

Perceived Organizational Support and Organizational Identification in Construction Firms in Port Harcourt

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between fair treatment and organizational identification in some selected construction firms in Port Harcourt. Two null hypotheses were drawn from the measures of organizational identification. A sample size of 186 was drawn using the Krejcie and Morgan 1970 table, while the population allocation was done using the Bowley's population allocation formula. Spearman's rank correction coefficient was used for analyzing the null hypotheses, while the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used as the statistical tool at 5% level of significance. All the null hypotheses were rejected; hence there is a significant relationship between fair treatment and organizational identification. It was therefore recommended that management of the construction firm should formulate and implement policies that will encourage fair treatment for all workers and ensure that benefits are distributed fairly so as to enhance employees' sense of belongingness and commitment, and employees' option should be heard and their well being should be considered by the firm in decision making.

Keywords: Fair treatment, Organizational identification, Cognitive identification, Affective identification

INTRODUCTION

Organizational identification (OID) is an evolving concept in organizational behavior and management studies. This can be seen in the number of scholarly work carried out on the concept in recent time (Carlin, End & Mullins, 2010; Jones & Volpe, 2010; Moksness, 2014). Organizational identification is said to take place when employee perceive oneness and belongingness with the organization. Therefore organizational identification is the extent to which employees perceive his/ her membership with that of the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The presence of organizational identification among employees develops a various positive employee and organizational outcome, which could be seen in low turnover intention, organizational citizenship behavior, employee satisfaction, employees' well being, and employee performance (Ashforth, et al., 2008; Riketta, 2005). Employee who identifies with the organization, develop a strong psychological relationship with the organization and this usually leads to career satisfaction (Gok, et al., 2015).

Some researchers argue that a strong organizational identification can be a great competitive advantage (Podnar, 2011), as strong identification results in increased level of career satisfaction, more extra-role behavior, with an attendant reduction in employees intention to leave and absenteeism. That is to say, employees are willing to go extra miles for the organization because of the strong organizational identification (Bartels, 2006). Employee' belief about an organization become more positive, when their identification increases, which makes the individual become psychologically connected to the organization, thereby making the future of the organization to determine the future of the employees (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Van Dick *et al.*, 2004).

Social identification helps employees to recognize and relate with their organization which leads to lower level of apprehension and an increase level self confidence about their personality (Jobnson, Morgeson, & Hekman, 2012).

Recent research in organizational identification has been rooted in social identity theory whereby individual are categorize into different social groups such as membership of organizations, the gender of the individual and his/her origin , also the age bracket and membership of religious, social affiliations (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Hogg, Treay & White, 1995; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Jones & Volpe, 2011). Hence employees thinking and actions is geared towards the benefit of the organization which makes up their social identity due to the fact that the norms and values of the organization which they belong have been included into their personal ideas (Van-Dick, *et al.*, 2004).

Fair treatment is one of the important construct in social sciences and a key focus in philosophical debate (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). Fair treatment is important to employees, as it provide information concerning their relationship with the organization and this in turn influence their identify and sense of self-worth (Koivisto, 2013).

Various works have been done on organizational identification by different scholars, Bartels (2006), studied the organizational identification and communication among the Dutch police officers. The effect of Organizational identification on job satisfaction: moderating role of organization politics in Istanbul, turkey was studied by (Basar & Basim, 2015).organizational identification and turnover intention of employees in the Turkish construction industry (Giritli, & Demircioglu, 2015). but none has been done on fair treatment and organizational identification in Nigeria construction companies. Therefore, the study seeks to identify, if there is

any relationship that exists between fair treatment and organizational identification among employees of the construction firms in Rivers state.

Statement of the problem

Organizational identification is beneficial to construction firms and employees of the construction firm and as such organizational non identification has a negative effect. Some problems were identified to be related to organizational identification, despite the fact employee is a source of competitive advantage to the organization, a dis-identified employee tends to revolt and oppose organizational objectives and goals and employees probably distrust each other (Dukerich, Kramer & Parks, 1998; Podnar, 2011). Scholars identified that in the absence of organizational identification, work commitment will not be possible because it will be unhelpful to work related behavior (Shahnawaz, 2012). This is in line with the work of Ameh and Odusami (2002) they identified low wages, insufficient material and unfriendly work environment as having a large impact on the productivity of workers in executing a project in Nigeria and this can be characterized by the increase in workplace accidents (Riketta, 2005). Another problem that is linked with organizational non identification is that favourable work experience by employees is not achieved because the employees are not attracted to the organization or encouraged to attain and preserve optimistic thought of one's self (Stinglhamber et al. 2015b), hence has lead to employees working just for survival seek rather than for self dignity (Bamidele, 2010).

