Business Ethics and Organizational Sustainability: A Study of Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Asaba, Delta State.

Bridget I. Ibobo
Department of Business Administration, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.
Email: ibobobridge@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examines the relationship between business ethics and sustainability of Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Delta State, Nigeria. The study employed cross sectional research design in examining seventy-three (73) firms. The population of the study is made up of owner-manager of SMEs (Hotels and Guesthouse) in Asaba metropolis. Census was adopted in which all the seventy copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents. Data were analyzed with the aid of Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient to examine the relationship existing between the study variables. Findings revealed the existence of significant relationship between the dimensions of business (transparency and integrity) and the measures of organizational sustainability given as economic, social and environmental sustainability. From the results of the finding, the study concludes that business ethics undoubtedly influences organizational sustainability. Thus, it was further recommended among others that, the right strategies and policies should be put in place to align corporate goals and objectives in the dimension of business ethics to achieve organizational sustainability. Also, organizational leaders/managers should give apt orientation to organizational members to imbibe ethical practices into all organizational processes, this will positively affect firms' sustainability.

Keywords: *Business ethics, Organizational, Sustainability, Transparency, Integrity, Economic, Social, Environmental*

Introduction

One of the purpose of business is profit making through customers' patronage and firms in the process of creating value for customers, achieves other objectives like market shares, growth, good public image and so on. Though, most organizations place so much emphasis on profit maximization to the extent of relegating other core issues that leads to organizational survival, interrupting the status quo as well as controlling turbulence to attain long term objectives through innovation, transparency, commitment, accountability and responsibility becomes of utmost importance to firms' sustainability. Sustainability implies continuation and in the process of thriving for continuous operations firms need to realign business and investment practice to ensure long-term prosperity. As opined by Hahn and Scheermesser (2006), firms do face constant changes in the environment as well as experience difficulties from legislation and society, forcing them to seek alignment with sustainability. Thus, the need to equip organizations with individuals (workforce) and structure necessary to operate successfully in the twenty-first century becomes of utmost concern to firms' sustainability.

Organizational sustainability hinges on the principle of strengthening the environmental, social as well as the economic systems within firms' operation (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012). This principle is considered been important, as Colbert and Kurucz (2007) views the concept of sustainability relatively with continuous business operations as well as assisting firms prosper without devaluing organizations' future needs (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005). For organizations to keep functioning, they must be financially, institutionally and morally strong, thus it is essential for Management, leaders as well as employees to act and be perceived as been ethical in their roles.

Organizations earmark large amount of resources (time and money) creating policies in regulating employees' conducts regarding how expense reports are fill, as well as the kind of gift considered acceptable and what (gift) constitute bribes. The motive of doing this, is identifying and communicating what constitute appropriate and inappropriate behaviour expected of employees, as it ensures social order and make society flourish if business practices and operations are built on the foundation of justice and rules of conduct. Though, the classical economists viewed human behaviour primarily on the basis of self-interest, behavioural economists reveals that humans are not only less rational than what the classical economist thinks but are moral as well. Thus, the cravings for most individuals to work for an ethical organization indicates that people do care about ethics and would feel good about themselves and their work for engaging in ethical practice. As opined by Schwartz, Dunfee and Kline (2005), in the context of ethics, perceptions of an organization's actions may have more of an impact than an organization's words. This could be ascertained through transparency and integrity shown in organizational relationship with its stakeholders.

However, ethics are codes of values and principles upon which individual or group of individuals' actions are regulated regarding what is considered right as well as what is deemed wrong (Levine, 2011). Dombin (2012) opined that organizational culture and structures are created on the foundation of ethics. As pillar to firms' culture and structure, organizations are expected to adhere to ethical practices in their routine operations with stakeholders, as unethical practices like bribery, dishonesty, lack of equity in interpersonal and professional relationship, falsification and misrepresentation of records just to mention but a few, creates bad reputation to businesses as well as has adverse effects on any economy. Though, from an economic point of view, businesses seem to be powerful, as the size and profits makes some organizations richer than some nations, contrarily these organizations stand the chances of losing their powers if they don't use it responsibly. According to Nelson and Trevino (2011) using power responsibly denotes being concerned about the interest of various stakeholders as well as parties who are affected by the business and its actions.

