

MANAGERIAL TRANSPARENCY AND CORPORATE IMAGE OF REGISTERED FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN RIVERS STATE

Ebere, F. O.

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Administration and Management, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Email: franciscaebere1@gmail.com

Oparanma, A. O.

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Administration and Management, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

and

Wechie, I.

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Administration and Management, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between managerial transparency and corporate image of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State. The study adopted a correlational survey design. The population of the study was the ten registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State. The study adopted a Census method. As an organizational level study, Chairmen and Vice Chairmen from each of the ten (10) registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State making a total of twenty respondents which serves as the population elements. As a quantitative study, data for the study was collected through questionnaire administration. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the data with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 27.0. The study findings revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between transparency and corporate image, particularly in terms of corporate identity and corporate reputation. This suggests that increased organizational transparency leads to enhanced perceptions of the company's integrity, trustworthiness, and credibility. The study concludes that transparency is a critical determinant of corporate image, influencing both how organizations present themselves and how they are perceived by stakeholders. Based on the findings, it is recommended that telecommunication companies implement open communication channels and routinely disclose relevant information to foster stakeholder trust. Additionally, organizations should institutionalize transparent policies and practices across all levels of operation to strengthen both their identity and reputation in the competitive telecommunications landscape.

Keywords: Transparency, corporate image, corporate identity, corporate reputation

INTRODUCTION

Registered faith-based organizations play a pivotal role in advancing socio-economic development in Rivers State, Nigeria, through services such as education, healthcare, and community welfare (Treviño & Nelson, 2022). These organizations depend heavily on public trust, donor support, and voluntary contributions for sustainability (Olawale, 2017). However, issues like financial mismanagement, opaque leadership practices, and ethical lapses have sometimes eroded stakeholder confidence (Mele & Schlag, 2022). Such challenges highlight the importance of ethical leadership and transparency in preserving the moral authority and societal relevance of these institutions (Lee & Kim, 2018). Ethical lapses not only tarnish their spiritual credibility but also jeopardize their operational viability and long-term impact.

Managerial transparency, as a key dimension of ethical intelligence, is fundamental to maintaining stakeholder trust and ensuring alignment between organizational practices and values (Treviño & Nelson, 2022). In the context of faith-based institutions, where moral standards are integral to their mission, transparency enhances accountability and fosters an environment of integrity. Leaders in these organizations are entrusted with decisions that shape both operational outcomes and social perception, making ethical stewardship essential (Mele & Schlag, 2022). Transparency, therefore, reinforces ethical culture and builds credibility, which are vital for organizational sustainability. Examining its role in shaping corporate image offers insights into how faith-based institutions can navigate reputational risks and maintain public support (Olawale, 2017).

Corporate image, encompassing corporate identity and corporate reputation, determines how organizations are perceived by stakeholders (Treviño & Nelson, 2022). A clearly defined identity grounded in ethical values helps distinguish the organization, while a strong reputation reflects consistent ethical behavior and dependable performance (Mele & Schlag, 2022). Positive perceptions attract donor engagement, community loyalty, and broader societal influence. Conversely, reputational damage can lead to diminished support and legitimacy. This study investigates how managerial transparency influences both dimensions of corporate image in registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State. By providing empirical evidence, the study offers practical and theoretical insights for leaders aiming to sustain trust and organizational resilience through transparent and ethically intelligent management.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between managerial transparency and corporate image of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State. The specific objectives of the study include:

- i. To examine the relationship between managerial transparency and corporate identity of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State.
- ii. To determine the relationship between managerial transparency and corporate reputation of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework showing the predictor variable (managerial transparency) and the measures of the criterion variable (corporate image).



Figure 1: Relationship between managerial transparency and corporate image of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State.

Source: Desk Research, 2025 - Managerial transparency adapted from the works of Stankeviciute, Orzekaukas and Jucevicius, (2004). Measures adapted from the works of Wobodo and Zeb-Obipi (2021).

Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between managerial transparency and corporate identity of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State?
- ii. What is the relationship between managerial transparency and corporate reputation of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State?

