

# The Relationship between University Students' Academic Achievement and Perceived Organizational Image\*

Soner POLAT<sup>a</sup>

Kocaeli University

## Abstract

The purpose of present study was to determine the relationship between university students' academic achievement and perceived organizational image. The sample of the study was the senior students at the faculties and vocational schools in Umuttepe Campus at Kocaeli University. Because the development of organizational image is a long process, the sample was selected using representative sampling method and half (n=2017) of the senior students (N=4071 students) were included in the sample. The data for this descriptive research were collected using an instrument adapted from the scale of Kazoleas, Kim and Moffitt (2001). The findings of the study showed that perceived organizational image predicts university students' academic achievement. Among the sub-dimensions of organizational image, the perceptions of quality image, sports image, general outlook and physical infrastructure image, social environment image and entertainment image were positively related with academic achievement whereas the perception of accommodation-food image had no influence on students' academic achievement.

## Key Words

Organizational Image, Higher Education, Image Management, Academic Achievement.

Public systems have certain impressions on people as a result of interactions. These impressions are called images that play an important role in the process of carrying out missions (Ertekin, 1978). Image is the thoughts of people regarding an object, a person, or an organization (Oktay, 2000) or it is either a positive or negative thought formed in people's mind after a long period of time and interaction with the elements of a system (Dichter, 1985). Moffitt (1994) describes image as a concept that develops through personal, environmental, cultural, and organizational factors throughout history. Organizational image is the overall evaluation of people's views regarding an organization or system (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001), a brief picture

of this organization (Wilson, 2001). Dutton and Dukerich (1991) define organizational image as the way organizational members or others perceive the organization itself.

With all these definitions in mind, we can define organizational image as "the vision, picture, or impression that is formed in individuals' mind, based on the data and information they gather through their interactions with the elements of an organization."

It has been observed that the organizations which are capable of attracting the talented to the organization, developing and keeping them have positive images. Additionally, variables such as social and environmental responsibility, financial credibility, innovativeness, marketing, communication, management, product and service quality are effective in image formation (Lemmink, Schuijff, & Streuikens, 2003).

An organization's image is affected by this organization's accoutrements, attitudes and communication style. An organization's future image is shaped

\* This research was conducted with the contribution of Kocaeli University, Scientific Research Projects Unit.

**a** *Correspondence:* Assist. Prof. Soner POLAT, Kocaeli University, Education Faculty, Department of Elementary Education, 41300 İzmit-Kocaeli/Turkey. E-mail: spolat@kocaeli.edu.tr. Phone: +90 262 3032448 Fax: +90 262 3032403

by the communication between management, employees and external audiences (Amon, 2004; Schuler, 2004).

Other factors that determine the image of educational institutions are name awareness, academic properties, sports and social facilities, physical environment (Arpan, Arthur & Zivnуска, 2003), personal and organizational environment, demographic features, environmental features, admission criteria, sports facilities, campus size, academic programs, library facilities (Kazoleas, Kim & Moffit, 2001), academic staff and relations with students, and stories about the school (Paden & Stell, 2006).

In their study, Arpan, Arthur and Zivnуска (2003) researched the criteria used in image assessment and how perceived image differs between different groups and found that factors such as name awareness, academic properties, sports and social facilities, and physical environment are important for students when forming an image.

While there are numerous international studies on organizational image including universities (Arpan, Roney & Zivnуска, 2003; Chandler et al., 2007; Ivy, 2001; Kazoleas, Kim & Moffitt, 2001; Melewar & Akel, 2005; Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001; Paden & Stell, 2006; Palacio, Meneses & Perez, 2002; Parameswaran & Glowacka, 1995; Theus, 1993), related research is inadequate in Turkey (Aksoy & Bayramoğlu, 2008; Canoğlu, 2008; Cerit, 2006; Çakmak, 2008; Demir, 2003; Doğan, 2006; Esener, 2006; Gürüz, 2004; Örer, 2006; Saracel et al., 2001; Yıldırım, 2007). There is no study investigating the relationship between organizational image and academic achievement. Our study aims to fill this gap.

Organizational image affects many organizational outputs either directly or indirectly (Vigoda-Gadot & Ben-Zion, 2004; Vigoda-Gadot, Vinarski, & Ben-Zion, 2004). Perceived organizational image yields several outcomes. A positive organizational image affects the quality, reputation, prestige, uniformity, attractiveness and originality of an organization positively. Moreover, perceived organizational image affects some variables related to employees. For instance, organizational image influences employees' performance, motivation, identification with their job, cooperation, job satisfaction and commitment as well as retention and attrition (Polat, 2009).

