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Green Office-Based Office Management Transformation in Supporting the Business Sustainability of MSMEs in Manado City

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Abstrak: *This study examines the role of office management in supporting the business sustainability of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Manado City, focusing on three aspects: office layout, digital archiving based on the green office concept, and the interaction between modern administration and local culture. The study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design, with data collected through in-depth interviews with 15 MSME owners and 2 expert informants from the culinary, retail, and tourism service sectors, selected through purposive sampling. The findings reveal that functional workspace arrangement improves information flow and employee productivity (the Profit pillar); the migration of paper-based archives to digital storage such as Google Drive is driven by limited physical space and flood-disaster mitigation needs, supporting the principle of eco-efficiency (the Planet pillar); and the kinship-based culture of Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou creates both challenges and social capital in enforcing Standard Operating Procedures (the People pillar). These findings confirm that office management functions as a micro-foundation that systemically interlocks the three pillars of the Triple Bottom Line, while also contributing to the achievement of SDGs 1, 8, 9, and 12 at the regional level.*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector is not only expected to become a primary driver of macroeconomic growth, but is also required to adopt the principles of *sustainable business* (Sala, 2020). The sustainability concept resting on the *Triple Bottom Line* pillar—namely the balance between economic profitability, environmental concern, and social justice—has now become a key determinant of business competitiveness at both the global and local level. For MSMEs, the transition toward sustainable business is no longer merely a moral social responsibility, but an essential strategy for mitigating resource-

scarcity risk, reducing operational costs through efficiency, and responding to shifting consumer preferences that increasingly demand environmentally friendly (*eco-friendly*) business practices (Rasyidin, 2025).

Although the urgency of sustainable business is now widely recognized, the mainstream literature and field practice tend to focus attention on the *supply chain* aspect, production processes, and *green marketing* strategy. There is one fundamental internal dimension that is frequently overlooked by both academics and practitioners, namely *office management*. Yet the office is in fact the *nerve center* of every business entity, where all strategic decisions are made and legal and financial documents are managed. Poor office governance—such as wasteful *paper-based* practices, unergonomic *office layout*, and the absence of a structured filing system—has been shown to be the root cause of cost inefficiency, low workforce productivity, and a high operational carbon footprint (Patricios et al., 2023). Therefore, transforming office governance toward the concept of an environmentally friendly office (*green office*) and administrative digitalization is an absolute prerequisite for MSMEs to build a resilient and sustainable business foundation.

As one of the centers of economic growth in the Eastern Indonesia region, Manado City shows very rapid MSME growth dynamics, particularly in the culinary, retail, and tourism service sectors. However, preliminary observations indicate that the majority of MSMEs in Manado City still adopt conventional, traditional office management. Most business operators use their residential area as both office space and production site (*hybrid layout*) with no clear separation of functions, thereby sacrificing work comfort and productivity (Agustin et al., 2024). In addition, the management of administrative and financial documents remains manual and fragmented. This condition is worsened by Manado City's geographical vulnerability to seasonal disasters (such as flooding), which places physical business archives at high risk of loss and can, in turn, cripple business continuity in an instant. On the other hand, there is a unique sociocultural challenge in Manado City. The local *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou* culture (humans living to humanize others) has implications for the strong kinship system within the employment structure of local MSMEs. This close personal relationship often triggers cultural resistance to the implementation of rigid, formal office Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). MSME owners in Manado frequently face a dilemma between maintaining modern office administrative professionalism and preserving family-based social harmony.

Although research on MSME digitalization has been widely conducted (Telukdarie et al., 2023), most prior studies have focused on the adoption of *e-commerce* and digital marketing technology (such as *social media marketing*). In-depth qualitative studies that specifically integrate functional office management (layout, digital archiving, and administration) with the pillars of sustainability (SDGs) within the corridor of local culture in Eastern Indonesia remain very scarce. This study fills that academic *research gap* by offering a holistic qualitative analysis of how office management acts as an *enabler* for MSME business sustainability, by contextualizing it within the sociocultural characteristics of the Manado City community.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approach and Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the researchers wanted to explore, understand, and interpret in depth the real phenomena in the field regarding how MSME actors adopt office management in their operational activities. The case study design allows the researchers to

explore the systemic boundaries of office governance implementation, the obstacles encountered, and its impact on business sustainability holistically within the local ecosystem.

Research Object

- Material Object: Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) actors actively operating within the administrative area of Manado City, particularly in dominant sectors such as culinary, retail, and tourism services.
- Formal Object: The implementation of contemporary office management functions (covering *office layout* arrangement, archive digitalization, and administrative efficiency based on *green office*) in supporting the pillars of sustainable business (*Triple Bottom Line*: *Profit, People, Planet*).