Statement of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between transparency and corporate identity of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between transparency and corporate reputation of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

This study was premised on the ethical climate theory

Ethical Climate Theory

The Ethical Climate Theory, developed by Victor and Cullen (1987), provides a framework for understanding how organizational environments influence ethical behavior. The theory suggests

that the ethical climate—shaped by leadership, values, policies, and culture—plays a central role in guiding employees' ethical decisions and actions. It identifies multiple climate types, such as caring, law and code, instrumental, independence, and rule, each shaping employees' perceptions of ethical dilemmas differently. Research has shown that positive ethical climates encourage integrity and accountability, while climates dominated by self-interest often lead to unethical behavior (Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005; Arnaud, 2010). Leadership is especially influential; ethical leaders who model transparency and fairness tend to foster climates that support ethical decision-making (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005).

Ethical Climate Theory also posits that ethical climates are not static; they can be actively managed and reshaped through deliberate organizational practices. This dynamic view allows institutions to create climates that promote ethical conduct, improve employee morale, and enhance performance (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005; Kaptein, 2011). In the context of faith-based organizations in Rivers State, a strong ethical climate rooted in values like transparency and justice enhances managerial ethical intelligence and reinforces a positive corporate image. By embedding ethical norms in leadership and organizational systems, these institutions can align their spiritual missions with effective ethical governance, thereby sustaining their credibility and societal influence.

Conceptual Review

Transparency

Transparency in managerial ethical intelligence is a vital principle that promotes openness, accountability, and ethical clarity in leadership, particularly in corporate governance, stakeholder relations, and organizational policies. It involves the accurate and timely disclosure of information to stakeholders, fostering trust and helping to prevent unethical practices and corruption (Rawwas et al., 2021; Ferrell et al., 2022). Scholars such as Brown and Treviño (2020) and Ferrell, Fraedrich, and Ferrell (2019) emphasize that transparency is not only a communication tool but also an ethical obligation, requiring managers to ensure that decision-making processes are clearly understood and aligned with moral and organizational standards. Donaldson and Dunfee (2021) assert that ethical transparency ensures that corporate leaders disclose potential conflicts of interest, avoid deceptive practices, and promote ethical accountability within organizations. Their study found that companies that practice transparency tend to have lower instances of ethical violations and greater compliance with regulatory standards.

Corporate Image

Corporate image refers to stakeholders' perception of an organization's identity and reputation, influenced by both tangible elements such as product quality and service delivery, and intangible aspects like leadership effectiveness, communication style, corporate values, and social responsibility initiatives (Jung & Lee, 2021; Barth, 2020; Bendixen, 2021). It is a critical

strategic asset that plays a vital role in shaping an organization's competitive advantage, customer loyalty, and market positioning (Fombrun, 1996). A strong and positive corporate image not only enhances public trust and stakeholder engagement but also impacts financial performance by influencing customer purchasing behavior, investor confidence, and overall brand equity (Keller, 2003). Furthermore, organizations with a reputable image tend to attract and retain top talent, as they are perceived as desirable and ethically responsible workplaces (Turban & Greening, 1997). Importantly, a well-established corporate image also serves as a buffer during times of reputational crisis, enabling quicker recovery and sustained stakeholder support (Ibironke et al., 2023).

Measures of Corporate Image

Corporate Identity

Corporate identity, often linked to brand identity, encompasses the core values, culture, communication, and visual representation of an organization that collectively shape how it is perceived by stakeholders (Ruiz-Palomino & Linuesa-Langreo, 2022; Keller, 2008). It forms the foundation of brand perception and consumer loyalty, requiring consistency across internal operations and external messaging to ensure coherence and credibility (Akhigbe & Akhigbe, 2021). A strong corporate identity fosters trust, differentiates the organization from competitors, and builds emotional connections with customers and stakeholders (Masimane et al., 2022). For faith-based organizations in particular, aligning ethical values with corporate identity is vital for sustaining credibility and member loyalty, enabling them to effectively communicate their mission and attract like-minded supporters (Gatimu & Minja, 2024; Ibironke et al., 2023). Additionally, a clearly articulated and consistent identity contributes to organizational resilience, helping the institution withstand external pressures and preserve its reputation over time (Nguyen, Tran & Le, 2021).

Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is widely regarded as an intangible asset that strengthens an organization's competitive advantage by shaping stakeholder perceptions, attracting and retaining talent, and fostering loyalty among customers and investors (Pless & Maak, 2023). It reflects the organization's ability to consistently meet or exceed stakeholder expectations, thereby contributing to its legitimacy, long-term survival, and market positioning (Kidwell & Valentine, 2021). Beyond mere public image, corporate reputation is crucial for building trust and credibility, serving as a protective buffer during crises and enhancing resilience in the face of economic or operational challenges (Gatimu & Minja, 2024). For registered faith-based organizations, a strong reputation reinforces alignment with ethical values and community expectations, strengthening support for their mission and increasing stakeholder engagement (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2022). Ultimately, corporate reputation signals reliability and integrity, making it a vital component of organizational success and sustainability in competitive environments (Masimane et al., 2022).

Empirical Review

Pirzada *et al.* (2023) investigated the effect of ethical leadership and ethical climate on corporate social responsibility and firm performance in the telecom sector. A closed-ended questionnaire was administered through an online survey to collect data from 415 telecom employees across the country. The proposed relationship was tested using partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approaches (i.e., PLS algorithm and bootstrapping). The findings of study results showed that there is a positive and significant effect of ethical leadership and ethical climate on firm performance and corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility also had a positive and significant influence on firm performance.

Khajavi *et al.* (2020) determined the relationship between ethical intelligence and professional behavior in nurses working in educational hospitals affiliated to Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences. In the descriptive correlational study 260 nurses working in educational hospitals of Mazandaran Medical Sciences University in 2018, were selected through stratified random sampling method. Data were collected using demographic questionnaire, modified Nursing Students Professional Behaviors Scale (NSPBS), and Lennick and Kiel's Ethical Intelligence Questionnaire (2005) In order to analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in SPSS V18. The mean scores for professional behavior and moral intelligence were 113.33 ± 13.66 and 151.56 ± 20.86 , respectively. Spearman correlation coefficient showed a significant positive correlation between moral intelligence and professional behavior ($r = 0.523$, $P = 0.001$). The study concluded that moral intelligence leads to better professional behavior in nurses. Therefore, it seems that professional behavior of nursing staff could be predicted according to their ethical intelligence.

Okafor (2019) explored the role of corporate ethics in shaping brand perception in Nigerian manufacturing firms. Using a sample of 180 respondents from three leading consumer goods companies, the study employed the SERVQUAL model and regression analysis to assess the impact of ethical decision-making on brand trust and loyalty. Results showed a strong correlation between ethical managerial practices and positive corporate branding. The major findings indicated that corporate image improves when companies emphasize ethical intelligence in decision-making processes. The study concluded that ethical managerial behavior serves as a crucial factor in enhancing brand perception and long-term customer loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study was the ten (10) registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State. As an organizational level study, the study was conducted as a census. Two principal staff were selected from each of the ten (10) registered faith-based organizations making a total of twenty principal staff which serves as the population elements. Structured questionnaire was the only source of data collection. Pearson

Product Moment Test Statistics was used to analyze the data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Bivariate Data Analysis

The secondary data analysis employed the use of bivariate inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation tool which was used at a 95% confidence level. Specifically, the tests covered hypotheses H_{01} to H_{02} which were bivariate at all, stated in the null manner. The probability criterion of 0.05 significance level was adopted for accepting the null hypotheses at ($P > 0.05$) or rejecting the hypotheses at ($P < 0.05$).

Transparency and Corporate Image Measures

Tables 1 and 2 show the result of correlation matrix between transparency and the respective measures of corporate image (corporate identity and corporate reputation) of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State. Also displayed in the table is the statistical test of significance (p – value), which makes us able to answer our research question and generalize our findings to the study population.