O'Neill and Gaither (2007) found that the employees with a more positive image are likely to identify

themselves with the organization more and there is a positive and significant relationship between organizational identification and cooperative behavior. Besides, the employees with a higher perceived image are less likely to have turnover intentions (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002).

The importance of image perception comes from its power to influence both the performance of organization employees and behaviors and attitudes of external stakeholders. The research on image states that the first impression that organizations make on consumers is highly effective in creating the image perception and it is decisive in intentions to apply (Collins & Stevens, 2001).

Organizations strive for creating a positive image among its target audience (Gray & Balmer, 1998). Organizations may have an illusion that they have a positive image, however, organizations need to evaluate their image frequently. Corporate image is essential for an organization's permanence (Peltekoğlu, 2004). A good image is distinctive, therefore cannot be imitated easily (cited in Taşkın & Sönmez, 2005).

Organizational image is seen as the key point of success (Dutton & Dukerich, 1994). Successful people in work life share the common feature of having positive images (Demir, 2003). For workers, to be successful and productive seems possible with creating positive images (Demir, 2003; Gürüz, 2004). In today's stiff competitive environment, organizations strive to have a difference over other organizations and gain more attention. Therefore, positive organizational image is seen as one of the terms of being reliable and successful in social environment (Çakmak, 2008; Demir, 2003; Gürüz, 2004). Positive organizational image is one of the important variables that have a direct effect on the success of the organization as it enables the success of employees (Doğan, 2006; Esener, 2006; Peltekoğlu, 2004; Yıldırım, 2007). Besides, the organizations with positive images are more successful in achieving their goals for they are trusted by society and raise their reputation (Aksoy & Bayramoğlu, 2008; Canoğlu, 2008; Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Yıldırım, 2007).

Organizational image is not only responsible for achieving success, but also for maintaining it (Örer, 2006; Yıldırım, 2007). Therefore, there is a direct relationship between a university's image and the satisfaction students get from the university. The image of a university with good infrastructure, physical resources, and social service units which contribute socialization and qualified academic

staff, directly affects the success and performance of students (Örer, 2006).

Organizational image is an important resource in this competitive context and positive organizational image help attract customers to the organization (Flavian, Guinaliu, & Torres, 2005). In this competitive context, universities seek to increase their image both to increase their share from the economic market and to attract the qualified faculty and students to their universities (Melewar & Aker, 2005; Porter & Claycomb, 1997).

### Purpose

This research aimed to determine the effect of perceived organizational image on university students' academic achievement. The research also aimed to find the sub-dimensions of organizational image that affect students' academic achievement.

### Method

Descriptive relational research method was used in this study since the momentary perception of organizational image is measured. The target population of this research is the senior students at 8 faculties and 2 vocational schools of Kocaeli University, Umuttepe Campus which has around 27000 students. The development of organizational image is a long process; therefore, the sample of the research was selected using representative sampling method by selecting %50 of the senior class students at faculties and vocational schools randomly. The sample contains 2057 students, which is roughly half of the senior students at Kocaeli University.

The data for students' perceived organizational image were measured by an instrument developed by Kazoleas et al. (2001) which was translated and adapted into Turkish by the researcher. After the factor analysis, factor loadings were accumulated around seven dimensions. These factors were named as I. quality image, II. program image, III. sports image, IV. general outlook and physical infrastructure image, V. social environment image, VI. entertainment image and VII. accommodation-food image. The alpha reliability coefficient of organizational image scale was .91.

To examine the relation between organizational image and academic achievement, correlation analysis was used. When the correlation coefficients are assessed, if the correlation coefficient is between 0.70 and 1.00, it has been interpreted as "high", between 0.69 and 0.30 it has been interpreted as "medium", and if it is 0.29 and

below it has been interpreted as related to "low" level (Büyükköztürk, 2005) and when it gets closer to 0.00, it has been interpreted as irrelevant. To control the effect of the organizational image on the academic achievement regression analysis was used.

### Findings

Correlation coefficients regarding the relationship between organizational image and academic achievement showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between students' perceived organizational image and academic achievement ( $r=0.42, p<.01$ ).

In terms of sub-dimensions, there was a moderate positive relationship between academic achievement and quality image sub-dimension ( $r=0.37, p<.01$ ) and also general outlook and physical infrastructure ( $r=0.31, p<.01$ ). There was a low positive relationship between academic achievement and social environment ( $r=0.29, p<.01$ ), sports image ( $r=0.26, p<.01$ ) entertainment image ( $r=0.24, p<.01$ ) and accommodation-food image ( $r=0.21, p<.01$ ) sub-dimensions. Students' academic achievement was mostly affected by quality image and physical conditions and infrastructure image.

