

1 Faculty Commitment in Moroccan Higher Education 2 Reforms: The Predictive Role of Trust

3
4 *This study explored faculty members' perceptions of trust, justice, and*
5 *commitment in Moroccan higher educational reforms initiated since 1999.*
6 *Drawing on Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) model of organizational*
7 *trust, Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of organizational*
8 *commitment, and Colquitt's (2001) framework of organizational justice, the*
9 *study tested a perception-based model using structural equation modeling.*
10 *Data from a survey involving 175 faculty members across twelve public*
11 *universities were gathered. The model evaluated both direct and mediating*
12 *effects linking perceived reforms to faculty commitment. Findings reveal that*
13 *perceived reforms significantly increased organizational trust and justice;*
14 *however, only trust was found to directly influence faculty commitment. These*
15 *findings highlight trust as a crucial psychological factor influencing faculty*
16 *reactions to reform efforts. By changing the analytical perspective from the*
17 *design of reforms to how faculty perceive them, the research adds to the field*
18 *of education policy and emphasizes the importance of institutional*
19 *environments that promote credibility, transparency, and inclusivity.*

20
21 **Keywords:** Moroccan higher education, reform, trust, faculty commitment,
22 justice

23 24 25 Introduction

26
27 Morocco's higher education (HED) landscape has undergone significant
28 transformations due to various structural reforms initiated following the
29 introduction of the National Charter for Education and Training (NCET) in 1999
30 and the passage of law 01.00 in 2000. Although these changes were intended to
31 enhance quality and align university education with international academic
32 standards, they have unfolded in a context characterized by fragmentation,
33 inadequate coordination among institutions, and inconsistent leadership. This
34 environment has limited opportunities for faculty involvement, thereby
35 maintaining the top-down policies that have historically defined reform efforts
36 in this sector (CSEFRS, 2024).

37 The most notable educational reform was implemented in 2003 with the
38 adoption of the *Licence-Master-Doctorat* (LMD) system, which aimed to
39 harmonize Moroccan higher education framework with the European model
40 established by the Bologna Process. This initiative sought to enhance quality,
41 standardize degrees for greater international recognition, facilitate mobility, and
42 improve the employability of graduates. Nevertheless, despite this reform
43 aligning with the strategic goals of the NCET, its execution highlighted a gap
44 between centrally established policies and the actual institutional and
45 pedagogical challenges faced by faculty members (CSEFRS, 2014).

46 To address these structural deficiencies, an Emergency Plan for 2009-2012
47 was introduced as a policy adjustment. This plan, which was supported by both

1 financial and human resources, sought to expedite the execution of Law 01.00's
2 provisions, strengthen the accomplishments of the system, create mechanisms
3 for quality assurance, enhance the professionalization of curricula, and improve
4 infrastructure. Nevertheless, the plan suffered from a lack of institutional
5 consolidation and strict supervision, leading to unfulfilled projects,
6 mismanagement of funds, and operational difficulties that undermined its
7 effectiveness (Cour des comptes, 2016-2017).

8 Between 2012 and 2016, a newly formed government implemented
9 additional measures aimed at advancing higher education development. These
10 initiatives encompassed the expansion of educational institutions, the creation of
11 technology hubs, the strengthening of quality assurance and accreditation
12 processes, and the development of international partnerships. However, many of
13 these efforts were implemented without a coherent strategic framework, which
14 limited their ability to generate meaningful and sustainable change. Ongoing
15 structural issues, declining quality, and increasing rates of student dropouts and
16 graduate unemployment continued to be significant challenges (CSEFR, 2019;
17 Mansouri, 2023; 2025).

18 As a result, the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific
19 Research (CSEFRS) created a Strategic Vision (2015-2030) aimed at reforming
20 the education system. This vision was designed as a comprehensive plan for
21 reshaping the “Moroccan school” (including higher education) based on three
22 fundamental principles: “equity and equal opportunities, quality for all, and the
23 promotion of both individuals and society” (CSEFR, 2015).

24 In 2017, the higher education ministry was merged into a unified ministry
25 responsible for overseeing the entire educational spectrum, spanning from
26 primary education to higher education. While this restructuring was intended to
27 improve governance, it unintentionally reduced higher education’s strategic
28 visibility and accountability. The absence of a definitive agenda resulted in
29 stagnation, reinforcing the belief that higher education was being run through
30 standard administrative practices rather than through forward-thinking policy
31 initiatives. That same year, the minister’s appointment was terminated by royal
32 decree, a consequence of shortcomings noted during his previous role as
33 Minister of the Interior from 2013 to 2017, which further intensified the
34 instability that has come to define higher education.