Finally individual identified costs of turnover intension are much lower in employees with low organizational identification, as they quickly sees disengagement as a reciprocation to low level of fair treatment which is an antecedent of perceived organizational support (Tavares, et al., 2015). Despite the efforts put in place by the management in form of increase wages, promotion, proper distribution of materials, staff involvement in decision making etc, there has not been an increase in organizational identification. However it could be that the employees are not happy with the way fair treatment is administered in the organization. Hence, the study focuses on identifying if fair treatment has a relationship with organizational identification among employees of construction firms in Rivers State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Fair treatment

Fair treatment is derived from equity theory and social exchange theory. Equity theory refers to the general belief of individuals with regards to the outcome of exchange process are fair from the perspective of those involved (Devlin, Kumar, & Sekhon, 2014). While social exchange theory involves the optional and intentional actions between individuals with the expectation of a reward for the action (Blau, 1964).

Fair treatment is a dimension of perceived organizational support. It is described as a relational subcomponent of procedural justice (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Justice is often interchanged with the use of fairness by social scientists, hence it is an important standard on which the legal and political institutions are considered and also function (Hassan, 2010). Fairness or justice as it is also known has been a philosophical interest since the time of plato and Socrates (Ryan, 1993). Organizational fairness is made up of three types: (i) procedural fairness which entails the processes by which organizational outcomes are determined, (ii) interactional/ interpersonal fairness, which is concerned with the interpersonal treatment between the employee and organization especially from managers, (iii) distributive fairness which relates to how resources are distributed among employees. The term "organizational justice" was first used by Greenberg (1987) - which referred to people's ideas of fairness in organizations (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005). Similarly Colquitt (2001) identified four dimensions of organizational fairness which include: procedural fairness, distributive fairness, interpersonal/ interactional fairness and informational fairness. Organizational fairness is defined by Byrne and Cropanzano (2001) as the study of fairness at work. Organizational fairness is determined when practice and implementation of fairness such as award and penalties, rules and regulations, working process, communication, coordination and interaction are considered and applied in the organization (Greengerg, 1990; Hasan & Hussain, 2015). Theories have show that fair treatment provides employees key feedback concerning their social status and standing in their organization, hence increasing their organizational identification which also motivates them to be more involved in their job which leads to career satisfaction and retention (Hassan, 2010).

Similarly, fairness is an indication to the employee that the organization is a desirable group to invest psychologically. This argument is supported by the evidence that there is a positive effect on organizational identification by procedural fairness (Walumbwa, Cropanzano & Hartnell, 2009; Tyler & Blader, 2000; Smith, *et al.*, 2012).

Organizational identification

Organizational identification was seen as another aspect of organizational commitment over the years (Gautam *et al.*, 2004). According to Boros (2008), organizational commitment is the "attitude or an orientation that links

the identity of the employee to the organization whereby the goals of the organization and the employee become similar". Commitment is defined by O'reilly & Chatman (1986), as an emotional relationship between an organization and its employees. They further differentiated this relationship into three forms: compliance, identification and internalization. That is to say that organizational identification is an aspect of organizational commitment, in other words organizational identification helps employer determine how committed their employees are to the organization. However, O'Reilly & Chatman (1986) also defined identification as a process in which an individual accepts the influence from an organization in order to ascertain and sustain a bond. If a favorable environment is provided by the organization for the employee to voice their concern, the employee will be incline to identify with the firm and strive for the organization to succeed (Brown, 1969; Basar & Basin, 2015).

Identification is the understanding of an employee with his/her organization or having a sense affiliation with the organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Lee (1971) stated that organizational identification is "the extent of the employee's broad personal identification with the organization". It is also defined as "a process by which the organizational and employee goals become increasingly incorporated" (Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, 1970). Similarly, Edwards and Peccei (2007) see it as "a psychological linkage between the individual and the organization whereby the individual feels a deep, self defining affective and cognitive bond with the organization as a social entity". Therefore, organizational identification can be described as a worker's expression of belongingness with the organization.

Some research identified there are different hubs of organizational identification which can be related to different group membership and organization as social entity (Podnar, 2011). Two level of identification have been recognized which are the group level and the organization level. Organizational identification can be said to be a particular form of social identification in which individual classify themselves based on the condition of belongingness to a given group (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Studies have shown that organizational identification is based on the concept of social identity theory. The theory expresses that employees segment themselves into different social group, and place other in opposing social group based on their gender, religious belief, sex grade, nationality (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Jones & Volpe, 2011).

