

Does Spiritual Intelligence Impact The Productivity Of Small And Medium-Scaled Enterprises?

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Abstract: As research findings have indicated that firms operations require sustainable strategies in a variety of areas to be productive. In recent times intelligence has become one of such strategies, and even more topical is the spiritual intelligence (SI) strategy since experts are recognising its importance and viability in business operations. Therefore, this study investigates SI as a strategy that impacts and avails businesses particularly small and medium scaled enterprises their quest for productivity. In doing so, it adopted the descriptive survey research method, with a population made up of 5648 SMEs duly registered within the South-eastern region of Nigeria. Data collection and analysed reveal a statistically significant impact of SI on productivity of SMEs in Southeast, Nigeria. It thus concluded that spiritual intelligence has a positive connection to SMEs' productivity in South-east, Nigeria.

Keywords: Ethical behaviour, Innovation capability, Productivity, Relational intelligence, Spiritual intelligence.

Introduction

Economic development is essential to a country's progression, and the nation's citizens' contributions to economic development are inextricably linked. As a result, participants in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) dominate the economic development of any country. Due to the nature and modality of SMEs, they have become a more central business units than the modern large-scale industrial businesses, as they are seen to play pivotal roles in the dynamics of job creation in countries over the years making them an essential component in an economic system (Arachie, Dibua & Idigo, 2023; Supriadi & Hadi, 2020). The capacity of SMEs to take on more work and narrow the income gap, or quicken the process of national development are an additional advantage (Bayu & Sukartha, 2019). SMEs are becoming more and more important in the global economy since they are now a platform to communicate the economic indexes all over the world. The importance of SME productivity, which is demonstrated by the steadily rising value of exports, provides evidence that SMEs can contribute to economic progression. However, SMEs in certain developing countries deal with specific regional issues. The main problem is not the present ideal improvement in HR quality, but rather the impact of SMEs on productivity (Susilawati, Reinpal & Agus, 2020). One reliable measure of a company's performance is its productivity, particularly for SMEs. In their study, Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, and Mayer (1999) assert that productivity is the result of a sequence of supervisory actions that give a summary of tasks and accomplishments towards public accountability in the form of successes and shortcomings. Productivity is posited by Monyei, Agbaeze and Isichei (2020), and Wibowo (2017) as an organization's performance over a certain fiscal year as measured against a variety of pre-established criteria. One metric used to assess how well a firm is managing its operations is productivity. Both internal and external factors, including the organisational culture, co-worker attitudes and behaviours, and the organisational structure, can have an impact. Additionally, there are internal variables such as their IQ. Etele, Nwadinobi, Akuezulo, Ezebube, Monyei and Ukpere (2024); Wibowo (2017) have all claimed that spiritual, emotional, and intellectual intelligence are the three categories into which human intelligence can be separated. Outstanding job results will be evidenced if intelligence is put to use efficiently (Devi, 2016). In their position, Wu Suen, Huang, and Lee (2014) noted that intelligence is a skill required for a variety of tasks, such as reasoning, problem-solving, and mental thinking. The research findings

of Goleman (2006) points that spiritual intelligence is one of the 80 percent of productivity index that comes from other factors, and it accounts for about 40 percent. Goleman (2006) went on to assert that intelligence may be used to characterise a number of abilities pertaining to the accuracy of assessments of one's own and other people's emotions as well as the capacity to control emotions in a group setting in order to inspire, organise, and accomplish life goals. Workforces with a high level of intelligence can generate more high-quality output. In addition to intelligence's importance in business, spiritual intelligence—a new kind of intelligence—is also gaining popularity. Spiritual intelligence, according to Anasrulloh (2017), is a moral sense, the capacity to modify strict standards in accordance with knowledge of the business environment, and the ability to predict changes in the industry. The basis for the effective operation of the intelligences is spiritual intelligence. According to Monyei, Agbaeze, and Isichei (2020) and Wibowo (2017), workers with cognitive intelligence are also more productive, and spiritual intelligence can integrate several intelligences, including intellectual and emotional intelligence. Given the foregoing, this study investigates the nature of spiritual intelligence and how it has grown to be an essential component of SMEs' productivity.