The results of the regression analysis regarding how much perceived organizational image predict students' academic achievement is given in table 5. Perceived organizational image affected students' academic achievement significantly ( $R=0,418, R^2=0,174, p<.00$ ) and explained 17% of the variance of academic achievement.

All sub-dimensions of perceived organizational image had significant effects of students' academic achievement ( $R=0,422, R^2=0,178, p<.01$ ). In total, sub-dimensions of perceived organizational image explained 18% of students' academic achievement. When the t values of regression coefficients were examined, quality image, sports image, general outlook and physical infrastructure, social environment and entertainment sub-dimensions were shown to explain students' academic achievement, whereas accommodation-food sub-structure did not influence academic achievement significantly. When  $\beta$  coefficients were examined, students' academic achievement was mostly explained by quality image ( $\beta=0,19$ ), followed by general outlook and physical infrastructure, ( $\beta=0,12$ ), social environment image ( $\beta=0,10$ ), entertainment image ( $\beta=0,09$ ), and sports image ( $\beta=0,08$ ) respectively.

### Results and Discussion

This study has revealed a significant moderate positive relationship between university students' perceived organizational image and their academic achievement. The more students perceive the organizational image of their university the higher their academic achievement was.

While a moderate positive relationship was found between students' academic achievement and quality image and general outlook and physical infrastructure, a low positive relationship was found between academic achievement and social environment image, sports image, entertainment image and accommodation-food image.

The sub-dimensions of organizational image; quality image, sports image, general outlook and physical infrastructure image, social environment image and entertainment image influenced students' academic success significantly, whereas accommodation -food image did not influence academic achievement. This may indicate that accommodation-food image affects students' academic achievement indirectly.

Quality image sub-dimension had the largest share in explaining students' academic achievement followed by general outlook and physical infrastructure image, social environment image entertainment image and sports image, respectively.

In conclusion, perceived organizational image is a factor that significantly affects students' academic achievement. Students' academic achievement increases as their perceived organizational image increases. The findings of this research confirmed the theoretical information provided in the introduction part of the study.

Findings of the present study verify that to provide academic success, students' perceptions regarding the image of their university have to be increased. Thereby, it is necessary to answer the questions of "how perceived organizational image is formed?" and "what are the ways of increasing the perception of organizational image?"

Organizational image management is a process based on the formation and the maintenance of the desired vision in the minds of administrators (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Every organization has a perceived and a desired image. The desired image is what the administrators and managers wish to achieve ideally. As for the perceived image, it is the perceptions of individuals regarding an organization (Roberts, 2005).

Organizational image management process has three stages. In the first stage, there is need to know about the perceptions of the administrators regarding the organization. Secondly, a desired image should be determined, which requires affective communication among administrators. In order to build a successful image, administrators should be able to determine a communication strategy, openly negotiate and give feedback continuously on issues regarding the image. The third stage of the process is about maintenance and restoration. Generally, this third stage is not taken seriously enough by the administrators. However, it is important for the maintenance and sustainability of the desired image. Unless this step is taken seriously, all the efforts could be wasted (Massey, 2003). Therefore, university administrators have three important steps to take. First, the current state of image of the university should be determined. Second, the question of "What kind of university I desire?" should be answered and the desired image should be determined accordingly. Third, various actions should be taken to transfer from the current state of image to the desired state and the circumstances should be observed continually.

For an effective management, it is important for university administrators to learn about the experiences and outcomes of organizational image. The existence of a supportive environment, good communication among university staff, students and the administration, high perceptions of organizational identity and personality result in an increase in the perception of organizational image. When the perceived image of the universities is high the participation of the staff in the decision making process and social facilities is also expected to be high.

Campus facilities, architecture, name, brand, logo, emblem, and physical infrastructure such as sports facilities and library are identified as the physical inputs that form the image perception. Universities can improve themselves in these areas and in return their images. Furthermore, universities can improve their image by hiring qualified academic staff and improving the quality of academic programs and services. Another factor that contributes to the positive image of universities is the social and environmental projects. University administration can improve the university's image by encouraging public relations and advertising such projects.

Organizational image has several important outcomes. A positive image affects an organization's quality, reputation, trust, prestige, stability, at-

tractiveness, and originality in a positive way. Furthermore, positive organizational image affects an employee's performance, motivation, identification with the organization, and cooperation, while it reduces attrition rates.

### Conclusion

The results of this study emphasize the importance of organizational image for university students. Moreover, it gives cues about developing and maintaining an organizational image to university administration as well as the researchers interested in image studies.