Social identity theory joined the cognitive elements of organizational identification such as emotional connection, sense of pride, and other positive emotions that are derived from organizational membership which have been incorporated in the conceptualization of organizational identification (Shahnawaz, 2012). Hence, since the dyadic and network properties of social relationship are measured by few scholars and how employees' organizational identification is influenced, the function of social relations remain a significant component in organizational identification (Jones & Volpe, 2011). Several studies have shown workers display the right attitude and character to their organization when they have strong feeling to being part of the organization (Bartels, 2006). The level of worker feeling of belongingness differs, this different outcome may be caused by the duration spent in the firm or the strength of relationship developed over a long period of time. Hence, the duration spent and the level of relationship created with the organization may enhance the level of identification (Basar & Basin, 2015).

Based on researches, organizational identification can be seen in two aspects: "self-categorization theory (largely the basis of the cognitive aspect of identification) and the social identity theory (largely the basis of the emotional/ affective aspect of identification)".

Researchers identified some factors that affect the level of employees' organizational identification, these factors include: perceived external prestige, organizational support, employee and organization contract level, supposed distinguishing ability of the organization, the uniqueness of the organizational values and practices compared to other group, organizational justices (Hall *et al.*, 1970; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Tyler & Blader, 2000). That is to say when an employee notices that these factors are not available it reduces the employees' level of organizational identification, leading to negative outcome. Some researchers proposed that an over identified employee may loss a sense of individual identity thereby being consumed b the work and is less likely to find fault or willing to point out the fault of the organization (Elsbach, 1999; Michel & Jehn, 2003). This could create a situation where the organizational identify overlap their individual identity. Hence, organizational identification is the key model in understanding various work behaviors (Van *et al.*, 2005; Cole & Bruch, 2006; Karanika *et al.*, 2015).

In the work of Wiesenfeld *et al.*, (2001), it was reported that organizational identification has a positive correlation with the affiliation need. A positive relationship exists between identification and commitment (Stinglhamber *et al.*, 2015a).

Several measures of organizational identification are identified in literature, but two of the measures suggested by Johnson, *et al.*, (2012) were adopted for this study. They are discussed below:

Cognitive Identification

Cognitive identification can be defined as the positive thoughts and feeling which individual employees have as

members of the organization. Cognitive identification which is also known as self-categorization may be the yardstick for an employee to feel any type of emotions associated to their identification (Johnson *et al.*, 2012). According to Johnson *et al.*, (2012) cognitive identification is related to uncertainty reduction, which is associated with how an individual think and define oneself in the social environment.

Affective Identification

Affective identification can be described as the kind of feeling individual have pertaining to themselves in comparison to others (Ashmore, Deaux & Mclaughlin-Volpe, 2004). In the same way Johnson *et al.*, (2012) defined affective identification as showing individuals' positive feeling of oneness with the group. They argued that affective identification that is usually expressed is positive which can be experienced in pride, excitement, joy and love of the individual and that individual may express a feeling by saying "I am 'A' and it's important to me" usually feel positive concerning the relationship and usually derived sense of fulfillment even when segregated in the group (Camerin, 2004; Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008) cited in (Johnson *et al.*, 2012). That is to say that the individual doesn't find any fault with the group for the fact he or she is happy and love the group.

Although much empirical studies on affective identification has not been done (Johnson *et al.*, 2012). Ashforth and Mael (1989) submit that their perception of organizational identification has failed to attract sustained attention from scholars because the affective and evaluation aspect has been over looked. Hence the following hypotheses are derived.

- Ho₁: There is no relationship between fair treatment and cognitive identification of employee in Rivers state construction firms.
- Ho₂: There is no relationship between fair treatment and affective identification of employee in rivers state construction firms.

Relationship between fair treatment and organizational identification

Employees organizational identification is evaluated, by the employees expectation that the work efforts is proportional to the organizational rewards, which indicates there is equity in the allocation of work related reward which is in turn an important enhancer towards employees motivation (Adams,1965; Homans, 1961; Greenberg, 1982; Latham and Pinder, 2005). This is argued in the work of Hasan and Hussain (2015) which concluded there fair treatment has significant influence on organizational identification of employees, similarly, Hassan (2010), argued that procedural justice has an effect on professional employees' turnover intention which was partially mediated by organizational identification, while organizational identification partially mediated the effect of distributive justice on professional employees' job involvement.

METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional design, which is an aspect of the quasi-experimental research design, was adopted for this study. The sample size of 186 was drawn from a population of 356 from five selected construction firms in Port Harcourt, using the Krejcie and Morgan 1970 table. Thus, 186 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the employees of the five selected construction firms. A total of 151 copies of questionnaire were retrieved and valid while 33 copies of questionnaire were not returned. This gave a responses rate of 81.1%, which is acceptable.