Research Objective:

To ascertain the extent spiritual intelligence impacts SMEs' productivity in South-east, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Rational Intelligence

The Stanford-Binet test, often known as rational intelligence, is a classification of human intellect that was initially proposed by Alfred Binet (Smith, 1974). During that period, the only personal intelligence that was exclusively linked to an individual's cognitive capacities was rational intelligence. At first, educational psychology was quite concerned about this intelligence. According to Behling (1998), cognitive ability, which includes the capacity to acquire and use language and symbols to solve problems, is equivalent to rational intelligence. Therefore, rational intelligence can be referred to as the capacity of human beings to think logically, analyse, create cause-and-effect relationships, think abstractly, utilise language, envision objects, and understand phenomena. According to the theories of these experts, rational intelligence is the total capacity of an individual or organisation to act in a way that accomplishes objectives by using critical thinking, rational thinking, and effective and efficient problem-solving both within and outside of their business environment. Accordingly, this theory connects the current study by suggesting that SMEs' general cognitive ability to improve output can be used to forecast a firm's productivity. Therefore, competencies are also crucial in determining how a company's outcomes will develop (Rae & Teachout, 2007).

Research Hypothesis

H_a: Ethical Behaviour has a significant connection with Innovation Capability of SMEs in South-east, Nigeria

Conceptualization of the Variables

Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual intelligence is a religious worldview that emphasises relationships with God, as opposed to spiritual intelligence, which is primarily concerned with the close and profound ties that occur between people (Supriadi & Hadi, 2020). In the context of the workplace, Ashmos and Duchon (2000) describe spiritual intelligence as the worth of life because work has purpose and importance. Spiritual intelligence, according to Nwadinobi, Etele, Ezebube, Monyei and Ukpere (2024), and Eckersley (2000), is a deep sense of intuition regarding how we interact with the outside world on a daily basis. Additionally, according to Zohar and Marshall (2001), it is the ability to deal with both good and evil problems by virtue of the moral capacity to understand love and alter rigorous laws, as well as the ability to identify when love and understanding have reached their limits. Spiritual intelligence facilitates connection between the mind and emotions, as well as between the soul and body, and aids individuals in committing to self-transcendence. High spiritual intelligence employees and organisations are inevitably characterised by strong values and a clear vision, the ability to

understand all facets of personal and professional life, and the capacity to cope with and endure hardships and suffering (Nggermanto, 2002). Spiritual intelligence, according to Monyei et al., (2020), and Akhtar, Arshad, Mahmood, and Ahmed (2017), is a tool required to recognise and make use of few resources in order to further an organization's mission. Howell (2004) assert that it is a process that connects us with the realm of infinite intellect. It can create a feeling of wonder and amazement, attraction and excitement, where an increased level of understanding is possible due to the constant flow of fresh intelligence. Meanwhile, Nggermanto (2002) defines spiritual intelligence as a moral sensibility, the ability to realise when love and understanding have reached their limitations, and the capability to change rigid standards that are consistent with knowledge and love. In addition, it allows one to contemplate future events and grapple with issues of guilt and virtue. Thus, the capacity to experience and accept any circumstance with appreciation and complete surrender to a supernatural energy or entity might be defined as spiritual intelligence. Individuals who possess spiritual intelligence will transcend beyond their religious views and have a purpose in life (Supriadi & Hadi, 2020). Finally, it is generally accepted that the elements of beliefs, fairness, honesty, self-awareness, contribution-focused thinking, spiritual non-dogmatism, and openness form the foundation of spiritual intelligence.

