Spiritual Intelligence and Sustainability of Family Owned Businesses

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Abstract: Research findings have offered that company operations need to be encouraged to grow in a variety of areas, be it in societal engagement, strategy, staff career growth, psycho-social patterns, and in contemporary times - spiritual intelligence (SI). It is becoming topical as experts are recognising its importance. Therefore, this study investigates SI as a strategy that avails businesses particularly family owned ones their quest for sustainability. In doing so, it adopted the descriptive survey research method, with a population made up of 12893 duly registered family owned business within the South-eastern region of Nigeria. Data collection and analyses reveal a significantly positive correlation between SI and the sustainability of FOBs in Southeast, Nigeria. It thus concluded that spiritual intelligence relates with the sustainability of family owned businesses in Southeast, Nigeria.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, Ethics, Family owned business, Motivational systems, Spiritual intelligence, Sustainability

Introduction

Business owners and entrepreneurs prioritise operational success (Walberg, 2010; Westerlund, Gustafsson, Theorell, Janlert, & Hammarström, 2013). This is true regardless of whether the business is privately or publicly held, run by a family or by an individual. However, this study focusses on family-owned businesses (FOBs). In many countries around the world, FOBs are among the oldest and most prevalent business models (Nnabuife, Ezimma, & Arachie, 2018). De la Fuenta and Cardelle-Elawar (2009); and Guay, Ratelle, Roy and Litien (2010) claims that business owners typically use subjective metrics, including sales viability or profitability from evaluations of the business environment, to test for cognitive achievement. Business owners have previously contested this cognitive limitation. According to research, business owners need to develop more than just cognitive intelligence if they want to improve the overall company (Etele, Nwadinobi, Akuezuilo, Ezebube, Monyei & Ukpere, 2024; Revell, 2008). According to research findings, company operations need to be encouraged to grow in a variety of areas, such as societal, physical, intellectual, career growth, psychological, cultural, and spiritual intelligence (Cassidy, 2012; Wester, 2011). Other experts are less cautious. Sisk (2008; 2002) not only recognised the reality of spiritual intelligence, but they also propose that the idea integrates and amplifies all other intelligences. It is now crucial for entrepreneurs committed to boosting success to assist companies in realising their potential while acknowledging their unique qualities. Nonetheless, a persistent problem for business owners is that their enterprises are not achieving their full potential or capabilities (Capeheart-Meningall, 2005). Although research on the unsettling trend of businesses failing to meet expectations identifies a number of contributing variables and offers suggestions to address the problem, it offers few practical solutions or constructive solutions for entrepreneurs. According to several academics, companies are either not driven to succeed or are not putting out the necessary passion in order to continue as a going concern (Balduf, 2009; Baslanti & McCoach, 2006). In spite of the core ideas of the Motivational Systems Theory (MST), which refer motivation as an organised pattern that dictate a company's direction, energy, and regulation (Ford, 1992). Based on earlier studies, an organisational structure or corporate environment may have a favourable effect on success and motivation. Success has been seen to be impacted by societal changes (Viadero, 2003), mission and vision statements (Winton, 2008), and even research on emotional intelligence (Qualter,

Whiteley, Morley, & Dukak, 2009). The fields of psychology (Ruddock & Cameron, 2010), paranoia (Monyei, Agbaeze, Isichei, 2020; Josephson & Dell, 2004), business leadership (Christ-Lakin, 2010; Luckcock, 2008), counselling (Jankowski, 2002; Suyemoto & MacDonald, 1996), medicine (Mueller, 2010; Yang, 2006), and the military (Wester, 2011) have all recently demonstrated a significant interest in spirituality, wellness, and resilience. Consequently, academics are realising that this spiritual element is a type of intelligence and ought to be included into corporate procedures. The current study is focused on determining whether a company's performance and long-term viability are impacted by its spiritual intelligence. Although there is evidence that a company's profitability and product viability may provide it the boost it needs to prosper (Winton, 2008; Mosconi & Emmett, 2003), there is little information in the body of existing literature regarding how much these factors affect spiritual intelligence and sustainability. While many studies have examined the impact of spirituality on academic performance (Bolghani-Abadi, Ghofrani, & Abde-Khodaei, 2012; Capeheart-Meningall, 2005; Cassidy, 2012; Green & Noble, 2010), few have examined this idea from a behavioural and management standpoint (Monyei et al., 2020; Revell, 2008; Sisk, 2008). Thus, this research investigates the link between spiritual intelligence and the sustainability of family owned businesses using empirical data from Southeast Nigeria in its effort to bridge this gap and clarify the inclusion of spiritual intelligence as a strategy for firm sustainability.

