formal systems, and firms may become less willing to invest in long-term projects.

This finding has broader implications for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs require access to capital, predictable institutions and confidence that rules will be applied fairly. If corruption undermines these conditions, entrepreneurial activity becomes more uncertain and more costly. Entrepreneurs may spend resources not on innovation or productivity but on navigating informal networks. Abu and

Staniewski's findings therefore show that corruption is an institutional barrier to productive entrepreneurship (Abu and Staniewski, 2022).

Baumol's distinction between productive, unproductive and destructive entrepreneurship is especially useful here. According to Baumol, the amount of entrepreneurial talent in a society may remain relatively stable, but the institutional environment determines whether this talent is directed toward productive or unproductive activities (Baumol, 1990). Corruption redirects entrepreneurial energy away from innovation and toward rent-seeking. It makes unproductive entrepreneurship rational from the point of view of individual gain, even when socially destructive.

The resource-based view of the firm also helps explain the damage caused by corruption. Barney argues that sustainable competitive advantage depends on valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991). In corrupt environments, however, competitive advantage may depend not on knowledge, innovation or human capital but on political access and informal privilege. This weakens the incentive to build genuine capabilities. It also discourages ethical entrepreneurs who cannot or do not want to participate in corrupt networks.

Corruption also affects young and student entrepreneurs. Staniewski and Szopiński show that socioeconomic factors influence the entrepreneurship of Polish students (Staniewski and Szopiński, 2013). If students perceive the economic environment as corrupt, they may conclude that entrepreneurship is not a fair path of self-realization. This perception can weaken entrepreneurial intentions, especially among those without family resources or informal networks. Thus, corruption does not only affect existing firms; it shapes the formation of future entrepreneurs.

The psychological consequences are also significant. Family communication, self-esteem, achievement motivation and entrepreneurial self-efficacy may prepare individuals for entrepreneurial action, but institutional corruption can undermine their perceived feasibility of success. Staniewski et al. show that family communication affects entrepreneurial success through entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Staniewski et al., 2025), while family determinants influence success through self-esteem and achievement motivation (Staniewski et al., 2024). Yet even highly motivated individuals may hesitate if the institutional environment appears unfair.

Corruption is therefore a systemic problem. It damages savings, investment, entrepreneurial motivation, institutional trust, knowledge-based competition and ethical legitimacy. It is not only a crime or a moral defect; it is a barrier to sustainable economic growth.

Governance as the Institutional Condition of Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Governance is the institutional framework that enables entrepreneurship to become productive, ethical and sustainable. It includes rules, norms, procedures, accountability mechanisms, networks and forms of

coordination between public and private actors. Good governance does not suppress entrepreneurship; it creates the conditions under which entrepreneurial initiative can serve innovation, value creation and sustainable development.

Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski argue that the future of sustainable growth depends on the integration of innovation, management and governance (Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski, 2022). This formulation is important because it rejects one-sided models of development. Innovation alone is not enough. Management alone is not enough. Governance alone is not enough. Sustainable growth requires their interaction.

Governance theory provides a broader conceptual basis for this claim. Kooiman interprets governance as interaction between public and private actors, while Rhodes describes the rise of governance beyond traditional hierarchical government (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996). Stoker formulates governance as a theory of collective action, and Ostrom shows that effective governance depends on rules, trust and participation (Stoker, 1998; Ostrom, 1990). These perspectives show that economic development requires institutional coordination rather than isolated individual action.

Entrepreneurship depends on such coordination. Entrepreneurs need legal predictability, contract enforcement, access to information, fair competition, transparent public administration and trust in institutions. Without these conditions, entrepreneurial action becomes defensive. Instead of focusing on innovation, entrepreneurs focus on survival, informal arrangements or avoidance of institutional risk.

Good governance also protects ethical entrepreneurship. Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk emphasize that entrepreneurship has ethical aspects because economic action affects others (Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk, 2015). But ethical entrepreneurship is difficult to sustain when institutions reward unethical behaviour. If corruption is tolerated, honest entrepreneurs may be disadvantaged. Governance is therefore necessary to align ethical conduct with economic incentives.

Abu and Staniewski's study of corruption demonstrates the negative version of this relationship (Abu and Staniewski, 2022). Where corruption weakens institutional trust, savings and investment are affected. This shows that governance is not abstract. It has measurable economic consequences. It shapes whether individuals trust the future enough to save, invest and create enterprises.