Ethical Behaviour

Monyei and Ukpere (2024), Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004) make the argument that ethical behaviour is a collection of common views and ideas that distinguish members of a group from one another. According to Weeks (2010), moral conduct is the constant force and foundation that gives any organisation stability and order, particularly when it comes to managing interpersonal relationships and activities. Since ethical behaviour fosters individual creativity, it influences both productivity and business success. As a group resolves its internal integration concerns as well as its productivity and profitability problems, Robinson et al. (2004) claim that the group gradually learns how to behave ethically. Such learning is a cognitive, emotional, and behavioural process all at once. For experts, acting ethically also means having a common set of beliefs and values that are communicated to everyone in the organisation. Common guidelines, principles, and standards that support and lead to commercial efficacy and sustained competitive advantage are a few examples of these (Monyei et al., 2020; Weeks, 2010).

SMEs' Productivity

According to Rae and Teachout (2007), productivity is a collection of management practices that give a summary of the outcomes attained when doing designated tasks and responsibilities. Productivity, according to Monyei, Olokede and Ukpere (2024), and Wibowo (2017) is a regular assessment of the efficacy and efficiency of an organization's activities using predetermined goals, standards, and criteria. Productivity is the sum of the actions and inactions of employees. Devi (2016) also posit it as a comparison of work outcomes with predetermined work criteria. According to the definitions provided, it can be concluded that employee productivity is the outcome of their labour, as evidenced by their participation in accomplishing organisational goals and their punctuality, quality, and amount of job output. Since productivity does not appear on its own, organisations, particularly SMEs, are supported by employees who possess it. While, Rae and Teachout (2007) aver that productivity is influenced by a number of characteristics, including discipline, initiative, authority and responsibility, effectiveness and efficiency (Wibowo, 2017).

Innovation Capabilities

According to Momeni, Nielsen, and Kafash (2015), internal reinforcement strategies and tactics make up innovation capability. This approach is a crucial tool for encouraging, assessing, and rewarding innovation. Many authors believe that being inventive or even performing innovatively is equivalent to having innovative capabilities. A new product's operations or the quantity of recorded inventions are two examples of such factors. These techniques provide valuable insights on the firm's productivity, but they don't paint a complete picture of the firm's capacity for innovation (Monyei, Aiyelabegun, Kelvin-Iloafu & Ukpere, 2023). Although capability is not a measure of productivity, it is a list of the firm's readiness and its growth through innovative forces (Saunila, Minna, Ukko & Juhani, 2014). Innovation capability is explained as an organization's ability to continuously use existing competencies and skills to create new services and products (Borjesson & Elmquist, 2011; Momeni et al., 2015).

Empirical reviews

Salman, Saira, Amjad, Sana, and Muhammad (2014) investigated how organisational culture affected retention, job satisfaction, and employee commitment. Employees employed by several organisations in the Multan region of Punjab, Pakistan, were the subject of the study. A questionnaire was used to gather data. Using SPSS, the correlation analysis test was used to determine the research findings. The findings showed that job satisfaction and plans to leave an organisation are highly impacted by the culture of the organisation.

Momeni, Nielsen, and Kafash (2015) looked at the process of assessing an organization's ability to innovate. The study emphasises the conceptual model based on a qualitative meta-analysis of scholarly literature on organisations, along with their elements of innovation capability. The Delphi Method and Qualitative Meta-synthesis are applied. The findings demonstrated a clear correlation between innovation capability and the three main capacities of operational, structural, and human capability.

Jumadi (2020) examined how the performance of SMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic was impacted by intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence. With a sample of 70 respondents selected by purposive sampling, the study used a descriptive survey methodology. Multiple linear regression is used to analyse data using IBM SPSS software version 25. The findings demonstrated that spiritual intelligence has a positive effect on SMEs' performance.

Kong, L. (1998) determined the strategic intelligence that contribute to the success or failure of new products in the electronics sector of New Zealand. A survey was used to gather data from 40 businesses, and regression analysis was used for testing. The findings showed that the combination of product specifications and market need has a major impact on the success or failure of new products. In order to minimise fierce rivalry, it was also advised that businesses utilise strategic intelligence and well-thought-out approach when developing new products and focus on a certain market.