Research Objectives

To determine the relationship between spiritual intelligence – (as measured by ethics) and the sustainability – (as measured by customer satisfaction) of family owned businesses (FOBs) in Southeast Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Theory of Motivational Systems by Ford in 1992

This thesis addresses one of the key ideas associated with business success. According to Sisk (2002), enterprises must be encouraged to develop spiritual intelligence as a process or as a result in order to create sustainability. There are several motivational concepts that can be used to improve achievement. For the current investigation, the researchers employed Martin Ford's (1992) Motivational Systems Theory (MST), which aims to enhance cognitive functioning through achievement and motivation. As a psychological foundation for proficiency development, the motivation system theory's underlying reasoning is based on a holistic view of human development, which is essential to solving the majority of society' pandemic issues. Three primary issues about the behavioural patterns underlying human motivation are included in MST. It explains how human psychology works to help guide, motivate, and control behaviour. Put differently, it explains a person's direction, the things that pique their curiosity or enthusiasm about the process, and how they behave or maintain its success (Monyei & Ukpere, 2024; Sisk, 2002). Two formulas that are actually relevant to the current investigation are provided by Ford's (1992) motivation system theory. First is the heuristic formula for success, which outlines his ideas about what it takes to achieve as follows: Motivation + Skill/Biology + Responsive Environment = Success/Competence. To put it another way, a company needs to be placed in a supportive atmosphere, have the capacity to finish a mission, and encourage others to succeed. Three necessary components are included in the second formula, which defines motivation. This phrase describes them: Objectives x Feelings x Personal Agency Beliefs = Motivation. Motivation is the term used to describe corporate goals or aspirations, whether they are utilised to accomplish or avoid a situation. Through affective, physiological, and transactional components, emotions are elements that facilitate assessment and engagement in the business setting. Individual Agency Beliefs, on the other hand, include firm-efficacy and firm-competence regarding its capacity to fulfil the objective. These two formulas contain non-linear and interconnected ideas. Ford thinks that for motivation or success to occur, every element in a formula needs to be present. Lack of any one of the three elements might prevent the company from achieving its full potential, prevent it from ever happening, or demotivate it from ever performing (Monyei & Ukpere, 2024; Sisk, 2002). Ford (1992) asserts that motivation is the cornerstone of corporate growth and operations. It not only offers insight into demotivating elements of a company's commercial settings, but it also exerts influence to support spiritual intelligence and sustainability. The main justification for researching the connection between spiritual intelligence and SMEs' sustainability is that, in essence, it has become relevant to a recurring problem that companies encounter. Businesses can progress and achieve success in their day-to-day operations by learning to integrate motivational

incentives. As a result, the MST supports this study since it gives a company a spiritual incentive, which enhances long-term success (Hutto, 2013; Campbell, 2007).

Research Hypothesis

H_a: Ethics has a statistical significant relationship with customer satisfaction of FOBs in Southeast Nigeria.

