

## Perceived Organizational Prestige: A Predictor of Organizational Identification in Public Universities in Anambra State

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**Abstract:** Employees who are very crucial for almost all organizations have some things that can trigger them to perform well, one of such thing is perceived organizational prestige (POP). Hence, this study sought to examine perceived external prestige as a measure of POP and how it affects organizational identity. The work adopted a survey research design. The area of the study is Anambra State and the population consisted of 11298 non-academic staff at public universities in Anambra State. A sample size of 371 was used and the instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Simple regression analysis was used in data analysis and the hypothesis was tested at a 5% level of significance. The findings showed a high degree of relationship between the variables and that 91% change in organizational identity is accounted for by changes in the PEP ( $R = .956$ ;  $R\text{-square} = .914$   $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). The study, therefore, concluded that POP plays a sterling role in determining the identification of the employees in the organization. Hence, it was recommended among others that in addition to treating the employees well, the organizations and their management should try its possible best to also mould a positive image in the mind of the public and the family members of the employees.

**Keywords:** Perceived Organizational Prestige, Organizational Identification, Perceived External Prestige, Public Universities and Anambra State.

### INTRODUCTION

Organizations exist to achieve certain predetermined purposes and to do this, employees are at the centre of it. This is possibly why a lot of scholars, managers and researchers seem to have come to the conclusion that employees are the most valuable asset any organization can boast of. This was succinctly captured by Dibua, Onyekwelu and Nwagbala (2021) who aver that the functionality of most organizations depends on the competency and commitment of the employees. Similarly, Arachie, Nzewi, Chiekezie and Nwakoby (2022) aver that human capital is the most important resource at the disposal of most organizations, irrespective of the forms or purposes of such firms. On their part, Ghanbari and Eskandari (2015) opine that the importance of employees at the heart of the survival of any organization cannot be downplayed. They further state that other resources may be very strategic in the accomplishment of goals in organizations, but the place of employees still stands tall above all of them.

Organizations need to attract different kinds of employees with different qualifications, skills, abilities and competencies, hence, recruitment processes are crucial to most organizations. Even more crucial is retaining the employees that are attracted into organizations, because employee turnover which is employee exiting from firms portends great danger to their survival, as it comes with different costs. These costs include the cost of recruitment, training and even lost time and dampened morale of the employees still staying with the firms. Many things influence the choice of employees to either stay in the firm or leave for another, one of such determining factor is perceived organizational prestige (POP).

Prestige as a word is etymologically a French word used as "prestige" in the original language. Its meaning in French is being respected, valuable and reliable and respectability (Özgür, 2015). Hence, POP in the organizational context is the sum of the impressions of parties both within and outside the

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organization, which are connected with the organization, as the result of their association with the organization (Yıldızı, 2018). It is the degree to which an organization is well regarded, and shows an organization's standing in relation to its peers (Liu, Lam, & Loi, 2014). Organizations that are seen as being valuable in the eyes of people or the employees working in them can be said to have good POP, while those organizations despised by others do not have good POP.

Perceived prestige or perceived image has been studied extensively in the past as captured by Muharrem, Issam, Murat, Aysen and Siddik (2016) who aver that much effort has long been devoted to the subject of organizational image and its effects in organizations and one of the most significant effects from studies is on organizational identity or identification and commitment (Smidts, Pruyn, Cees & Riel, 2001). POP affects stakeholders in many ways, and there is a positive correlation between a good corporate reputation and an organization's value (Roberts and Dowling, 2002; Williams, Schnake & Fredenberger, 2005).

University systems globally and in Anambra State specifically are service institutions where the bulk of manpower needed to run the economy of nations and organizations are trained, nurtured and groomed. The performances of the universities are greatly influenced by the performance of employees. Employees are usually drawn from different areas of the world and placed in different departments or units based on the similarity or goals of the different departments. Their level of identification with the organization is the level of interest the employees have in their departments and the organization as a whole. The extent to which the goals, vision and aspirations of the organization align with that of the employees is critical to the continued existence of the university, hence, this study tends to examine the role POP plays in building organizational identification of non-academic staff of public universities in Anambra State. But will specifically look at perceived external prestige and how it affects organizational identity.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Conceptual Review

#### Perceived Organizational Prestige

Perceived Organizational Prestige (POP) is the way people within and outside the organization see the organization. When they perceive that the organization is a good place to work, and will do anything to either get into the organization or stay in the organization, then, such an organization has a positive image or good perception. However, the reverse will be the case if people do not want to be associated with the firm and, if people working in the firm are always actively seeking to get out of the firm (quit).