Organizational image is the accumulation of perceptions of insiders and outsiders regarding that organization. A good organizational image is vital for any organization. The formation of organizational image requires a long time and the maintenance of the desired image is very crucial for the organizations. Therefore, organizations should manage their images effectively. Individuals' needs should be satisfied in order to build a positive perception and achieve organizational objectives.

The following can be proposed to improve a university's image:

- The physical infrastructure of the university can be improved.
- The ways to improve the quality of service should be found.
- Physical image elements (logo, emblem, uniforms) should be used affectively.
- Public activities can be advertised.
- Sponsorship can be encouraged.
- Relationships between university and media can be improved.
- Participation in social projects should be encouraged.
- Library, sports facilities and social resources should be improved.
- The quality of academic staff can be improved.
- The reputation of the academic programs can be restored.
- Qualified and famous academicians can be employed to attract students.
- Necessary changes should be made in terms of infrastructure and academic staff to keep up with developments and changes.

Finally, the organizational image should be observed and evaluated continually and the positive image dimensions should be maintained and poor dimensions should be improved.

### References/Kaynakça

- Aksoy, R. ve Bayramoğlu, V. (2008). Sağlık işletmeleri için kurumsal imajın temel belirleyicileri: Tüketici değerlemeleri. *Zonguldak Karaelmas Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 4 (7), 85-96.
- Amon, F. S. (2004). *Organizational change communication, identity, image, and culture: The case of care international*. (A thesis presented to the graduate school of the university of florida in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master of arts in mass communication) University Of Florida.
- Arpan, L. M., Raney, A. A., & Zivnuska, S. (2003). A cognitive approach to understanding university image. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 8 (2), 97-113.
- Büyükoztürk, S. (2005). *Sosyal bilimler için veri analizi el kitabı*. Ankara: Pegem Yayıncılık.
- Canoğlu, M. (2008). *Otel müşterilerinin imaj ve hizmet kalitesi algıları ile tekrar satın alma davranışları arasındaki ilişkinin belirlenmesi*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Adana.
- Cerit, Y. (2006). Eğitim fakültesi öğrencilerinin üniversitenin örgütsel imaj düzeyine ilişkin algıları. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Yönetimi Dergisi*, 12 (47), 343-365.
- Chandler, A., Jakstadt, L., Loughman, L., Smith, K., Turner, R., & Wrye, H. (2007). *Party foul: An analysis of factors contributing to a university's party school image*. Retrieved December 01, 2008, from <http://www.grady.uga.edu/reports/party-school2007.pdf>.
- Collins C. J., & Stevens C. K., (2001). Initial organizational images and recruitment: A within-subjects investigation of the factors affecting job choices. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 6 (4), 205-216.
- Çakmak, H. (2008). *Kurumsal imajın çalışanların örgütsel bağlılıkları üzerindeki etkisine yönelik bir araştırma*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Kütahya.
- Demir, K. (2003). *İmaj yönetimi (Çalışma yaşamında izlenimlerin yönetimi)*. Ankara: Sandal Yayınları.
- Dichter, E. (1985). What's an image. *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 2, 75-81.
- Doğan, T. (2006). *Yeni reklam araçları ve kurum imajı oluşturma sürecine katkıları*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Konya.
- Dukerich, J. M., Golden, B. R., & Shortell, S. M. (2002). Beauty is in the eye of the beholder: The impact of organisational identification, identity, and image on the cooperative behaviors of physicians. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47, 507-533.
- Dutton, J., & Dukerich, J. (1991). Keeping an eye on the mirror: İmage and identity in organizational adaptation. *Academy of Management Review*, 34, 517-54.
- Ertekin, Y. (1978). *Örgüt iklimi*. Ankara: TODAİE Yayınları.
- Esener, B. (2006). *Kurum kimliği ve imajının tüketici davranışları üzerindeki etkisinin belirlenmesine yönelik bir araştırma*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Maltepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul.