35 With the formation of a new government between 2018 and 2021, the
36 leadership of the higher education ministry launched a major reform called the
37 Bachelor, aiming to end the LMD system after its seventeen years of
38 implementation. Inspired by Anglo-Saxon higher education frameworks, the
39 Bachelor sought to enhance educational quality, stimulate pedagogical
40 innovation, increase flexibility, boost internal efficiency, and improve the
41 employability of graduates. A notable aspect of this reform was the integration
42 of soft and digital skills into higher education curricula (MENFPESRS, 2021).
43 In this governance phase, a significant advancement in higher education took
44 place with the passage of Framework Law 51.17 in 2019. This legislation
45 reinforced the Strategic Vision 2015-2030 by specifying the mandatory
46 measures and regulatory guidelines necessary for its execution. The primary

1 objective was to improve educational quality across the entire education system,
2 strengthen institutional unity, and reorganize the governance framework.
3 However, a key and impactful goal of this law was to shield the reform agenda
4 from political fluctuations, ensuring its stability and continuity through various
5 administrations (Framework Law 51.17).

6 Nonetheless, the Framework Law (51.17) soon faced challenges due to
7 decisions made following the 2021 electoral transition and the subsequent shift
8 in leadership within the higher education ministry. Among the most significant
9 actions was the official cessation of the Bachelor reform, which was criticized
10 by the CSEFRS for its lack of pedagogical clarity and legal grounding. Rather
11 than building upon prior successes, the new leadership dismissed earlier efforts
12 and introduced a different reform initiative, known as the Pacte ESRI 2030,
13 which was shaped by the principles outlined in Morocco's 2021 New
14 Development Model (MESRI, 2023).

15 Although the Pacte ESRI intended to transform the higher education system,
16 it ultimately reinstated the LMD framework, emphasizing innovation,
17 performance, and sustainability, concepts that had already been part of the
18 Bachelor reform. This move disrupted the academic journey of more than 20,000
19 students who had enrolled in the Bachelor program, forcing them to re-enter a
20 system they had deliberately chosen to escape. Additionally, this reform faced
21 significant resistance from institutions with limited access that have historically
22 maintained structural stability. A year-long nationwide strike initiated by
23 medical students from 2023 to 2024 exacerbated the tensions and underscored a
24 deep crisis of trust among essential stakeholders. This unrest played a significant
25 role in the Pacte ESRI's failure and led to a rapid reorganization within the
26 ministry and the appointment of a new leadership.

27 Beginning in 2024, the new administration opted to abandon the term "Pacte
28 ESRI," while continuing to support the LMD framework. However, substantial
29 structural and pedagogical modifications were made without first evaluating
30 previous achievements or coordinating with relevant academic bodies.
31 Moreover, within a period of less than a year, a proposed law (59.24) intended
32 to replace law 01.00 was introduced by the new leadership and passed by the
33 government (in August 2025) without involving faculty, administrative staff, or
34 student unions in the process. This development has fostered a sense of exclusion
35 and has sparked considerable resistance from academic stakeholders.

36 To sum up, the ongoing changes in higher education policy highlight the
37 inherently unstable and politically charged nature of reform initiatives, which
38 are often interrupted by shifts in leadership and governance challenges. This kind
39 of instability not only threatens the long-term viability of reform efforts but also
40 diminishes the trust of essential stakeholders, resulting in a lack of commitment
41 and undermining the potential for significant change (CSEFRS, 2023).
42 Moreover, this vulnerability is exacerbated by the recognition that reform is
43 neither straightforward nor linear; rather, it is influenced by the viewpoints,
44 decisions, and actions of those actively engaged in its daily implementation
45 (Fullan, 2007). These factors suggest that achieving sustainable reform requires

1 both a stable institutional environment and a deep involvement of stakeholders
2 based on their contextual experiences.

3 Faculty members, situated at the crossroads of policy formulation and
4 implementation, play a critical role in mediating the impacts of reforms. Their
5 views on trust, commitment, and justice significantly influence how they react
6 to change. Rather than examining the implementation of reforms per se, this
7 study takes a perception-oriented and relational approach to investigate how
8 faculty members interpret and respond to these reforms. By utilizing
9 organizational trust (OT) theory (Mayer et al., 1995), the model of organizational
10 commitment (OC) (Meyer & Allen, 1991), and Colquitt's (2001) framework of
11 organizational justice (OJ), the research explores how these perceptions affect
12 faculty assessments of legitimacy, fairness, and leadership credibility. It
13 addresses the following question: How do faculty members' perceptions of
14 higher education reforms in Morocco influence their organizational
15 commitment, and what mediating roles do organizational trust and perceived
16 organizational justice play in this relationship?