Methodology

The study used a survey research approach since it surveyed SMEs operating in Southeast Nigeria, one of the six regions in the nation. 5648 SMEs that are registered with different market unions in significant South-east markets make up the population. These markets include Ariaria International Market, Aba Abia State, Ogbete Main Market, Enugu, Enugu State, Onitsha Main Market, Nkwo Nnewi, Nnewi, Anambra State, and Ariaria International Market. The study's sample size was 359, as established by Krejcie and Morgan's formula for determining sample sizes in 1970. The primary data for the study were collected using a methodical questionnaire. The structure took a Likert format, with strongly agreed scaled 5 to strongly disagreed scaled 1. The questionnaire was distributed using 4 research assistants, one taking each of the four states included in the study. Before then, the questionnaire was subjected to both content and face validity and was also tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha Technique, with an alpha value of 0.829. proportionate allocation was used to distribute a total of 359 copies of questionnaire, in the end, 298 copies were returned completely answered and used, hence, there was an 83% usage rate of questionnaire compared to how many distributed (sample size). Inferential statistics (Regression using the Ordinary Least Square Method) and descriptive statistics (Tables, Frequencies, and Averages) were used in the analysis, and the hypothesis was evaluated at the 5% level of significance.

Table 1: Distribution of Responses on Ethical Behaviour and Innovation Capability

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Ethical Behaviour								
1	My spirituality makes me honest at my work place.	70	107	14	50	57	3.28	Accept
2	I always want to do the right thing in my office.	120	103	22	40	13	3.93	Accept
3	I want to be in the side of truth always.	80	111	10	97	-	3.58	Accept
4	My religion makes me to want to do the right thing.	89	93	-	76	40	3.40	Accept
5	I can differentiate between right and wrong and I choose right over wrong all the time.	90	70	42	40	56	3.33	Accept
Innovation Capability								
6	I always want to find a better way of doing things.	34	78	12	90	84	2.62	Reject
7	Trying new ideas come to me naturally.	-	99	40	101	58	2.60	Reject
8	I do not like using old methods to execute tasks where new methods are possible.	12	78	10	79	119	3.44	Accept
9	I can initiate improved ways of doing old things	78	70	-	89	61	3.05	Accept
10	My mind will not allow me to keep repeating old things when I can suggest new ways.	61	100	79	14	44	3.40	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents the respondents' responses about their ability to be innovative and behave ethically. Since the acceptability criterion is three, the analysis in this instance is based solely on the mean of the individual questionnaire items. As a result, answers with a mean of three or higher on the questionnaire should be treated as true, while those with a mean of less than three should be ignored. Looking at the response patterns and the mean of the items in the questionnaire, it shows that accept for questionnaire items 6 and 7 with means lesser than 3 and therefore rejected, every other questionnaire items have mean that is greater than 3 and therefore accepted.

Test of Hypotheses

Restating the hypotheses:

H₀: Ethical Behaviour does not have a significant connection with Innovative Capability of SMEs in South-east, Nigeria

H_a: Ethical Behaviour has a significant connection with Innovative Capability of SMEs in South-east, Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression Result

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	t	Sig.
1	.973 ^a	.946	.946		1.547	5161.884	71.846	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), ETHBEH

b. Dependent Variable: INNAP

The research hypothesis's regression result, which shows a statistically significant relationship between ethical behaviour and SMEs' capability for innovation in Southeast Nigeria, is displayed in Table 2. According to the results, a 95% change in innovative capability was explained by changes in ethical conduct (R Square = 0.946), while the correlation value, expressed by R, indicates a strong positive association (R = 0.973). The probability value (P-value), denoted by sig, is 0.000, the F statistics are 5161.884, and the t statistics are 71.846. The alternative hypothesis is adopted in support of the null hypothesis based on this (p-value < 0.05), which states that there is a statistically significant positive connection between ethical behaviour and the innovation capability of SMEs in South-east, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study's regression analysis demonstrate a statistically significant positive correlation between ethical behaviour and the innovative capability of SMEs in Southeast Nigeria.