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) contributes to the economic wellbeing of many countries around the world, as their size is far greater than large firms, thus becoming a huge employer of labour. Though, in the Nigeria these businesses are generally defined by the number of employees possessed which range between 1 and 250 employees, the number are often different based on the size, as the number possess by Micro Enterprise range between 1 and 9 employees. Small Enterprise ranges between 10 and 49 employees while Medium size enterprise ranges between 50 and 249 employees. Statistics form Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment in Nigeria indicates that MSMEs contributes 84 percent of the total jobs in the country as well as 48.5 percent of the gross domestic product.

Businesses operating within this category (MSMEs) are expected to render products and services in a just and equitable manner consistent with societal expectation as such guarantees good public image and eventually leads to firms' growth and sustainability. The continuity as well as the operational efficiency of most companies that have lasted for centuries around the world, are been attributed to sound ethical practice and conduct. Though, business failure has universal phenomenon around the world, as there is an indication that most SMEs' are been threatened by forces within their operational environment, and most often not survive their fifth years of operation (Holland, 1998; Watson, 2003). Buttressing this, Almed and Seet (2009) averred that despite the geographical location (nation), SMEs encounter similar difficulties which have adverse effect on their operational performance and survival rate. However, in Nigeria, particularly Asaba, Delta state, there is an observation that most MSMEs do not continue operations after some years of establishment. Though, factors such as paucity of resource (finance), stringent government policy, inadequacy of infrastructure, lack of research and development, inability to use ICT tools as well as lack of internet connection and location of business etc., affect MSMEs operations, most businesses (MSMEs) engaged in various forms of unethical practice like bribes, under-declared sales, pilferage, dishonesty, lack of equity in interpersonal and professional relationship and so on. This has eventually leads to high level of corruption, unfair competition, inflation and high level of unemployment etc. thereby resulting into unexpected business failure.

Though, several studies exist on business ethics and organizational sustainability (Ugoani, 2019; Akhtar, Bin Arshad, Mahmood & Ahmed, 2015; Quarshie, Salmi & Leuschner, 2016; Tormo-Carbo, Segui-Mas & Oltra, 2018), none have been done (researched) on business ethics and organizational sustainability in Asaba metropolis, Delta state, Nigeria. Based on the foregoing the study intends to empirically investigate the impact of business ethics on organizational sustainability, particularly in Asaba, Delta State.

The main objective of the study is to investigate the link between business ethics and organizational sustainability of micro, small and medium scale enterprise in Asaba, Delta State. The specific objectives of the study are to ascertain the influence of transparency and the impact of integrity on organizational sustainability of micro, small and medium scale enterprise in Asaba, Delta state.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Review

Business Ethics

In today's business world, information spreads rapidly beyond unimaginable distance than ever before due to technological advancement that have made the world a global village. In the global business arena, emphasis now lies on 'doing well by doing good'. In other words, in business transaction, emphasis is on just and equitable treatment or dealings with all concerned as way of enhancing and building good public image than profit-maximization as the economic perspective of business. As opined by Anam (2011) firms make decision based on the perception of what society would accept as ethically correct standard. However, it will be of utmost importance to ascertain various perception of ethics before clarifying the construct of business ethics.

Ethics originates from the word "ethos" denoting one's character as well as moral nature in Greek (Greek-English Lexicon, 1889). It is the part of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending as well as recommending ideas of what is deemed right and wrong behaviour (Verst, Kampmann, Eilers & Franz-Josef, 2015). Ethics denotes a generally held morality in societies which defines the rules that governs individuals' behaviour, the rules that society should enforce as well as the quality deemed improving in human's existence (George, 2005). Similarly, in the words of Trevino & Nelson (2011), ethics refers to the principles, norms, and standards of conduct regulating either individual or group of individuals. In other words, ethics is concerned with individual character and the moral rules that govern and limit human conduct. Proper functioning of society, requires rules regulating individual's conduct in all sphere of human endeavor relatively to what is considered right and wrong, duty and obligation as well as moral responsibility. Since businesses create value that satisfy human's need and is influenced by society, it becomes necessary to considered ethical aspect in all dealings with stakeholders.