- Flavian, C., Guinaliu, M., & Torres, E. (2005). The influence of corporate image on consumer trust: A comparative analysis in traditional versus internet banking. *Internet Research*, 14 (4), 447-470.
- Gray, E. R., & Balmer, J. M. T. (1998). Managing corporate image and corporate reputation. *Long Range Planning*, 31 (5), 685-92.
- Gürüz, D. (2004). *Halkla ilişkiler ve tanıtım faaliyetlerinin etkinliğinde izlenim (imaj) yönetimi (Kurum imajından kişisel imaja)*. <http://cim.anadolu.edu.tr/pdf/2004/1130849701.pdf> adresinden 15.06.2009 tarihinde edinilmiştir.
- Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (1997). Relations between organizational culture, identity and image. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31, 356-365.
- Ivy, J. (2001). Higher education institution image: A correspondence analysis approach. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 15 (6), 276-82.
- Kazoleas, D., Kim Y., & Moffitt, M. A. (2001). Institutional image: A Case Study. *Corporate Communications*, 6 (4), 205-216.
- Lemmink, J., Schuijff A., & Streukens, S. (2003). The role of corporate image and company employment image in explaining application intentions. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 24, 1-15.
- Massey, J. E. (2003, April). *A theory of organizational image management antecedents processes outcomes*. Paper presented at the International Academy of Business Disciplines Annual Conference, Orlando.
- Melewar, T. C., & Akeel, S. (2005). The role of corporate identity in the higher education sector: A case study. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 10 (1), 41-57.
- Moffitt, M. A. (1994). A cultural studies perspective toward understanding corporate image: A case study of state farm insurance. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 6 (1), 41-66.
- Nguyen, N., & LeBlanc, G. (2001). Image and reputation of higher education institutions in students' retention decisions. *The International Journal of Education Management*, 15 (6/7), 303-311.
- O'Neill, J. L., & Gaither, C. A. (2007). Investigating the relationship between the practice of pharmaceutical care, construed external image, organizational identification, and job turnover intention of community pharmacists. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, 3, 438-463.
- Okay, A. (2000). *Kurum kimliği*. Ankara: Media Cat Yayınevi.
- Örer, L. (2006). *Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi'nin kurumsal imajının öğrenciler açısından ölçülmesi üzerine bir alan çalışması*. Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Kahramanmaraş.
- Paden, N., & Stell, R. (2006). Branding options for distance learning programs: Managing the effect on university image. *International Journal Instructional Technology & Distance Learning*, 3 (8), 45-54.
- Palacio, A. B., Meneses, G. D., & Perez, P. J. P. (2002). The configuration of the university image and its relationship with the satisfaction of students. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40 (5), 486-505.
- Parameswaran, R., & Glowacka, A. E., (1995). University image: An information processing perspective. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 6 (2), 41-56.
- Peltekoğlu, B. F. (2004). *Halkla ilişkiler nedir?* İstanbul: Beta Yayınları.
- Polat, S. (2009). *Yükseköğretim örgütlerinde örgütsel imaj yönetimi: Örgütsel imajın öncülleri ve çıktıları*. <http://oc.eab.org.tr/egtconf/pdfkitap/pdf/106.pdf> adresinden 13 Ağustos 2009 tarihinde edinilmiştir.
- Porter, S. S., & Claycomb, C. (1997). The influence of brand recognition on retail store image. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 6 (6), 373-387.
- Roberts, L. M. (2005). Changing faces: Professional image construction in diverse organizational settings. *Academy of Management Review*, 30, 685-711.
- Saracel, N., Özkara, B., Karakaş, M., Yelken, R., Vatandaş, C., Bayram ve ark., (2001). *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesinin kurumsal imajı: Afyon halkının üniversiteyi algılaması tutum ve beklentilerine ilişkin araştırma*. Afyon: Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Schuler, M. (2004). Management of the organizational image: A method for organizational image configuration. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 7 (1), 37-53.
- Taşkın, E., & Sönmez, S. (2005). Kurumsal imaj oluşturmada halkla ilişkilerin rolü ve bir alan araştırması. *Akademik Bakış Uluslararası Hakemli Sosyal Bilimler E-Dergisi*, 7, [http://www.akademikbakis.org/pdfs/7/ercanta\\_k\\_n\\_semih.pdf](http://www.akademikbakis.org/pdfs/7/ercanta_k_n_semih.pdf) adresinden 19 Temmuz 2009 tarihinde edinilmiştir.
- Theus, K. T. (1993). Academic reputations: The process of formation and decay. *Public Relations Review*, 19 (3), 277-291.
- Vigoda-Gadot, E., & Ben-Zion, E. (2004). Bright shining stars: The mediating effect of organizational image on the relationship between work variables and officers' intentions to leave the military service for a job in Hi-Tech industry. *Public Personnel Management*, 33 (2), 201-223.
- Vigoda-Gadot, E., Vinarski, H., & Ben-Zion, E. (2003). Politics and image in the organizational landscape: An empirical examination among public sector employees. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 18 (8), 764-787.
- Wilson, A. (2001). Corporate reputation: Seeking a definition. *Corporate Communications*, 6 (1), 24-30.
- Yıldırım, N., (2007). *Millî Eğitim Bakanlığına bağlı okullarda kurum imajı ve halkla ilişkiler çalışmaları "Malatya örneği"*. Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, İnönü Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Malatya.