Spiritual Intelligence

For the purposes of this study, the ideas of spirituality and religiosity—as well as their correlation with intelligence and business performance—are crucial. It is necessary to define and analyse spiritual intelligence in detail as well as to clarify its implications for use in professional contexts. Nwadinobi, Etele, Ezebube, Monyei and Ukpere (2024) claimed that several educators are discouraged from attempting to use this talent as a support system for company performance because of the term's inherent ambiguity and elusiveness, which complicates any discussion. Although spirituality has an impact on business operations, little is known about this connection, (Nnabuife, Okoli, Arachie, & Adani, 2019; Gallagher, Rocco & Landorf, 2007). Spirituality can be measured as an intelligence, according to the majority of academics and business leaders, while some people are sceptical or disagree until further empirical research is conducted (Emmons, 2000; Sisk, 2008). (Zwilecki, 2000; Gardner, 2000; Mayer, 2000). In addition to providing a definition of spiritual intelligence, this section of the literature study goes into detail to explain traditional intelligence and clarify its connection to spirituality. Another idea about intelligence has gained popularity recently. Yet, spiritual intelligence is very challenging to define and quantify, much like intelligence itself. Even though ideas like intelligence quotients, emotional intelligence, and artificial intelligence are crucial for trying to understand how organisations function, they are unable to cover all of the complex facets of business intelligence. These concepts appear to damage a company's soul, spirit, or essence. Spiritual intelligence (SI), according to Zwilecki (2000), is the capacity to use and exhibit spiritual attributes and resources to improve everyday life and welfare. As a foundation of a holistic approach to transactions and viability, it implies that businesses may be more functional and more equipped if they can embrace these spiritual resources (Gardner, 2000: Mayer, 2000). According to Zohar and Marshall (2001), spiritual intelligence is the capacity to handle both positive and negative challenges by fusing the moral capacity to alter strict norms with the knowledge of love and the capacity to recognise when affection and comprehension have reached their limits. Communication between the soul and body, as well as between the mind and emotions, is facilitated by spiritual intelligence. It also aids in self-transcendence. Monyei and Ukpere (2024) posit that employees and organisations with high spiritual perception and intelligence are inevitably characterised by strong values and a clear vision, an ability to understand all facets of personal and professional life, and the ability to cope with and endure challenges even amidst administrative restructuring. Moreover, Akhtar, Arshad, Mahmood, and Ahmed (2017) claimed that spiritual intelligence is a tool required to recognise and make use of few resources in order to further an organization's mission. The principles of spiritual intelligence are founded on the elements of spirituality, such as self-awareness, honesty, justice, cooperation, non-dogmatic religiosity, and open-mindedness. When addressing the definitional issues raised by this study, Emmons (2000) argues that adaptive problem-solving behaviour—which is posited in terms of actual goal attainment and some kind of positive progressive outcome—is the primary element that makes up a description of spiritual intelligence. In addition to the problem-solving aspect of Spiritual Intelligence, Emmons went a step further and claimed that businesses' capacity to demonstrate and improve their business ethics is a significant factor in talks about Spiritual Intelligence. Effective action and motivation are related to business ethics (Etele et al., 2024). The idea that these internal attributes constitute business ethics suggests that they are sources of firm strength that allow employees to perform their jobs well. Enabling businesses to acquire and apply these values or attributes could improve their commercial success and offer first-hand experience to help with problem solving. Thus, the addition of business ethics by Emmons (2000) is an effort to recognise the importance of ethics in the appropriate growth of businesses.

Ethics

Particularly with family-owned businesses, ethics in business is absolutely essential in forming leadership behaviour, organisational values, and long-term sustainability. Regarding spiritual intelligence, ethics is both a sign and a result of inner knowledge, moral foundation, and intentional decision-making. In family businesses, ethics is usually ingrained in personal and cultural beliefs