Business ethics are the set of moral principles or values applied by firms in directing the conduct of the organization itself as well as its workforce relatively in all business undertaking internally and externally (Cole, 2002). Similarly, as opined by Sexty (2011), business ethics are the rules, norms or codes that serve as guide for morally acceptable behavior decided by management relatively to organization's operations and its relationship with stakeholders. Furthermore, Steade, Lowry, Dan and Raymond (1984) as cited in Dwiharto, Nirwarto and Manan (2018) view business ethics as the ethical standards relatively to the goals and how businesses make decision. Business ethics emphasizes on the knowledge of the procedures for setting up and managing ideal business why considering the universality of norms and morality and its application socially as well as economically (Velasquez, 2005). Business ethics enhances firm's public image, as customers are willing to patronize business whose products and services meets their requirement. Also, suppliers grant trade credit to business (MSMEs) who are transparent and trustworthy in business transaction over time. Buttressing on the foregoing, Long and Driscoll (2008) opined that ethical policies and procedures permits external stakeholders gain organizational legitimacy, thus promoting trust in the management of the organization.

Nevertheless, Adenubi (2010) averred that behaviour consistent with ethical manner, connote an aspect of firms' social responsibility, which itself dwells on the believe that firms ought to affect society in a manner other than profit maximization. Though, several concepts have been used as proxies for business ethics by various researchers and author, this study adopts integrity and transparency as the dimension of business ethics. These dimension are part of the indicators used by Suherman (2011) which include: trust, honesty, promise accuracy, reliability task and transparency.

Transparency

Stakeholders (customers, owners, shareholders, suppliers, government, creditors, analyst, producers/manufacturers as well as the general public) demand organizations to be more open and accountable in their operations. This could be in a form of information disclosure to stakeholders in relation to firm’s products and services, manufacturing processes as well as their decision making processes. As opined by Bentele and Seidenglanze (2008) and Van Riel (2000), in business, trust, legitimacy and reputation often develop on the foundation of transparency. Though, the concept of transparency has been use in several fields of human endeavor like in journalism, politics, sociology, philosophy etc. (Baudrillard, 1993; Han, 2012; Allen, 2008), in business studies as opined by Holmstrom (2000) transparency is viewed as organizational practice consisting ethical programmes, dual communication, bridging strategies and openness. In addition, Jahansoozi (2006) viewed transparency as confidence, responsibility, collaboration as well as cooperation in relation to responsible form of organizational behaviour. Pratt and Adamolekun (2008) portray transparency contrarily to manipulative and biased information.

Though, most scholars conceptualized transparency relatively to openness and disclosure of information, contrarily Rawlins (2009) opined that it is not just openness and disclosure, but the enhancement of understanding. As opined by Gower (2006), information transparency denotes improvement in understanding between parties who have stake in business undertakings as well as in organization’s decisions. Transparency from the perspective of MSMEs requires enhancement in understanding between firms and stakeholders relatively on information about prices (i.e. information about current market price, quotes and historical price), information about the features and quality of products as well as information about internal management and production processes. These are important to the plans and objectives of users on the receiving end. Contrarily, firms through distortion, bias or opaque intentionally decreases transparency (Granados, Gupta & Kauffman, 2006).

Integrity

Integrity is the inner sense of wholeness derives from quality such as honesty and consistency of character. As opined by Krishna (2011), an individual is said to have possess the virtue of integrity if the person’s action is based upon internally consistent framework of principles. As opined by Kirsch (2011), integrity is what human do in the absence of people around or what firms consistently do and how they do it. It involves concepts like continuous consistency in value, expectations, methods, actions, measures, outcomes, and principles. Consistency is the key to establishing integrity and the consistency of a business's actions will determine the trust a consumer will place in it.

Integrity in business can be classified differently. It can be interpreted in terms of behavior that is illegal or immoral. It could connote behavior that is considered inappropriate by members of the community. Lastly, it presents a behavior that serves as a model for others. It stands out as exceptionally positive. It goes beyond norms of decency. Others perceive it as contributing to the safety and well-being of the community. Levine (2010) opined that in business, integrity is the same as trust and that customers need to trust firms they transact with in order to retain them, thus assuming every responsibility is absolutely vital. Levine opined that every responsibility must be owned up to, not occasional choice ones.

Organizational Sustainability

Sustainability is a process that constantly interrupts the existing state of affairs as well as harnessing environmental disorder to realizing long term goals of the firm through continuous innovation, transparency, commitment accountability and responsibly (Mehra, 2010). In the views of Brundlandt (1987), sustainability means meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations. Though, the concept of sustainability has various roots which results to diverse meanings, the focus here is on the organizational point of view.