Dibua *et al.*, (2021) state that POP is the way workers in a firm feel that it is being viewed by people, both within and outside the organization. That is the perception of the importance of a firm by its stakeholders. The image or perception of people, both the employees and other stakeholders could stem from the kind of pay the workers receive, the conduciveness of the work environment or the training and development they give to their employees. Presenting this clearly, Dibua *et al.*, (2021) opine that the level of admiration and respect accorded to a firm could be a result of the successes recorded by the organization, the way they treat its employees and the corporate social responsibility the organization has engaged or is engaging in.

The way people perceive an organization goes a long way in determining the behaviour of people towards the organization, especially the employees. Employees will identify with the organization if they perceive that the public sees their organization in good light and would, therefore, not want to exit from the firm. This was the position of Carmeli, Gilat and Weisberg (2006) who aver that organizational image as a concept affects peoples' behaviours within organizations, and as such is important for organizations to build a good image about themselves.

#### Perceived External Prestige

Perceived Organizational Prestige (POP) can be divided into two main categories, the first being how people within the firm see their firm, which is called perceived internal prestige, while the second is how outsiders see the firm, which is called perceived external prestige. The focus here is on the latter, which deals with external stakeholders' perceptions about how good an organization is and the image they have of it. Whetten and Mackey (2002) view it as the perception of an organization's uniqueness and individuality from the outside stakeholders.

The focus of this category of perception of prestige is on outsiders, which could be family members of the insiders, the suppliers of raw materials, creditors or even debtors. PEP is based on an individual's knowledge of the organization, their beliefs and the influence of the external world that individuals are exposed to (Muharrem *et al.*, 2016). The way the thought processes of an organization are perceived by individuals in the external world reflects the PEP of such a firm (Helm, 2013). It expresses the views and perceptions of the people outside the organization, contains the situation at the moment and evaluates the value and behaviours for the future (Carmeli, 2005a).

Fundamentally, while the reputation of the organization refers to external beliefs, PEP refers to the internal stakeholders' views of the organization built solely on the outsiders' beliefs or views (Muharrem *et al.*, 2016). It basically describes the employee's

perception of how the external entities view his organization (Marium & Mutahir, 2015). It reflects fame comprehension regarding a person's work organization by external entities (Muharrem *et al.*, 2016).

### Organizational Identification

Organizational identification is an organizational construct that has to do with how an employee sees himself or herself attached or glued to the firm. It is the level at which an employee feels attached and loyal to the organization. It is both a psychological and sociological concept as described by Yıldızı (2018) who posits that it is an individual's social cohesion with a group or other individuals and identifying herself/himself as a member of a group. It fosters a sense of meaning, belonging, and control at work (Ashforth, 2001). It is generally viewed by researchers and practitioners as a desirable association made by persons to their employing organizations (Marium & Mutahir, 2015). It is the link between the individual and the organization and tries to explain and understand the attitudes and behaviours of the individual in the organization and the underlying reasons for their attitudes and behaviours (Leblebici, 2016).

Organizational identification has the potential of predicting the behaviours of individuals in the organization and the performances of such individuals and firms as a whole. This was succinctly captured by Edwards (2005) who states that organizational identification is a variable potentially capable of explaining and predicting many important attitudes and behaviours in the workplace (Edwards, 2005). An employee who strongly identifies with an organization values the goals of such a firm and accepts them or performs her/his job willingly (Meydan and Polat, 2013). An employee identified with the organization with a real sense and can see herself/himself as a member who sustains the organization (Celep, 2014). The most fundamental effect of organizational identification is that the individuals will act in the interests of the organizations they are identified with. Organizations want to work with individuals identified with their firms to achieve their long-term goals (Yıldızı, 2018). As people become more identified with their organizations, their level of thinking and acting in line with the firm's perspective increases (Tüzün and Çağlar, 2008).

Organizational identification increases a person's sense of purpose in their job, solidifies their

organisational connection, aids in control activities, and maximises their potential (Yıldızı, 2018). Due to their perception that they are a part of the organisation, those who identify with it put forth more effort on its behalf (Ashforth and Mael, 2001). Because identification is thought to affect employee performance, organisations strive to increase employee identification (Tüzün and Alar, 2008). Cohesion within the group increases when members become increasingly satisfied that their needs will be met by belonging to the firm (Bursalıoğlu, 2002).

Numerous studies have revealed a relationship between perceived external image and organisational identification (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Smidts *et al.*, 2001; Carmeli & Freund, 2002; Carmeli, 2005). According to each study, "workers' attitudes toward their company and degree of identification with it are correlated with how positively they believe their organization's position and reputation are seen by the outside world" (Bartels, *et al.*, 2007). Members of the organisation will become more identified with their organisations if the group has a strong sense of its prestige and believes in it (Polat, 2009).