Operational measures of variables

Fair treatment was measured by three (3) statement items adopted from the work of (Choi, 2008; Masterson, 2001; Rodell, 2009) e.g "My supervisor always gives me a fair deal". Cognitive identification was measures by (5) observable indicators adopted from the works of (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Van knippenberg *et al.*, 2002) e.g "The organization successes are my successes". Affective identification was measured by three (3) items adopted from the work of (Smidts, *et al.*, 2001) e.g "I feel proud to work for this organization". All variables were places on a five-point Likert-scale which was adopted from Reins Likert (1932), and the mode of response ranges from strongly agreed (5) to strongly dis-agreed (1).

Reliability and Validity of the instrument

The scale for this study recorded a Cronbach alpha value of .913 for fair treatment, .942 for cognitive identification and .892 for affective identification. This is in line with conditions suggested by Nunnally (1978). The instrument passed the face and content validity as it was adopted from the scholarly literature on fair treatment and organizational identification. Moreover the instrument was subjected to the scrutiny and approval of scholars in the field.

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The hypotheses were tested using the spearman's ranked correlation coefficient via statistical package for social

science (SPSS) version 20.

Using the spearman's ranked correlation coefficient; the research result shows the relationship between fair treatment and organizational identification

Table 1: Correlations between Fair Treatment and Cognitive Identification

		FAIR TREATMENT	COGNITIVE IDENTIFICATION
Spearman's rho	FAIR TREATMENT	1.000	.699**
	Correlation Coefficient		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	151	151
	COGNITIVE IDENTIFICATION	.699**	1.000
	Correlation Coefficient		.000
Sig. (2-tailed)			
N	151	151	

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

The table above indicates a large positive significant relationship between fair treatment and cognitive identification, rho = .699, n= 151, p-value =0.000. Thus, the stated hypothesis was rejected and its alternative accepted.

Table 2: Correlations Fair Treatment and Affective Identification

		FAIR TREATMENT	AFFECTIVE IDENTIFICATION
Spearman's rho	FAIR TREATMENT	1.000	.409**
	Correlation Coefficient		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	151	151
	AFFECTIVE IDENTIFICATION	.409**	1.000
	Correlation Coefficient		.000
Sig. (2-tailed)			
N	151	151	

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

The table shows a moderate significant relationship between the two variables (rho = 0.409, n= 151, p < 0.0000). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, while its alternative was accepted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results, it's was found that:

- I. When employees are fairly treated in the organization, they tend to have more of positive feeling and thought towards the organization.
- II. Higher levels of fair treatment may trigger greater levels of affective identification, whereby employees have positive feelings of oneness with the organization.

These findings are in consonance with the works of various scholars. Zagenczyk, et al., (2011) conducted a study on "Psychological contracts and organizational identification: The mediating effect of perceived organizational support" among university faculty members in the united states and found that employee perceptions of treatment and value impacts on their feeling of belongingness and attachment to the organization. This view is also shared by Edwards and peccei (2010) in noting that workers tend to identify with group and organizations that recognize them and respect their feeling and opinions as well.

Conclusion and recommendations of the study

Based on the result of the study, it can be concluded that fair treatment contributes significantly to cognitive identification. This is as the result obtained from the analysis of the study provides evidence of a significant level of association between employee perceptions and feeling of fair treatment from their organization.

Fair treatment significantly enhances affective identification. The result of the analysis indicates that workers perceptions of fair treatment and support from the organization significantly enhance the extent to which they identify and affectively associate themselves with the organization.

The following recommendations are made:

- i. Management of the construction firms should formulate and implement policies that will ensure that promotion, benefits and work allocation are fair for all workers so as to enhance their commitment and cognitive identification with their firm.

- ii. Employees' option should be heard and their well being should be considered by the firm in decision making so as to increase their affective identification.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that Fair treatment contributes significantly to cognitive identification. This is as the result obtained from the analysis of the study which provides evidence of a significant level of association between employee perceptions and feelings of fair treatment from their organizations.

Fair treatment significantly enhances affective identification. The result of the analysis indicates that workers perceptions of fair treatment and support from the organization significantly enhance the extent to which they identify and affectively associate themselves with the organization.

Limitation and further research

This study had some limiting factors. The study focused on fair treatment and organizational identification of construction firm in Rivers state alone, but did not cover other states and industries. This limits the generalizability of the research findings. The dimensions of fair treatment were not studied with the measures of organizational identification. Obtaining data from employees had its own limitation as most employees were busy and access to the firm was not so easy due to some firms' restricted access. Therefore, further research needs to be done using the dimensions of fair treatment and measures of organizational identification. Studies into other industries can as well be carried out.

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