Business sustainability simply means the business of staying in business (Doane & MacGillivray, 2001). Business sustainability refers to the process through which businesses manage their financial, social as well as environmental risk, obligation and opportunities. This approach is simply referred to as managing the three Ps (People, Planet and Profit). Similarly, Organizational sustainability from the perspective of stakeholders to firm's level means fulfilling both direct and indirect stakeholders' (employees, customers, shareholders, pressure group, community, government etc.) requirements without compromising firms' ability to fulfill the needs of future stakeholders (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). This definition, is in relation to the broader perspective of Brundlandt notion of sustainability. Furthermore, sustainability relatively in organizational context can be viewed from the Triple-P point of view, as developed by Elkington (1997). The triple P, denotes people, planet as well as profit and is based on the notion that organization is sustainable if a certain minimum performance is achieved relatively in the areas of people, planet as well as profit. This perspective on organizational sustainability emphasizes the need for organizations to maintain a balance between economic objective (profit) as well as the objective of the social (people) and ecological (planet) environment rather than focusing on profits alone because firms are equally liable to the social and ecological environment.

In addition to the Triple-Bottom Line approach to organizational sustainability, McDonough and Braungart (2002) and Kainuma and Tawara (2006) put forward a more advance approach to organizational sustainability known as the 'Zero waste approach'. The approach suggest that products needs to be created or designed in a manner that during its life cycle, it enhances the natural environment as well as the social environment. In other words, the approach suggest that product should be design in such a way that at the end of the its life cycle it becomes usable or reuse as a raw material to the development of a new product. They termed this approach as 'cradle to cradle' which supports considerably the Triple P as well as Es (Profit, People and Planet also known as Economy, Equity and Ecology) not as a 'Triple-bottom line', that is after the fact, but as 'Triple top line' which means an integral part of firms' strategy and design procedure.

Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability emphasizes on financial/economic achievability relatively in the areas of competition, job offer, profit as well as new market penetration. It is firms' ability to present cash flow that assures the essential liquidity and is responsible for the creation of wealth as well as indicating the ability to perform business undertakings in a responsible manner while ensuring profitability (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002; Munck, Munck & Souza, 2011). According to Azapagic (2003), economic viability is the core, as it creates profit and jobs which generally contribute to social welfare. Measures of economics sustainability comprises sales, profits, return on investment, tax paid, monetary flow and jobs created (Savitz, 2013).

Social Sustainability

Social sustainability emphasizes on equity, empowerment, participation, sharing, Cultural identity, accessibility as well as institutional stability. The aim is to preserve the environment through economic growth and poverty alleviation. It compels firms to internalize the social costs, maintains and provides social capital development; avoid exploiting the individual, giving incentive to auto-renewable structures; support democracy, amplifying the scope of personal choices and impartial distribution of resources and property rights (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). It also emphasizes on the expectation of various groups relating to organization, issues relating to human development, equity and ethics (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). Measures include: Labour practice, community impacts, human right and product responsibility (Savitz, 2013).

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability lay emphasis on ecosystem integrity, carrying capacity and biodiversity. Serageldin (1993) averred that environmental sustainability demands maintaining natural capital as both a provider of economic inputs referred to as ‘source’ and an absorber known as ‘sink’ of economic output called ‘waste’. Goodland (1995) opined that at the ‘sink site’, waste sent out or produced from industrial operation must be controlled so that they don’t exceed the capacity of the environment to absorb them without impairment. Organizations aligned with Environmental Sustainability only consume natural resources at a rate below its natural regeneration capacity, or below the production rate of substitutable resources (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Utilitarianism

The study hinges on the theory of utilitarianism propounded and developed by Jeremy Bentham and J. S. Mills in 1863. It is based on the notion that generally most humans seek ultimate good that brings happiness and pleasure. In other words, the desire of most individuals naturally aims towards pleasure and avoid pains. Though, the theory is classified into three types such that there exist Act utilitarianism (which emphasizes on individual action rather than the moral rules of the action), Rule utilitarianism (emphasizes on the consequences of keeping certain rules than judging the consequences of each individual’s action) and Preference utilitarianism (which emphasizes on the preference of all those concerned in a specific course of action). These categorizations all aimed at the ultimate good of the society.