rather than official standards. Kobiyh et al. (2024) underline that in family enterprises, ethical conduct is mostly shaped by family values and passed down through generations, usually functioning as an informal tool for preserving trust, reputation, and organisational cohesiveness. Tied to socio-emotional wealth, this moral framework closely matches aspects of spiritual intelligence like empathy, honesty, and service orientation (Kobiyh et al., 2024). Rahutullah (2024) underlines that ethics in family businesses is both a strategic asset and not only a cultural relic. The study shows that companies that integrate ethical values into their operations—via role modelling, training, whistle-blower procedures, and respect for employee autonomy—tend to create strong cultures that promote sustainability and stakeholder confidence (Rahatullah, 2024). Spiritually intelligent management is characterised by ethical integrity and servant leadership, hence this is clearly related to spiritual intelligence. While family-owned businesses are less likely than non-family companies to adopt formal ethical rules, Adams et al. (1996) discovered that they usually depend on role modelling and interpersonal trust to foster ethical conduct. This informal transmission of ethics emphasises the importance of spiritual principles like humility, compassion, and honesty in daily business activity (Adams et al., 1996). Gallo and Cappuyns (1999) also found a generational aspect in ethical views, pointing out that older generations typically see ethical lapses—such as delayed succession or favouritism—differently than younger, more formally educated stakeholders. This shows different degrees of spiritual maturity and ethical sensitivity between generations, which can affect how spiritual intelligence appears in a family business (Gallo & Cappuyns, 1999). Though the presence of nepotism and conflict of interest in family businesses created particular ethical issues, Hebert et al. (2002) did comparative studies showing no notable difference in ethical judgement between owners of family and non-family businesses. These fields are especially important when assessing spiritual intelligence since the capacity to act fairly and defend justice shows a deeper moral and spiritual competence (Hebert et al., 2002). Coville (2014) examined studies on family business ethics and found that although many such companies are based in trust and shared identity, the same family closeness can also cause ethical difficulties or insularity. Examining spiritual intelligence as a mediating element between values and behaviours is made easier by the conflict between moral intention and practical behaviour (Coville, 2014).

Business Sustainability

Monyei, Aiyelabegun, Kelvin-Iloafu and Ukpere (2023) assert that the sustainability of success for any company is frequently shaped during its strategy formation and commencement of operation. In actuality, the success of the company depends critically on the competences required to become viable and productive. According to Price (2002), in the twenty-first century's information-age economy, failing a corporation is just not an option. In the twenty-first century, it is crucial for both economic firm-sufficiency and successful corporate social responsibility. Based on an education survey, only 8 other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) had a higher college graduation rate than the United States between 1995 and 2008. Price (2002) further posited that success is no longer merely a desire for children to do better academically and on standardised tests, but also an economic requirement for a successful existence. Guay et al. (2010), and Schwinger, Steinmayr and Spinath (2009) it is difficult to define achievement due to the vast disparities in metrics. Some studies utilise measures like sales turnover or net-profit as indicators of success, while others merely use a company's product viability. Concern is raised by the fact that businesses in developing countries have been less successful than those in industrialised countries (Aubin et al., 2011; Price, 2002). Business executives may need to adopt a number of factors revealed by research on sustainability in order to positively impact firm growth for all organisations. These include increased levels of computer knowledge, mentorship, equity, positive work conditions, and motivation (Guay et al., 2010; Schwinger et al., 2009).

Business Sustainability Factors

For sustainability to be achieved, spiritual intelligence is essential. In actuality, Price (2002) argues that a company's fundamental notion of value is largely dependent on its capacity to achieve commercial success. When discussing company success, the majority of the literature on sustainability seems to fall into three major categories. According to Cassidy (2012), there are two distinct categories of factors that contribute to poor performance: internal/firm factors and environmental (business) factors. Businesses' profitability, capabilities, strategies, and business climate all have an impact on sustainability (Bosworth, Ford, & Hernandaz, 2011). Training and development also plays a role (Rainey & Murova, 2004). There are many different firm challenges

that are discussed, such as rivals (Ornstein, 2010), health and safety, motivation, business regulation, time management, spiritual intelligence, cognitive capacity, and firm-efficacy beliefs (Brooks-Gunn, Linver & Fauth, 2005). The internal determinants include business culture (Dekker & Fischer, 2008), socioeconomic status (McCoach, Goldstein, Behuniak, Reis, Black, Sullivan & Rambo, 2010), and supervisor support (Nokelainen, Tirri, Campbell & Walberg, 2007).