### METHODS

This work adopted a survey research design because the study collected data from a sampled respondent using a structured questionnaire. With these characteristics, a survey research design is the most fitting for the work. The area of the study is Anambra State, one of the five South Eastern States in Nigeria. The population of the study consist of 11298 non-academic staff of both Nnamdi Azikiwe University and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, all in Anambra State. The sample size of the study is 371, this was arrived at by the application of the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. The instrument for data collection is a Likert Scale structured questionnaire ranging from Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). It was put through validity and reliability tests. The validity test carried out was a face and content validity while the Cronbach Alpha reliability technique was deployed to test for internal consistency and it returned a coefficient of .874. A total of 371 copies of the questionnaire were distributed in proportion to the population of the two universities studied, in the end, 342 copies representing a 92% collection rate. A total of 340 copies were finally analyzed for the study, using simple regression analysis at a 5% level of significance.

**Data Presentation**

**Table 1: Perceived External Prestige and Organizational Identity Responses**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (5)	A (4)	UD (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
<b>Perceived External Prestige</b>							
1	My family members like the organization I am working in.	150	122	16	40	12	4.05
2	I get respected by the public because of my organization.	98	120	35	65	22	3.59
3	My community hold me in high esteem because of my workplace.	134	108	19	39	40	3.76
4	I am recognized in my church because of where I work.	59	78	49	89	65	2.93
<b>Organizational Identity</b>							
5	I am loyal to my organization because it is a respected place.	90	134	6	62	48	3.46
6	I give my all to my firm because of the respect I get from people by working here.	128	80	18	55	59	3.48
7	I am prepared to go the extra mile for my firm because of the love I am shown by the public.	-	134	5	93	108	2.49
8	I am attached to my firm as I get recognized because of it within the society.	56	149	10	102	23	3.33

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows the distribution of responses for perceived external prestige and organizational identity. The analysis here is based on the mean of the respective questionnaire items, with a threshold of acceptance of 3, meaning that any questionnaire item with a mean of 3 and above should be accepted while any that is below 3 should be rejected. From the Table, it is seen that all the questionnaire items are accepted except 4 and 7 which

are rejected because their respect means were less than 3.

**Test of Hypothesis**

H<sub>a1</sub>: Perceived External Prestige has a statistically significant relationship with Organizational Identity in Public Universities in Anambra State.

**Table 2: Model Summary for Regression Analysis**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.956 <sup>a</sup>	.914	.914	1.555

a. Predictors: (Constant), PEP

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Where:

PEP = Perceived External Prestige

Table 2 shows the model summary of the regression analysis done to test the hypothesis which states that perceived external Prestige has a statistically significant relationship with Organizational Identity in Public Universities in Anambra State. From the analysis, it shows that the correlation coefficient as

represented by R is .956 signifying a high degree of relationship between the variables. The coefficient of determination as represented by R-square is .914 meaning that a 91% change in the dependent variable (organizational identity) is accounted for by changes in the independent variable (PEP).

**Table 3: ANOVA<sup>a</sup> for Regression Analysis**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8717.133	1	8717.133	3603.685	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	817.605	338	2.419		
	Total	9534.738	339			

a. Dependent Variable: ORGIDEN

b. Predictors: (Constant), PEP

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Where:

ORGIDEN = Organizational Identity

Table 3 is the ANOVA as produced from the regression result for the test of the hypothesis. From the Table, it shows that at 1 degree of freedom, F is

3603.685 and the p-value as represented by Sig is .000 which is less than the 0.05 level of significance used for

the study. From this result, therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

## CONCLUSION

Getting employees to be part of the set-up of the organization is not enough to ensure the success of such an organization, the employees have to be ready to put in their best and perform optimally and stay in the organization without quitting at the slightest provocation. Optimum performance and employee staying in the organization is subject to the image of the organization, and the external prestige of the firm plays a key role. The study concludes on the strength of the findings therefore, that POP plays a sterling role in determining the identification of the employees to the organization.

## RECOMMENDATION

Following the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- a) In addition to treating the employees well, the organizations and its management should try its possible best to also mould a positive image in the mind of the public and the family members of the employees by always engaging them through meetings, interactions and end-of-the-year parties.
- b) That some fringe benefits employees get such as medical care, tuition reduction and paid vacation should also be extended to the members of the families of the employees, that this will go a long way in building a positive external prestige for the organizations, which will, in turn, make the employees identify more with the organizations.

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