As opined by Bentham, the principle of utilitarianism usually results in the establishment of general rules which in some exceptional situation might be violated, while evaluating the outcome of individuals’ action, the general rule should be acknowledge. Bentham opined that virtue such as truthfulness and honesty should be incorporated as part of individual’s habit because these virtues provide society the means of securing the greatest happiness for the large number of people.

The practical implication of this theory to the study is that organizations while providing goods and services to the society, need to acknowledge the moral aspect of their operation to the society at large. This is established in a form of rules guiding the conduct of individuals and organizations (MSMEs). This could be in form of what is deemed morally rights and wrong practice generally either accepted or rejected by the generality of humans in a given society where firms operate. Thus, firms need to ensure that their services and products satisfy the needs of consumer which eventually leads to the overall happiness of the greatest number of users, as any act of business practice contrarily to what is generally acceptable in the society can damage firm's reputation and makes them lose their economic power.

This is achievable when firms disclose information in a transparent manner to stakeholders. For instance, where there is improvement in understanding between firms and their stakeholders relatively on information about the feature and quality of products as well as price, consumers make informed decision about their purchase which eventually leads to higher level of customers' satisfaction.

Similarly, since utilitarianism emphasizes on the greatest good to the greatest number of persons, MSMEs are expected to engage in sustainable development practice while managing the social, economic and environmental risk, obligations as well as opportunities. This will not only benefit the needs of direct and indirect stakeholders at present, but it will also fulfill the needs of future stakeholders to the ultimate good of the society.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey because these studies involve human beings that lack the true major attributes of experimentation. This choice of design originates primarily from the nature of the study, which is basically quasi-experimental and within a non-contrived settings (Baridam, 2001). The population consists of small and medium scales enterprises (SMEs) particularly owner-managed hotels in Delta State, Nigeria. The study population is seventy-three (73).

The choice of these SMEs is based on the classification of SMEs by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) as well as the National Association of Small & Medium Enterprises (NASME). The research utilized the census sampling, meaning that the population is adopted as the sample size. Questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used for data analysis to test the null hypotheses proposed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20).

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of seventy-three (73) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the owner-managers of the Hotels in Delta State; seventy (70) were reported as valid and usable and were thus analyzed.

Table 1: Dimensions of Business Ethics

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TRANSPARENCY	70	4	20	14.21	4.492
TY1	70	1	5	3.55	1.123
TY2	70	1	5	3.55	1.123
TY3	70	1	5	3.55	1.123
TY4	70	1	5	3.55	1.123
INTEGRITY	70	5	20	17.17	4.065
IY1	70	1	5	4.29	1.016
IY2	70	1	5	4.29	1.016
IY3	70	1	5	4.29	1.016
IY4	70	1	5	4.29	1.016
IY5	70	1	5	3.64	1.349
Valid N (listwise)	70				

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 illustrates the result for the data distribution for the dimensions of business ethics (transparency (TY), integrity (IY); the results point out that the dimensions all bear high and substantial mean values, resulting from the high mean scores for each of their statement items; this is suggestive of strong affirmative response to the construct from the respondents.

Table 2: Indicators of Organizational Sustainability

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ECO.SUS	70	4	20	15.65	5.429
ES1	70	1	5	3.91	1.357
ES2	70	1	5	3.91	1.357
ES3	70	1	5	3.91	1.357
ES4	70	1	5	3.91	1.357
SOCIAL. SUS	70	5	20	14.53	5.472
SS1	70	1	5	3.63	1.368
SS2	70	1	5	3.63	1.368
SS3	70	1	5	3.63	1.368
SS4	70	1	5	3.63	1.368
SS5	70	1	5	4.01	1.148
ENVIRON. SUS	70	5	20	14.58	5.357
ENS1	70	1	5	3.66	1.308
ENS2	70	1	5	3.63	1.359
ENS3	70	1	5	3.64	1.349
ENS4	70	1	5	3.64	1.349
ENS5	70	1	5	4.01	1.148
Valid N (listwise)	70				

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 illustrates the result for the data distribution for the measures of organizational sustainability (economic sustainability (ES), social sustainability (SS) and environmental sustainability (ENS); the results point out that the indicators all bear high and substantial mean values, resulting from the high mean scores for each of their statement items; this is indicative of strong affirmative response to the constructs as elicited from the respondents.