Governance also influences innovation. Teece, Pisano and Shuen's theory of dynamic capabilities shows that firms must integrate, build and reconfigure resources in changing environments (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997). However, firms are more likely to invest in capabilities when institutional conditions are stable and fair. Corrupt or unpredictable governance discourages long-term investments in knowledge, people and innovation.

The relationship between governance and sustainable development is central. The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainable development as development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Elkington's triple bottom line links business performance with people, planet and profit (Elkington, 1997). Hart and Milstein show that firms can create sustainable value by integrating environmental and social challenges with strategy (Hart and Milstein, 2003). Governance is the institutional mechanism that helps align private entrepreneurship with these wider goals.

Thus, governance is not a bureaucratic burden but an enabling condition of sustainable entrepreneurship. It creates trust, protects fairness, reduces corruption, supports innovation and directs entrepreneurial energy toward long-term value creation.

Ethical Entrepreneurship as Responsible Value Creation

Entrepreneurship must be evaluated not only by the amount of value it creates, but also by the kind of value it creates and the means by which it creates it. A firm may be profitable and still be ethically harmful. A business model may be innovative and still exploit consumers, employees or institutions. For this reason, ethical entrepreneurship is essential to sustainable economic growth.

Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk argue that entrepreneurship has ethical aspects because entrepreneurial decisions always affect other people and social structures (Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk, 2015). This means that entrepreneurship cannot be reduced to individual freedom or market success. It is a social practice involving responsibility. Entrepreneurs decide how to treat employees, how to communicate with customers, how to compete, how to pay taxes, how to use knowledge and how to relate to institutions.

Corruption represents the negation of ethical entrepreneurship. It replaces responsibility with manipulation and trust with informal privilege. Abu and Staniewski's study shows that corruption affects domestic savings and weakens development conditions (Abu and Staniewski, 2022). This confirms that unethical institutional behaviour has economic consequences. Ethics is therefore not merely a moral ideal; it is a condition of sustainable development.

Ethical entrepreneurship also connects with knowledge management. Staniewski's article on knowledge management shows that knowledge must move from concept to practice (Staniewski, 2002). Yet knowledge can be used ethically or unethically. It may support innovation, but it may also enable manipulation, surveillance or exploitation. Ethical entrepreneurship requires that knowledge management be oriented toward responsible value creation.

Human resource management also has ethical implications. Staniewski's work on HRM and innovativeness shows that employees are central to innovation (Staniewski, 2011). If

employees are sources of creativity and knowledge, they must not be treated merely as instruments. Ethical entrepreneurship requires respect for human dignity, fair treatment, participation and development. Innovation built on exploitation is not sustainable.

Baumol's theory again clarifies why ethics matters. Entrepreneurship can be productive, unproductive or destructive depending on institutional incentives (Baumol, 1990). Ethics helps distinguish value creation from value extraction. Productive entrepreneurship creates social and economic value. Destructive entrepreneurship may generate private gain while damaging institutions, trust or communities.

Ethical entrepreneurship is also connected with family and psychosocial determinants. Staniewski et al. show that family communication influences entrepreneurial success through self-efficacy, and that family determinants operate through self-esteem and achievement motivation (Staniewski et al., 2025; Staniewski et al., 2024). These psychological resources can support entrepreneurial action, but they require ethical orientation. Self-efficacy without ethics may become aggressive opportunism. Achievement motivation without ethics may become destructive ambition. Ethics gives direction to agency.

In sustainable development, ethics becomes even more important. Porter and van der Linde argue that environmental responsibility can stimulate competitiveness and innovation (Porter and van der Linde, 1995). Hart's natural-resource-based view shows that environmental capability can become a strategic resource (Hart, 1995). These perspectives demonstrate that ethics and competitiveness need not be opposed. Ethical entrepreneurship can be strategically intelligent.

Thus, ethical entrepreneurship should be defined as responsible value creation. It integrates initiative, innovation, knowledge and profit with responsibility, trust and sustainability. It is the opposite of corrupt entrepreneurship. It is the moral foundation of sustainable growth.

Knowledge Management, Innovation and Institutional Uncertainty

Entrepreneurial firms must manage knowledge and innovation in environments that are often uncertain and unstable. Institutional corruption intensifies uncertainty by making rules unpredictable and incentives distorted. In such environments, knowledge management and innovation become both more necessary and more difficult.