Customer Satisfaction

Particularly in the framework of family-owned companies where long-term survival and intergenerational legacy are primary objectives, customer happiness is generally recognised as a major factor influencing corporate sustainability (Monyei, Olokede & Ukpere, 2024; Lezhneva, 2019). In family businesses, where personal ties and trust are fundamental values, customer satisfaction typically goes beyond simple service excellence to include emotional and relational factors that foster loyalty and long-term involvement. Research indicates that happy consumers not only buy again but also promote companies, hence strengthening their resilience. According to Oladeji et al. (2024), entrepreneurial activities including marketing innovation and staff empowerment were essential for developing customer satisfaction in SMEs, hence directly supporting business sustainability. Setiawan et al. (2022) likewise showed how tools such the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) enable companies to gauge and improve the extent of satisfaction, hence fostering a competitive advantage in crowded markets. Brand loyalty and company performance are also directly influenced by customer satisfaction. Lezhneva's (2019) study stresses the need of loyalty, founded on satisfaction, for sustained company operations. It strengthens the connection between preserving consumer confidence and reaching consistent, repeat income sources (Lezhneva, 2019). Gutiérrez-Broncano et al. (2017) discovered that internal customer satisfaction— such as among family employees—contributes to external customer satisfaction in the particular setting of family-owned enterprises. Their study indicates that family companies can improve the whole service experience by encouraging internal drive, hence supporting customer happiness and sustainable advantage (Gutiérrez-Broncano et al., 2017). Suriyankietkaew (2016) found that customer happiness is much enhanced by leadership techniques such innovation and staff involvement, which therefore helps the viability of companies in developing countries. Family businesses whose leadership is frequently intertwined with legacy and values find great resonance in these results driven by leaders (Suriyankietkaew, 2016).

Sustainability and Spiritual Intelligence: A Nexus

Sustainability in connection to spiritual intelligence is posited by Qaisar et al. (2019) as the typical or average point at which a particular productivity level is attained. They point out, nonetheless, that the term "sustainability" is frequently used to refer to the usual stage at which a certain activity is projected to be completed and is considered practicable. This idea is significant to business since it is recognised that attempts to give success or standards significance can be capricious (Guay et al., 2010). Furthermore, the phrase "sustainability" can also be used to evaluate a company's business results or spiritual intelligence. Firm success was found to be positively connected with business processes in a study by Golinelli et al. (2011), and the variables showed a substantial correlation with one another. The main finding was that operational issues diminished as a company developed, allowing for greater attention to be paid to business-related issues. Consequently, a key predictor of sales turnover was the persistence of profit-making (McCoach et al., 2010). Profit qualities that are impacted by product sales are one of the main current research topics on spiritual intelligence and sustainability. According to research, a number of characteristics, including organisational learning, years of service experience, and, unexpectedly, industry complexity, affect intelligence outcomes, particularly the neurocognitive skills of organisations. Rainey and Murova (2004) investigated the reasons for underperformance and discovered that as businesses developed, sales, economic depression, and productivity declined while bankruptcy and socioeconomic status rose (Defoe, Farrington, & Loeber, 2013). Despite the lack of research on spiritual intelligence and its connection to SMEs' sustainability, there are numerous studies that have looked at the connection between emotional intelligence and business performance. There was no significant association between emotional intelligence and sustainability, despite the majority of these research suggesting that emotional intelligence was a key predictor of success (Nasir & Masrur, 2010). Investigating whether there is a connection between spiritual intelligence, corporate sustainability, and small and medium-sized firms is the rationale behind the current study.

Empirical Insight

Qaisar, Noor, and Basheer looked at how workplace spirituality and job attributes can improve sustainable performance in a 2019 study on SMEs. Data was gathered from 400 employees in selected enterprises in Islamabad, Pakistan, and New Delhi, India. The structural equation modelling of the SmartPLS 3.0 was utilised in data analysis. The findings indicated that workplace spirituality is positively impacted by perceived job attributes.

Jumadi (2020) examined how the performance of SMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic was impacted by spiritual, emotional, and intellectual intelligence. The research employs a descriptive verification technique using a sample of 70 respondents selected through propulsive sampling provided the research data. The collected data was analysed using the multiple linear regression analysis. The findings indicated that the spiritual intelligence component had a positive and beneficial effect on SMEs' performance. The study concluded that SMEs perform better when they possess intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence.

Merial (2012) studied the association between spiritual intelligence and student achievement in two public and two private schools in a Southeast American metropolis. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the data. Findings revealed that the predictor and control variables of age, gender, and spiritual intelligence were found to be significantly and positively correlated with the criterion variable of success.