Bivariate Level Analyses

This section is concerned with testing hypotheses stated earlier; using Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient statistical tool and the p-values obtained; hence the decision rule; reject null hypothesis if p-value obtained is less than the alpha value of 0.05 and accept the null hypothesis when p-value is greater than the alpha value (0.05).

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between transparency and economic sustainability of Small and Medium Scales Enterprises in Delta State.

Table 3 Correlation between transparency and economic sustainability

			TY	ES
Spearman's rho	TY	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.912
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	70	70
	ES	Correlation Coefficient	.912	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	70	70

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2018

Table 3 presents Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient to find out the relationship between transparency and economic sustainability as reported by seventy (70) respondents. A strong positive correlation coefficient value was reported between transparency and economic sustainability which was statistically significant (rho = .912, p = .000 < 0.05 (alpha value) this suggests that there is significant relationship between the variables.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between transparency and social sustainability of Small and Medium Scales Enterprises in Delta State.

Table 4 Correlation between transparency and social sustainability

			TY	SS
Spearman's rho	TY	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.916
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	70	70
	SS	Correlation Coefficient	.916	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	70	70

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 presents Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient to find out the relationship between transparency and social sustainability as reported by seventy (70) respondents. A strong positive correlation coefficient value was reported between transparency and social sustainability which was statistically significant (rho = .916, p = .000 < 0.05 (alpha value) this suggests that there is significant relationship between the variables.

$H0_3$: There is no significant relationship between transparency and environmental sustainability of Small and Medium Scales Enterprises in Delta State.

Table 5 Correlation between transparency and environmental sustainability

			TY	ENS
Spearman's rho	TY	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.711
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	70	70
	ENS	Correlation Coefficient	.711	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	70	70

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2021

Table 5 presents Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient to find out the relationship between transparency and environmental sustainability as reported by seventy (70) respondents. A strong positive correlation coefficient value was reported between transparency and environmental sustainability which was statistically significant (rho = .711, p = .000 < 0.05 (alpha value) this suggests that there is significant relationship between the variables.

Decision: The null hypotheses ($H0_{1-3}$) are rejected and we state that there is significant relationship between transparency and the measures of organizational sustainability (economic, social and environmental sustainability) of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Delta State.

$H0_4$: There is no significant relationship between integrity and economic sustainability of Small and Medium Scales Enterprises in Delta State.

Table 6 Correlation between integrity and economic sustainability

			IY	ES
Spearman's rho	IY	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.872
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	70	70
	ES	Correlation Coefficient	.872	.872
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		N	70	70

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2021

Table 6 presents Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient to find out the relationship between integrity and economic sustainability as reported by seventy (70) respondents. A strong positive correlation coefficient value was reported between integrity and economic sustainability which was statistically significant (rho = .872, p = .000 < 0.05 (alpha value) this suggests that there is significant relationship between the variables.

$H0_5$: There is no significant relationship between integrity and social sustainability of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Delta State.

Table 7 Correlation between integrity and social sustainability

			IY	SS
Spearman's rho	IY	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.853
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	70	70
	SS	Correlation Coefficient	.853	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	70	70

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2021

Table 7 presents Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient to find out the relationship between integrity and social sustainability as reported by seventy (70) respondents. A strong positive correlation coefficient value was reported between integrity and social sustainability which was statistically significant (rho = .853, p = .000 < 0.05 (alpha value) this suggests that there is significant relationship between the variables.

$H0_6$: There is no significant relationship between integrity and environmental sustainability of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Delta State.

Table 8 Correlation between integrity and environmental sustainability

			IY	ENS
Spearman's rho	IY	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.716
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	70	70
	ENS	Correlation Coefficient	.716	.716
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
		N	70	70

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2021

Table 8 presents Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient to find out the relationship between integrity and environmental sustainability as reported by seventy (70) respondents. A strong positive correlation coefficient value was reported between integrity and environmental sustainability which was statistically significant (rho = .716, $p = .000 < 0.05$ (alpha value) this suggests that there is significant relationship between the variables.

Decision: The null hypotheses ($H0_{4\text{-}6}$) are rejected and we state that there is significant relationship between integrity and the measures of organizational sustainability (economic, social and environmental sustainability) of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Delta State.