Staniewski's work on knowledge management, from concept to practice, emphasizes that knowledge must be transformed into organizational action (Staniewski, 2002). This is particularly important in uncertain institutional environments. Entrepreneurs must interpret legal conditions, market signals, customer expectations and institutional risks. Knowledge management helps organizations transform fragmented information into practical decisions.

Davenport and Prusak define knowledge as a mixture of experience, values, contextual information and expert insight (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). This definition is useful because institutional uncertainty cannot be managed by information alone. Entrepreneurs need contextual understanding and practical judgement. Nonaka and Takeuchi's theory of knowledge creation also emphasizes the relationship between tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Entrepreneurs often rely on tacit knowledge to navigate complex institutional environments. Cohen and Levinthal's concept of absorptive capacity further explains why knowledge management matters. Firms can use external knowledge only if they possess prior knowledge that allows them to recognize and interpret it (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). In corrupt environments, external signals may be ambiguous or misleading. Firms with stronger absorptive capacity are better able to distinguish real opportunities from institutional traps.

Innovation also depends on human resources. Staniewski's article on human resource management in the aspect of innovativeness argues that people are central to innovation (Staniewski, 2011). Employees carry tacit knowledge, creativity and adaptive capacity. In uncertain environments, this human capacity becomes especially important. Firms need people who can learn, improvise, cooperate and maintain ethical standards under pressure.

This argument corresponds with Pfeffer's view that competitive advantage can be built through people and Huselid's evidence that HRM practices influence performance (Pfeffer, 1994; Huselid, 1995). Becker, Huselid and Ulrich also show that HR systems must be linked with strategy (Becker, Huselid and Ulrich, 2001). In institutional environments marked by corruption, strategic HRM can help firms build internal integrity and innovative capability.

Innovation theory also supports this analysis. Abernathy and Clark show that innovation can reshape competencies, while Christensen shows that established firms may fail when they cannot interpret disruptive change (Abernathy and Clark, 1985; Christensen, 1997). Institutional corruption can be understood as a disruptive condition that affects how firms interpret risk and opportunity. Firms that manage knowledge effectively may be better able to innovate despite uncertainty.

However, corruption can distort innovation. If institutional rewards are linked to informal access rather than creativity, firms may underinvest in knowledge and innovation. Abu and Staniewski's findings concerning corruption and savings support this broader argument: corruption weakens the conditions for long-term investment (Abu and Staniewski, 2022). Innovation requires patience, resources and trust in the future. Corruption undermines all three.

Thus, knowledge management and innovation are organizational responses to uncertainty, but they require governance and ethics. Knowledge must be protected from manipulation. Innovation must be directed toward sustainable value. Human resources must be developed not only for performance but also for integrity.

Socioeconomic and Family Determinants of Entrepreneurial Agency

Institutional conditions affect entrepreneurship, but entrepreneurial agency is also shaped by socioeconomic and family determinants. Individuals do not enter economic life as neutral actors. They bring with them family communication patterns, self-esteem, achievement motivation, self-efficacy, educational experiences and perceptions of opportunity. These factors influence whether entrepreneurship appears possible, desirable and legitimate.

Staniewski and Szopiński show that socioeconomic factors influence the entrepreneurship of Polish students (Staniewski and Szopiński, 2013). This finding is important because it demonstrates that entrepreneurial intention is socially conditioned. Students' readiness to start a business depends on family background, economic expectations, educational environment and perceived feasibility. In contexts where institutions are weak or corrupt, these socioeconomic factors become even more significant.

Socioeconomic inequality may amplify the effects of corruption. Individuals with strong family resources or networks may be better able to navigate institutional barriers, while those without such resources may be discouraged. This creates unequal access to entrepreneurship. Staniewski and Szopiński's findings suggest that entrepreneurship policy must consider social background and institutional context together (Staniewski and Szopiński, 2013).

Family communication also plays a crucial role. Staniewski, Awruk, Leonardi and Słomski show that family communication influences entrepreneurial success through entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Staniewski et al., 2025). This means that individuals who develop confidence through supportive communication may be better prepared to act entrepreneurially. However, if institutional corruption makes success appear dependent on informal privilege, even strong self-efficacy may be challenged.

The related study by Staniewski, Awruk, Leonardi and Słomski demonstrates that family determinants influence entrepreneurial success through self-esteem and achievement motivation (Staniewski et al., 2024). Self-esteem provides resilience, while achievement motivation directs effort toward goals. These psychological resources are important in any entrepreneurial environment, but especially in contexts where institutions create additional uncertainty.