According to a coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.946$) and correlation coefficient ($R = 0.973$), 95% of increases in innovative capabilities can be attributed to ethical behaviours. This finding highlights the crucial role of ethical behaviour in fostering an innovative work environment and strengthening SMEs' competitiveness. The findings from various studies highlight key factors influencing SME performance, employee satisfaction, innovative capability, and new product success. Jumadi (2020) found that spiritual intelligence positively affects SME performance, while emotional intelligence does not show a significant impact. This suggests that the role of spirituality in business practices, such as ethical decision-making and resilience, may enhance SME performance, whereas emotional intelligence alone may not be a strong determinant of success. Also, Salman, Saira, Amjad, and Muhammad (2014) demonstrated how organisational culture affects employee commitment, job satisfaction, and retention. Their study underscores the importance of aligning workplace culture with employee expectations to reduce turnover intentions. This aligns with the idea that fostering a positive work environment can enhance employee loyalty and, consequently, organizational success. Momeni, Nielsen, and Kafash (2015) identified a strong relationship between innovation capability and structural, personnel, and operational capabilities. Their S.P.O. Model suggests that businesses must develop these core capabilities to sustain innovation. Collectively, these studies emphasize the interconnectedness of intelligence, organizational culture, ethical practices, and innovation in enhancing SME performance. A strategic approach that integrates these factors is essential for fostering sustainable growth and competitiveness in various business environments.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study, in ascertaining the extent spiritual intelligence impacts SMEs productivity in South-east, Nigeria, investigates the connection between ethical behaviour and the innovation capability of SMEs as the specific objective. The findings strongly support the hypothesis that ethical behaviour significantly connects innovation in SMEs. The regression analysis results indicate a high positive connection ($R = 0.973$) between ethical behaviour and innovation capability, with a coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.946$), meaning that 95% of the changes in innovation capability can be attributed to ethical practices. The statistical significance of the findings (p -value = 0.000) confirms that ethical behaviour is a key determinant of SMEs' ability to innovate and adapt in a competitive market environment. These results suggest that fostering an ethical business culture is essential for enhancing innovation, as integrity, trust, and moral decision-making create an environment where creativity and novel ideas can flourish. Ethical leadership and corporate values play a crucial role in driving sustainable business growth and competitiveness. Given the high impact of ethical behaviour on innovation, SMEs in Nigeria must prioritize ethical business practices as a core strategy for improving productivity and long-term success. This study underscores the importance of integrating spiritual intelligence and ethics in business operations to maximize innovative potential.

In light of the findings that ethical behaviour—an outcome of spiritual intelligence—strongly influences the innovative capabilities of SMEs in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Promotion of Ethical Training Rooted in Spiritual Intelligence:** the owners and managers of SMEs need to be encouraged to implement training programs that nurture spiritual intelligence, emphasizing values such as integrity, truthfulness, and empathy. This will reinforce ethical behaviour and create an innovation-friendly work environment.
2. **Integrate Spiritual Intelligence into Leadership Development:** the government and its agencies, relevant business associations and unions need to include modules on spiritual intelligence and ethics in leadership capacity-building programs, workshops and seminars. This will enhance ethical leadership, which is crucial for sustained innovation.
3. **Incentivisation of Ethical Behaviours:** to encourage wide spread adoption of ethical behaviours, businesses that are observed to be ethical in their dealings with customers and other businesses should be encouraged to continue doing so, and if position given prizes and awards, and patronage should be channelled to such businesses to encourage others to follow their footsteps.
4. **Building Collaborative Platforms for Ethical Knowledge Sharing:** relevant stakeholders should develop forums or platforms where SME leaders can share experiences and strategies on how ethical behaviour has translated into innovative gains, as this could serve as a catalyst for wider adoption.

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