Discussions

The study investigated the link between business ethics and organizational sustainability of Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Delta State. Six (6) hypotheses were stated and tested thus;

The result of the tested $H0_{1\text{-}3}$ revealed the existence of a significant relationship between transparency and the measures of organizational sustainability; (rho = .912, p = .000; rho = .916, p = .000; rho = 711); this agrees to the study of Sisman, Yozgat, Abunaz and Ozarslan (2015) who maintained that transparency is very essential for the successful operations in the public sector in addition to all other organizational management practice and it is consider the most essential for public sectors due to humans.

As opined by Kolk (2008), transparency is highly essential in improving firms' operations and grants stakeholders the opportunity to get acquainted with firm's undertakings in order to ascertain if it is appropriate in achieving objective or not. Furthermore, Kolk (2008) viewed transparency from a dual perspective. Transparency could be viewed relatively to accountability required in corporate governance like staff related ethical aspects of corporate governance. On the other perspective, it could be seen relatively in terms of sustainability reporting like ethical/social issues, community and employees related issues, organizational structure established to control them as well as the financial facets.

The tested $H0_{4\text{-}6}$ revealed the existence of a significant relationship between integrity and the measures of organizational sustainability; (rho = .872, p = .000 < 0.05; rho = .853, p = .000 < 0.05; rho = 716, p = .000); this agrees to the study of Biggemann (n.d) who posited that integrity increases business sustainability. Integrity strengths the links between actors in a network, reduces costs to build and maintain relationship and also reduced motivation for opportunistic behaviour. Integrity has positive effects on the parties' perception about value creation and how this is shared within the network.

Integrity is built on consistency, trust and pride, which are concepts that allow for a clearer understanding of integrity. Consistency keeps integrity stable (McFall, 1987), trust decreases the perception of risk when interacting with other party, and pride is about having high praise and dedication towards the values that products and services stand for, as well as having pride in the work you are doing and the relationships forged throughout the value chain.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the results of the findings, the study concludes that business ethics generally influences the sustainability of micro, small and medium scale firms in Asaba, Delta State. Specifically, the study concludes that transparency significantly effects the measures of firms' sustainability (economic, social and environmental) in the study areas. Also, the study concludes that integrity has a strong influence on the measures of firms' sustainability (economic, social and environmental) in Asaba, Delta State. Thus, from the study's perspectives, ethics of firms explain organizations' disposition to quality practice which in turn, affects firms' sustainability positively.

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn from the study, it was further recommended that business organizations should be more open in the manner in which they provide information about their products and services (i.e. the features and quality), price and productions process to consumers as well as the general public, as stakeholders primarily rely on accurate and clear information in making informed decision. This will further enhance firms' profitability and overall performance. Also, micro, small and medium scale firms should ensure transparency while developing and enhancing the social conditions of workers, communities as well as society in general, as challenges such as poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and social problems related to safety, inequality, health and working conditions are seen barriers to advancing sustainable development. Similarly, the right strategies and policies should be put in place to align corporate goals and objectives in the dimension of business ethics to achieve organizational sustainability. Lastly, organizational leaders/managers should give apt orientation to organizational members to imbibe ethical practices into all organizational processes, this will positively affect firms' sustainability.

References

Ahmed, N. H. & Seet, P. (2009). Dissecting behaviours associated with business failure: A quantitative study of SME Owners in Malaysia and Australia. *Asian Social Science, 5*(9), 98-104.

Akhtar, S., Bin Arshad, M. A., Mahmood, A., & Ahmed, A. (2015). Spiritual quotient and ethical value towards organizational sustainability. International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences, 58, 1-7. https://www.learntechchilb.org/p/176798/.

Anam, B. E. (2011). The Framework of Public Administration. Calabar: Kingsview Publishers.

Appiadjei, E. A., Ampong, G. O., Danso, S. A., & Koranchie, K. A. (2017). Development and Validation of work place integrity scale: Evidence from Ghana. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 9(30, 187-196.

Baridam, D. M. (2001). *Research Methods in Administrative Sciences* (3rd Edition). Port Harcourt: Sherbrook Association.

Biggemann, S. (n.d). Achieving business sustainability: the role of integrity. University of Otago - School of Business, New Zealand.

Dapko, J. L. (2012). Perceived firm transparency: Scale and Model Development. Graduate Theses and Dissertation, University of South Florida, Scholar Commons.