Population and Sample (Research Informants)

In qualitative research, the terms "population" and "sample" are not used for statistical generalization, but rather refer to the social aspect or context of the research (*social situation*).

- Contextual Population: All MSME actors registered with the Manado City Cooperatives and MSME Office who have adopted digital technology at least in the form of a business instant-messaging application or a simple digital point-of-sale system.
- Sampling Technique: Data sources were sampled using a non-probability approach through the Purposeful (Purposive) Sampling technique. The inclusion criteria for *key informants* in this study were determined as follows:

1. Micro- or Small-scale businesses located and operating in Manado City.
2. Have been operating for at least 3 (three) years to ensure consistency and understanding of business sustainability.
3. Combine residential space with office/production operational space (*hybrid layout*).
4. The business *owner* also acts as the primary decision-maker in administrative governance.

Based on these criteria, 15 key informants (MSME owners) and 2 expert informants (representatives from the Manado City Cooperatives and MSME Office as well as academics in the field of management) were established in order to reach the point of data *saturation*, at which information obtained from new informants no longer shows variation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative data analysis of 15 MSMEs (culinary, retail, and service sectors) in Manado City reveals that office management is not merely a supporting activity, but a crucial instrument that determines business efficiency and *resilience*. The findings of this study are grouped into three main thematic clusters that reflect the pillars of sustainability.

Table 1. Summary of Quantitative Findings (N = 15 MSMEs)

Aspect Observed	n / N	Percentage
MSMEs operating under hybrid space (home-office)	11 / 15	73.3%
MSMEs with functional space partitioning	4 / 15	26.7%
MSMEs using Android-based digital POS	12 / 15	80.0%
MSMEs still relying on manual/paper-based recording	3 / 15	20.0%
Key informants (MSME owners)	15	—

Expert informants	2	—

Note: Percentages are calculated from the 15 key informant MSMEs interviewed in this study.

Office Layout and Work Productivity (Economic Pillar)

The majority of the MSMEs studied (11 of 15 businesses) operate under the concept of *hybrid space*, that is, using their residence as both a production area and an administrative office. In the initial phase, spatial arrangement was carried out organically without functional planning.

An interview with Informant 3 (owner of a culinary MSME in Malalayang) revealed:

> *"Before, the table for recording receipts, the computer for bookkeeping, and the storage area for cake ingredients were all mixed together in one room. As a result, receipt papers were often splashed with water or misplaced, and administrative staff were disturbed by the noise of the mixer machine in the kitchen."*

In contrast, the 4 MSMEs that had implemented functional partitioning (separating the administrative space from the operational/production space, even on limited land) reported a decrease in order-data input errors and an increase in employee work comfort.

Holistically, office layout arrangement has a direct impact on *information flow* and operational time efficiency. The limited land available to Manado MSMEs demands the application of a *flexible open-plan layout* (Gao et al., 2025).

When the administrative function is given a dedicated space (even if only a minimally partitioned corner of a room), employee concentration levels increase. Ergonomically, this separation reduces communication barriers and mental fatigue caused by operational noise. This efficiency contributes to the *Profit* pillar because it speeds up transaction data processing and minimizes losses from lost physical order documents.

Digital Archiving Migration and the *Green Office* Concept (Environmental Pillar)

The study found a wave of transition in document management from *paper-based* systems toward the use of simple digital ecosystems, such as free *cloud storage* (Google Drive) and document delivery via WhatsApp Business. Of the 15 MSMEs, 12 businesses had minimized manual recording for daily transactions and switched to an Android-based Point of Sales (POS) application. Informant 7 (owner of a fashion retail business in Wenang) stated:

> *"We no longer buy new filing cabinets. All receipts from suppliers are photographed right away and uploaded to Google Drive, organized by monthly folders. The space that used to be used for the filing cabinet can now be used to add more product displays."*

These findings prove that the adoption of digital archiving management among MSMEs in Manado City is driven by two main factors: limited physical space and disaster-mitigation awareness. Manado City has areas prone to seasonal flooding. The loss of physical archives (such as debt/receivable notes or legal certificates) is considered a fatal threat that could instantly halt a business. Therefore, archive digitalization acts as an environmental compliance strategy (*Planet*) as well as asset protection. The massive reduction in paper printing lowers the cost of office stationery procurement and supports the principle of *eco-efficiency*. This practice is in line with *Green Office* theory from Prasetyo and Wijaya (2025), which states that the de-materialization of physical documents in local businesses is the most realistic first step toward reducing downstream operational carbon emissions.

Conflict between Administrative Professionalism and Local Culture (Social Pillar)

The most complex challenge in implementing orderly office management among MSMEs

in Manado City is rooted in the sociocultural dimension. The strong kinship concept in Manado leads most business owners to employ family members or close relatives as office administrative staff.