Table 1: Transparency and Corporate Identity Correlations

		Transparency	Corporate Identity
Transparency	Pearson Correlation	1	.751**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	18	18
Corporate Identity	Pearson Correlation	.751**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	18	18

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The analysis of Research Question 1 examined the relationship between transparency and corporate identity in registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed a strong positive relationship with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.751$, indicating that higher levels of transparency characterized by open communication, accountability, and inclusive decision-making significantly strengthen the organization's corporate identity, particularly in aligning shared values, beliefs, and ethical culture. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.564$) suggests that 56.4% of the variance in corporate identity is explained by transparency practices. Furthermore, the test of significance ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) confirmed that the relationship is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}). Therefore, the study concludes that transparency has a significant and positive impact on corporate identity in registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State.

Table 2: Transparency and Corporate Reputation

		Transparency	Corporate Reputation
Transparency	Pearson Correlation	1	.785**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	18	18
Corporate Reputation	Pearson Correlation	.785**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	18	18

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The analysis of Research Question 2 assessed the relationship between transparency and corporate reputation in registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State, Nigeria. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed a strong positive relationship with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.785$, suggesting that as transparency increases, so does the organization's corporate reputation particularly in terms of public trust, ethical perception, and stakeholder confidence. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.616$) indicates that 61.6% of the variance in corporate reputation is attributable to transparency. Additionally, the test of significance ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) confirmed that the relationship is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (HO2). Therefore, the study concludes that transparency significantly and positively influences corporate reputation in registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the relationship between transparency and corporate identity of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State. The findings confirm the positive impact of transparency reflected in open communication, accountability, and inclusive decision-making on shaping and reinforcing corporate identity. This aligns with previous studies such as Pirzada et al. (2023), who found that ethical leadership and climate significantly influence corporate responsibility and performance in the telecom sector, and Islam and Alharthi (2020), whose results indicated that ethical commitment and climate contribute directly to SME performance. Similarly, Khajavi et al. (2020) reported a significant correlation between moral intelligence and professional behavior among healthcare workers. Supporting this, Okafor (2019) linked ethical practices to enhanced corporate branding, and Ibrahim and Musa (2018) found that ethical leadership in Ghana's telecom sector improved corporate image. Lee and Kim (2018) demonstrated that ethical leadership positively affects both business and social performance, while Abidin et al. (2017) confirmed a positive relationship between ethical commitment and financial outcomes. Other supportive evidence includes.

Similarly, the analysis revealed a strong and significant relationship between transparency and corporate reputation of registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State. This demonstrates

that as transparency improves—through ethical communication, stakeholder engagement, and visible accountability—corporate reputation is significantly enhanced. These findings are in tandem with the results of Pirzada et al. (2023), who affirmed that ethical leadership drives firm performance and social responsibility, and Islam and Alharthi (2020), who found that ethical climate supports SME outcomes. Khajavi et al. (2020) also emphasized the link between moral intelligence and ethical conduct in healthcare. Likewise, Okafor (2019) and Ibrahim and Musa (2018) showed that ethical managerial behavior boosts brand reputation and corporate image. Studies by Lee and Kim (2018) and Abidin et al. (2017) revealed that ethical leadership and commitment have a measurable impact on social and financial outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that transparency significantly enhances both corporate identity and corporate reputation in registered faith-based organizations in Rivers State. Transparent practices such as ethical communication, openness in decision-making, and accountability contribute to stronger brand identity and improved public perception. These results highlight the vital role of managerial ethical intelligence in promoting organizational credibility, stakeholder trust, and sustainable performance. Based on the study's findings on the influence of transparency on corporate identity and corporate reputation, the following two recommendations are proposed:

1. Faith-based organizations should institutionalize transparent communication frameworks that ensure timely, accurate, and accessible information sharing with both internal and external stakeholders. This will strengthen organizational identity by reinforcing shared values, building trust, and enhancing alignment with the organization's mission.
2. Leadership within faith-based organizations should adopt ethical governance practices that promote accountability, fairness, and openness in decision-making processes. Such practices will enhance the organization's public image and credibility, leading to a stronger corporate reputation within the broader community.

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