The determinants influencing profitability were assessed by Nishanthini and Nimalathasan (2013) using a case study of Sri Lankan listed manufacturing enterprises. Secondary data as gathered by the Colombo stock market in Sri Lanka were utilised. The results show that manufacturing businesses' profitability is below average based on the influencing factors such as gross profit ratio, return on investment, and the operating profit ratio.

The success and failure criteria of products development in the New Zealand electronics' industry were determined by Kong (1998). Through a survey, information was gathered from 40 businesses, and regression analysis was used for testing. Findings indicated that the combination of product specifications and market demand has a major impact on the success or failure of developed products. It further suggested that in order to prevent fierce rivalry, businesses should use a well-thought-out procedure when developing new products and focus on a specialised market.

Methodology

This study adopts a survey research design, this is because of the nature of the study that seeks to collect relevant data from a sampled respondents using questionnaire. Surveys are conducted by distributing questionnaires or interviewing of respondents about a phenomenon so as to get their opinion. Given that that is what this study did, the survey design was used. The study was conducted in the south eastern part of Nigeria, a region known for the entrepreneurial nature of its people. The five states that make up the region are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. 12893 Small and Medium Scale Enterprises that are duly registered with the corporate affairs commission (CAC), and operates as family owned business within the states make up the population of the study. A sample size of 295 was derived using the Krejcie and Morgan 1970 formula. The data collection instrument is a Likert-Scaled structured questionnaire, which was subjected to both validity and reliability test, all showing positive results. The distribution of the questionnaire was handled by 4 research assistants, each taking one state, while the researchers handled responses from Anambra state and online responses through Google form. Bowley's proportionate allocation formula was used to determine the number of questionnaire that goes to each state. 295 copies of the questionnaire were distributed both online and offline, and 219 were collected. However, only 209 of the retuned copies were ultimately evaluated because 9 of them were unsuitable due to missing responses in some and mutilation in others. At a 95% confidence level, or 5% level of significance, the hypothesis was evaluated using descriptive statistics (Tables, Frequencies, and Means) and inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient) to analyse the data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Distribution of Responses on Ethics and Customer Satisfaction

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Decision
	Ethics							
1	It's important to me that my customers and partners trust the way I run my business.	70	75	10	34	20	3.67	Accept
2	For me, profit comes before any other consideration.	120	80	-	8	1	4.48	Accept
3	I am ready to do anything provided it makes me to make more money in my business.	79	108	4	10	8	4.15	Accept
4	I do not really about what happens tomorrow in my business, I just want to make the most money now.	89	90	21	8	-	4.24	Accept
	Customer Satisfaction							
5	Many of my customers return to buy again from me.	67	59	5	60	18	3.46	Accept
6	My old customers usually refer new customers to me.	39	88	8	30	44	3.23	Accept
7	Retaining old customers has sometimes been challenging for my business.	80	98	-	20	11	4.03	Accept
8	I believe most customers leave satisfied after doing business with me	50	100	34	25	-	3.84	Accept
9	Customers rarely complain about my products or services.	60	90	4	25	30	3.60	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The distribution of ethics and customer satisfaction responses from the investigated FOBs (respondents) is displayed in Table 1. Here, the mean of each questionnaire item is displayed along with the response rates. Any questionnaire item with a mean of three or higher should be accepted as generally true, while those with a mean of less than three should be rejected as not applicable with the FOBs. This is because the analysis is based on the mean of the questionnaire items, with a threshold of three. All of the individual questionnaire items, including those that measure ethics and customer happiness, had means greater than three, according to the respondents' response pattern.

Test of Hypotheses

Restating the hypotheses:

H_0: Ethics has no statistical significant relationship with customer satisfaction of FOBs in Southeast Nigeria.