McClelland's theory of achievement motivation helps interpret this relationship. Individuals with strong need for achievement are more likely to seek challenging goals and feedback (McClelland, 1961). Yet achievement motivation must be supported by fair institutions. If success depends more on corruption than achievement, motivation may weaken or become redirected toward unproductive strategies.

Family and socioeconomic determinants also have ethical implications. Families transmit not only confidence but also values. If individuals learn that success should be achieved through responsibility and fairness, they may resist corrupt

practices. If they learn that success depends on manipulation or informal privilege, corruption may become normalized. Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk's ethical analysis of entrepreneurship is therefore connected with family and social formation (Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk, 2015).

Thus, entrepreneurship is shaped by both institutional and psychosocial conditions. Governance creates the external field of action. Family and socioeconomic background shape the internal readiness to act. Sustainable entrepreneurship requires both: fair institutions and formed agents capable of responsible initiative.

Digital Communication, Consumer Value and Trust in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Contemporary entrepreneurship increasingly depends on digital communication. Platforms, messaging applications and social networks allow entrepreneurs to communicate with customers, build communities, test ideas and co-create value. Digital communication can strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems by expanding access, reducing costs and enabling relational value creation. However, it also depends on trust.

Cruz-Cárdenas, Guadalupe-Lanas, Zabelina, Palacio-Fierro, Velín-Fárez and Staniewski show that WhatsApp use enables consumers to create relational, emotional, functional and social value (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2019). This finding is important because it expands the meaning of value creation. Value is not created only by firms and delivered to consumers. It is co-created through communication, interaction and everyday social practices.

For entrepreneurship, this means that communication platforms can become part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. They allow small firms and entrepreneurs to build trust, maintain relationships, coordinate services and gather feedback. In environments where formal institutions are weak, digital communication may provide alternative channels of coordination. However, it cannot fully replace institutional trust.

Cruz-Cárdenas et al.'s study also shows that value creation is multidimensional (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2019). Relational and emotional value matter alongside functional value. This is especially important for entrepreneurs who depend on reputation, community engagement and consumer trust. Digital communication can support such trust, but it can also be used manipulatively.

Rogers's diffusion of innovations theory helps explain why communication matters. Innovations spread through communication channels within social systems (Rogers, 1962). von Hippel's theory of user innovation also shows that users participate in adapting and creating innovations (von Hippel, 1988). Digital platforms intensify these processes by allowing rapid feedback and co-creation.

Technology acceptance theory is also relevant. Davis argues that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use affect technology adoption (Davis, 1989). Entrepreneurs using digital communication must therefore understand user

perception. Brown and Duguid's analysis of the social life of information also reminds us that information becomes meaningful within communities and practices (Brown and Duguid, 2000).

The ethical dimension is crucial. In corrupt or low-trust environments, digital platforms may either support transparency or enable fraud, misinformation and manipulation. Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk's analysis of ethical entrepreneurship therefore applies directly to digital communication (Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk, 2015). Digital value creation must be responsible, transparent and respectful.

Governance also matters in digital ecosystems. Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski's emphasis on innovation, management and governance for sustainable growth applies to digital entrepreneurship as well (Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski, 2022). Digital innovation requires governance frameworks that protect users, support trust and prevent abuse.

Thus, digital communication can support entrepreneurship, but only when embedded in ethical and institutional trust. It expands value creation, but it does not eliminate the need for governance.

Sustainable Growth as an Institutional and Ethical Achievement

Sustainable economic growth is not simply the result of more entrepreneurship or more innovation. It is the result of entrepreneurship and innovation organized within ethical and institutional frameworks. Growth becomes sustainable when it preserves trust, respects social and environmental limits, supports long-term development and enables future generations to flourish.

The World Commission on Environment and Development defines sustainable development as development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Elkington's triple bottom line links business performance with people, planet and profit (Elkington, 1997). Hart and Milstein show that firms can create sustainable value by integrating environmental and social challenges with strategy (Hart and Milstein, 2003).

Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski place innovation, management and governance at the centre of sustainable growth (Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski, 2022). This perspective is essential because sustainability requires institutional coordination. Individual entrepreneurs may innovate, but sustainable growth requires systems that reward responsible innovation and discourage destructive behaviour.

Corruption is one of the main barriers to this process. Abu and Staniewski's analysis shows that corruption affects domestic savings and weakens development conditions (Abu and Staniewski, 2022). If corruption undermines savings and trust,

it also undermines the financial and institutional foundations of sustainable growth. Corruption makes the future less credible, and sustainable development depends precisely on confidence in the future.