Dombin, N. A. (2012). Business ethics: A catalyst for rapid economic growth. *Journal of Educational and Social Research, 2*(10), 30-37.

Dwiharto, J., Nirwarto, N., & Manan, A. (2018). *The effect of business ethics, entrepreneurship behavior, and organizational climate on legal micro,*

small and medium enterprises performance through professional commitments in Pasuruan city. International conference of graduate school sustainability.
Dyllick, T., & Hockerts, K. (2002). Beyond the business case for corporate sustainability. *Business Strategy and the Environment, 11*, 130-141.
Elkington, J. (1997). *Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business*. Capstone: Oxford.
George, R. T. De. (2005). A history of business ethics. The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics.
Goodland, R. (1995). Environmental sustainability: Universal and rigorous. Sustainable development, (under review).
Gower, K. K (2006). Truth and transparency. In Fitzpatrick K and Bronstein C (eds) *Ethics in Public Relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 89–105.
Granados, N., Gupta, A., & Kauffman, R. J (2006). The impact of market transparency on market information and transparency: A unified theoretical framework. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 7*(3), 148-178.
Hahn, T. & Scheermesser, M. (2006). Approach to Corporate sustainability among German companies. Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, 13(3), 150-165. DOI: 10.1002/csr.100.
Holland, R. (1998). Planning against a business failure. Agricultural development centre, University of Tennessee. https://firrl.files.wordprocess.coml.../smallbusiness_planning againstabusiness.
Khan, E. A., & Quaddus, M. (2015). Development and validation of a scale for measuring sustainability factors of informal microenterprises - A qualitative and quantitative approach. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, 5(4), 347-372.
Kolk, A. (2008). Sustainability, accountability and corporate governance: Exploring multinationals' reporting practices. *Faculty of Economics and Business*, 17(1), 1-15.
Krishner, P. (2011). *Essence of a manager.* Science and Business Media.
Levine, S. (2010). The importance of keeping your integrity in business. Retrieved from https://www.openforum.com/articles/the-importance-of-keeping-your-integrity-in-business-1
McFall, L. (1987). Integrity. Ethics, 98, 5-20.
Quarshie, A. M., Salmi, A., & Leuschner, R. (2016). Sustainability and corporate social responsibility in supply chains: The state of research in supply chain

management and business ethics. Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, 22(2), 82-97.
Rawlins, B. (2009). Give the emperor a mirror: Toward developing a stakeholder measurement of organizational transparency. *Journal of Public Relations Research 21*(1), 71–99.
Savitz, A. (2013). Triple Bottom Line: How Today's best –run companies are achieving economic, social and environmental success- and how you can too. Somerset, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved www.ebrary.com.wncln.org.
Schwartz, M. S., Dunfee, T. W., & Kline, M. J. (2005). Tone at the top: An ethics code for directors? *Journal of Business Ethics*, *58*, 79-100.
Serageldin, I. (1993). Development partners: Aid and cooperation in the 1990's. Stockholm: SIDA.
Sexty, R. (2011). *Canadian business and society: Ethics and responsibilities (2nd Ed).* Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
Sisman, F. A., Yozgat, U., Abunaz, E., & Ozarslan, T. (2015). Importance of transparency on sustainable success orientation. Research journal of Business and Management, 2(3), 366-379.
Suherman, E. (2011). Praktik Bisnis Berbasis Entrepreneurship. Jakarta: Alfabeta.
Svensson, G., & Wood, G. (2003). The dynamics of business ethics: A function of time and culturecases and models. *Management Decision, 41*(4), 350-361
Tormo-Carbo, G., Segui-Mas, E., & Oltra, V. (2018). Business ethics as a sustainability challenges: Higher education implications. Sustainability, 10(8), 2717. https://doi.org/10.3390/su10082717.
Trevino, L. K., & Nelson, K. A. (2011). *Managing business ethics: Straight talk about how to do it right*. U. S. A: John Wiley & Sons, INC.
Ugoani, J. (2019). Business ethics and its effect on organizational sustainability. *Global Journal of Social Sciences Study, 5*(2), 199-131.
Verst, Kampmann, L., Eilers, S., & Franz-Josef (2015). Die Literaturrudschau. Communicatio Socialis. OCLC 914511982
Watson, J. (2003). Failure rates for female controlled businesses: Are they any different? *Journal of Small Business Management, 41(*3), 262-277.