H_a: Ethics has a statistical significant relationship with customer satisfaction of FOBs in Southeast Nigeria

Table 2: Correlations Output

		ETHICS	CUSSAT
ETHICS	Pearson Correlation	1	0.952**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	209	209
CUSSAT	Pearson Correlation	0.952**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	209	209

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 displays the findings of the correlation analysis used to test the hypothesis, which holds that there is no statistically significant relationship between ethics and customer satisfaction at FOBs in Southeast Nigeria. Given the results, it can be concluded that ethics and customer satisfaction at FOBs in Southeast Nigeria are statistically related. This is due to the fact that the alternative hypothesis was approved since the p-value, or probability value, as shown by Sig in the Table, is 0.000, which is below the study's 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion of Findings

Using customer satisfaction as one of the main measures of sustainability, the study looked at how spiritual intelligence related to sustainability in Family Owned Businesses (FOBs). The study's findings reveal ethics and customer satisfaction in South-eastern, Nigeria's FOBs were found to be significantly and positively correlated ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This result implies that the major factor in customer satisfaction is the ethical behaviours FOB, which is strongly associated with spiritual intelligence. High ethical standards motivated by spiritual awareness in family enterprises are positive and significant to the quest for sustainability, stable and consistent customer relationships. This outcome corresponds to previous empirical research. Merial (2012), for instance, discovered that even when age and gender were considered, spiritual intelligence strongly correlated with student performance. Its basic focus on purpose, awareness, and ethical conduct implies that spiritual intelligence can favourably affect results in many areas, including education and business. Jumadi (2020) underlined the beneficial impact of spiritual intelligence on SME performance during the COVID-19 outbreak. The research indicated that spiritually savvy leaders were better able to preserve performance and sustainability even in times of crisis by means of qualities including resilience, empathy, and meaningful involvement. These qualities speak powerfully inside FOBs, where leadership is generally individualised and purpose-driven. Moreover, the results of Qaisar et al. (2019) show that the link between job qualities and environmental sustainability is much mediated by workplace spirituality. This supports the notion that spiritual intelligence affects outward sustainability targets as well as internal performance and motivation. In the framework of FOBs, this mediation could take place via the internalisation of common values giving ethical decision-making and long-term effect priority over short-term benefits. On the other hand, the research of Nishanthini and Nimalathasan (2013) and Kong (1998), although not specifically on spiritual intelligence, emphasise the need of internal capacities—such as profitability measures and product creation processes—for sustainability. These results imply that although spiritual intelligence is important, to attain complete corporate sustainability it has to operate in concert with strong strategic, financial, and operational approaches. These findings taken together imply that spiritual intelligence— operationalized via ethical behaviour and workplace spirituality—is a major enabler of customer happiness and more general company sustainability in family-owned enterprises. The focus on integrity, meaning, and moral responsibility helps such companies to keep loyal consumers and create sustainable practices throughout generations by arming them with the relational capital required.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study investigated the relational influence of spiritual intelligence on fostering sustainability in FOBs in Southeast, Nigeria, using ethics and customer satisfaction as primary metrics. The results indicate a significant and positive correlation between ethical conduct—a metric of spiritual intelligence—and customer satisfaction which indexes sustainability. This shows that spiritual intelligence, encompassing self-awareness, compassion, integrity, and moral responsibility, is crucial in influencing sustainable economic practices within family firms. Empirical data from prior studies corroborates these findings, indicating that spiritually aware leadership enhances performance, resilience, and alignment with long-term objectives. In family enterprises, where personal values and generational continuity are intricately linked, spiritual intelligence offers a distinctive framework for fostering ethical cultures and stakeholder relationships. In contrast to transactional leadership models, spiritually intelligent leadership emphasises meaning, purpose, and service—principles that align well with sustainability. For spiritual intelligence to effectively influence sustainable corporate outcomes, it must be underpinned by robust operational strategies and performance monitoring mechanisms. Cultivating spiritual intelligence in family company leadership is advantageous for ethical practices and customer loyalty, and is crucial for the longevity of the enterprise throughout generations.

Based on the study's conclusion it is recommended that:

Ethics is in recent times is considered as a strategy, as such proprietors of FOBs in Southeast Nigeria need to adopt sound ethics in their operations as it not only delivers goodwill to the business it also endears clienteles to continuously patronise the business through repeat purchases, offering referrals and giving positive reviews on its product offerings. Furthermore, it is proffered as a policy implication that sustainability is ensured and delivered to FOBs that strive to meet, offer and deliver in a timely manner the needs/demands of its customers. Meeting these needs can be in terms of

providing after sales services, and creating a feedback platform as it translates into customer satisfaction and ultimately sustains the operations of FOBs.

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