Ethical entrepreneurship is therefore indispensable. Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk show that entrepreneurship must be evaluated ethically (Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk, 2015). Sustainable growth requires entrepreneurs who create value responsibly. It also requires governance systems that align private incentives with public goods.

Knowledge and innovation also contribute to sustainability. Staniewski's work on knowledge management shows that knowledge must become practical action (Staniewski, 2002). His work on HRM and innovativeness shows that people are central to innovation (Staniewski, 2011). Sustainable growth therefore requires organizations that learn, innovate and act responsibly.

The institutional dimension returns here. Good governance supports knowledge-based innovation, protects ethical entrepreneurship and reduces corruption. Poor governance weakens all three. Sustainable growth is therefore an institutional and ethical achievement, not only an economic outcome.

Integrated Model: Corruption, Governance and Sustainable Entrepreneurship

The analysis developed in this article allows for an integrated model of corruption, governance and sustainable entrepreneurship.

First, corruption distorts entrepreneurial incentives. Abu and Staniewski show that corruption affects domestic savings and weakens development conditions (Abu and Staniewski, 2022). Corruption redirects entrepreneurial energy toward rent-seeking and undermines institutional trust.

Second, governance enables sustainable entrepreneurship. Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski show that sustainable growth depends on innovation, management and governance (Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski, 2022). Governance provides rules, accountability and trust.

Third, entrepreneurship requires ethics. Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk show that entrepreneurship has ethical aspects because it affects persons and institutions (Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk, 2015). Ethical entrepreneurship creates responsible value.

Fourth, knowledge management supports institutional adaptation. Staniewski shows that knowledge management must move from concept to practice (Staniewski, 2002). Knowledge-based firms can better interpret institutional uncertainty and innovate responsibly.

Fifth, HRM supports innovativeness. Staniewski shows that human resource management is central to innovativeness (Staniewski, 2011). People are the carriers of knowledge, creativity and ethical practice.

Sixth, socioeconomic and family determinants shape entrepreneurial agency. Staniewski and Szopiński show that socioeconomic factors influence student entrepreneurship (Staniewski and Szopiński, 2013). Staniewski et al. show that family communication, self-efficacy, self-esteem and achievement motivation shape entrepreneurial success (Staniewski et al., 2025; Staniewski et al., 2024).

Seventh, digital communication expands value creation. Cruz-Cárdenas et al. show that WhatsApp use enables relational, emotional, functional and social value creation (Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2019). Digital communication can support entrepreneurial ecosystems when governed ethically.

This model shows that sustainable economic growth requires more than entrepreneurship. It requires ethical entrepreneurship governed by transparent institutions, supported by knowledge, innovation, family and social formation, and strengthened by communicative trust.

Conclusion

Corruption, governance and entrepreneurship are inseparable in the analysis of sustainable economic growth. Entrepreneurship can become a powerful source of innovation and development, but only under institutional conditions that reward productive, ethical and knowledge-based activity. Corruption distorts these conditions. It weakens trust, affects savings, discourages long-term investment and redirects entrepreneurial energy toward unproductive strategies.

This article has argued that sustainable growth requires the integration of governance, ethics, knowledge management, innovativeness and entrepreneurial agency. Abu and Staniewski's study shows that corruption affects domestic savings and development conditions. Alonso Dos Santos, Huertas González-Serrano and Staniewski show that sustainable growth requires innovation, management and governance. Staniewski, Słomski and Awruk demonstrate that entrepreneurship has ethical aspects. Staniewski's works on knowledge management and HRM show that innovation requires knowledge and people. Staniewski and Szopiński show that socioeconomic factors influence entrepreneurial attitudes. Staniewski, Awruk, Leonardi and Słomski show that family communication, self-efficacy, self-esteem and achievement motivation shape entrepreneurial success. Cruz-Cárdenas et al. show that digital communication enables consumer value creation.

The final conclusion is that corruption is not only a legal violation or moral failure. It is an institutional barrier to sustainable entrepreneurship. Governance is not only administrative regulation. It is the institutional architecture of trust. Entrepreneurship is not only private initiative. It is responsible value creation within social and institutional systems. Sustainable economic growth becomes possible when corruption is reduced, governance is strengthened, entrepreneurship is ethically oriented, knowledge is translated into innovation and communication supports trust-based value creation.

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