When business owners attempt to implement strict Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)—such as mandatory daily logbook entries, rigid petty-cash recording, or punctual attendance—a psychological barrier arises in the form of *ewuh pakewuh* (a sense of reluctance or awkwardness).

Informant 11 (owner of a service business in Sario) explained:

> *"It's difficult when the person handling finance or admin is your own cousin. If you want to reprimand them for being late with the cash report, the matter can drag on all the way to family gatherings. The mutual-help culture in Manado is good, but it sometimes makes office rules become lax."*

Through the lens of the social pillar of sustainability (*People*), the interaction between modern organizational management and local wisdom gives rise to a unique dynamic (Simanjuntak & Sunarja, 2023). The *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou* culture, on one hand, has a positive impact in the form of high loyalty and a *sense of belonging* among employees toward the survival of the MSME. During an economic crisis, local employees tend to stay and help think through solutions (the practice of *Mapalus*, or mutual cooperation).

However, from the standpoint of office efficiency, the absence of consistently enforced written formal rules leads to administrative inefficiency. The qualitative analysis concludes that the key to the social sustainability of Manado MSMEs lies in the Hybrid Office Management Model (Rahmawati et al., 2025). Business owners cannot rigidly apply strict corporate-style SOPs wholesale. A strategy successfully applied by several adaptive MSMEs is to package formal SOPs within a familial dialogue, in which administrative transparency is positioned as a form of "mutually safeguarding shared assets" rather than as an oppressive instrument of control.

Overall, the findings of this qualitative study produce a new theoretical proposition: office management is a *micro-foundation* of MSME business sustainability. The three aspects studied (spatial layout, archiving, and culture-based administration) interlock systemically. Disorder in any one aspect of office administration will trigger a domino effect that undermines the other pillars of sustainability. When MSMEs in Manado City succeed in balancing these three variables, they achieve not only cost efficiency (*Profit*) and environmental preservation (*Planet*), but also create an inclusive, transparent, and equitable working environment for the local community (*People*), in line with the direction of SDG Points 1, 8, 9, and 12 at the regional level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of an in-depth qualitative analysis of the implementation of office management among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Manado City, this study produces a holistic conclusion that maps the systemic linkage between internal organizational governance and the pillars of sustainable business (*Triple Bottom Line*):

Office Management as the *Micro-Foundation* of Sustainability

This study concludes that office management is not merely a supporting administrative activity (*back-office*), but rather acts as a key *enabler* for creating economic, environmental, and social sustainability values at the grassroots level. The three office dimensions studied—layout, digital archiving, and administrative culture—do not stand alone, but rather interlock within a single internal business ecosystem. Failure or inefficiency in any one aspect of office governance has been shown to trigger a domino effect that weakens an MSME's financial and operational

resilience.

Synthesis of Inter-Dimensional Relationships (Economic, Environmental, Social)

Economic Dimension & Spatial Layout: Optimizing the workspace through a *flexible open-plan layout* concept on *hybrid* (home-office) land has been shown to cut congested communication chains, minimize order-data input errors, and boost employees' daily productivity. This efficiency directly secures the *Profit* pillar through daily operational cost savings.

Environmental Dimension & Digital Archiving: Digital transactions (based on POS applications) and the migration of physical archives to *cloud storage* (such as Google Drive) are driven by the pragmatic motives of business owners, namely limited physical space and the need to mitigate the risk of annual disasters (flooding) in Manado City. The resulting holistic impact is the achievement of the principle of *eco-efficiency* (the *Planet* pillar) through a massive reduction in paper waste (*paperless*) and savings in office electricity consumption.

Social Dimension & Local Cultural Contextualization: The implementation of modern office standardization in Manado City faces a distinctive sociocultural challenge, in which the strong kinship system and the *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou* philosophy give rise to a feeling of *ewuh pakewuh* (reluctance) in enforcing formal SOPs. Holistically, however, when managed through the Hybrid Office Management Model—which packages professional rules within familial dialogue—this cultural bond transforms into strong social capital in the form of high employee loyalty, trust-based transparency, and an inclusive work climate (*People*).

Contribution to the Achievement of Regional SDG Targets

On a macro level, improving office management among MSMEs in Manado City has a tangible, interconnected impact on *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) targets. Orderly administration and digital financial documentation make MSMEs more accountable and *bankable*, thereby expanding access to capital to prevent family financial vulnerability (SDG 1: No Poverty), fostering a more productive work climate (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth), encouraging appropriate-technology-based governance innovation (SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and reducing operational carbon emissions through a paper-saving culture (SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production).

1. The business sustainability of MSMEs in Manado City cannot be achieved solely by relying on downstream green marketing strategies; it must instead begin with an upstream restructuring of office governance capable of marrying efficient modern administrative principles with the local wisdom of the community.

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