17 18 19 **Literature Review**

20 21 *Organizational Trust Theory*

22
23 The Organizational Trust (OT) theory, proposed by Mayer et al. (1995),
24 continues to be a cornerstone in organizational management. It provides a
25 comprehensive framework for analyzing how trust influences organizational
26 change processes, acting either as a facilitator or a hindrance (Dirks & Jong,
27 2022; Efthymiopoulos & Goula, 2024; McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011; Sondern &
28 Hertel, 2024). Mayer et al. (1995) articulate trust as "the willingness of a party
29 to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the
30 other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the
31 ability to monitor or control that other party" (p. 712). This definition highlights
32 three essential dimensions: vulnerability, expectations, and the lack of direct
33 control. Together, these elements differentiate trust from similar concepts such
34 as confidence and cooperation.

35 Mayer et al. (1995) defined trust as a complex construct consisting of three
36 key dimensions: "ability, benevolence, and integrity." The term ability
37 encompasses "the collection of skills, competencies, and traits that empower an
38 individual to exert influence in a particular area" (p. 717). Benevolence is
39 described as "the degree to which a trustee is perceived to genuinely wish to
40 benefit the trustor" (p. 718), while integrity refers to "the trustor's belief that the
41 trustee follows a set of principles deemed acceptable by the trustor" (p. 719).
42 Together, these three elements significantly influence how people assess
43 trustworthiness in organizational contexts.

44 Research has established a strong connection between trust and several
45 crucial outcomes within an organization. These outcomes encompass enhanced
46 job satisfaction, improved collaboration among team members, increased

1 commitment, and a stronger inclination to accept change (Colquitt, Scott, &
2 LePine, 2007; Dirks & de Jong, 2022; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). The
3 significance of trust is particularly highlighted during times of transition, as
4 intensified uncertainty and perceived risks urge stakeholders to depend more on
5 the integrity and reliability of their leaders (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

6 In educational environments, the framework proposed by Mayer et al.
7 (1991) has been valuable for exploring the interactions between faculty and
8 administrators. In contexts where authority is unevenly distributed and
9 mechanisms for shared governance are present, trust emerges as a pivotal
10 element in shaping these relationships (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Cultivating
11 trust in leadership is essential for fostering a sense of ownership and confidence
12 among faculty, particularly during times of policy change (Vidovich & Currie,
13 2011). When faculty members view decision-makers as competent, equitable,
14 and transparent in their actions, they are more likely to participate actively in the
15 decision-making process (Lashari, Moazzam, Salman, & Irfan, 2016; Pope,
16 2004).

17 18 *Meyer and Allen's (1991) Model of Organizational Commitment*

19
20 Alongside the trust-based perspective, the organizational commitment
21 model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991) provides a comprehensive
22 framework for exploring the psychological bond that exists between individuals
23 and their organization. This model defines commitment as a complex
24 psychological state made up of three interconnected yet distinct components:
25 affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

26 Affective commitment is defined as "the employee's emotional attachment
27 to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (p. 67), reflecting a
28 desire to remain because one "wants to." In contrast, continuance commitment
29 is defined by "an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the
30 organization" (p. 67). Individuals choose to stay because they "need to," often
31 due to previous investments, a lack of viable alternatives, or the potential
32 personal or professional losses that could arise from departure. Finally,
33 normative commitment encompasses "a feeling of obligation to continue
34 employment" (p. 67). Employees stay because they feel they "ought to,"
35 influenced by ingrained values, ethical standards, or the socialization processes
36 inherent in the organizational culture.

37 Affective, continuance, and normative commitment serve as fundamental
38 psychological mechanisms that shape how employees perceive their roles within
39 the organization and influence their motivation to align with its goals,
40 particularly in times of change or uncertainty. Affective commitment, in
41 particular, has been closely linked to increased job satisfaction, a greater
42 willingness to collaborate, and proactive support for organizational initiatives
43 (Colquitt, Lepine, & Wesson, 2015; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, &
44 Topolnytsky, 2002).

45 The predictive power of Meyer and Allen's (1991) model has been affirmed
46 through various studies, underscoring its relevance across diverse cultural and

1 professional settings (Meyer et al., 2002; Wasti, 2003). Within the context of
2 higher education development, this model offers a significant framework for
3 examining the motivational aspects of faculty commitment, especially during
4 periods of institutional change (Alghamdi, 2024).

5
6 *Organizational Justice Theory (OJT)*
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8 OJT examines how employees perceive justice in their work environment.
9 Initially introduced by Greenberg in 1987, OJT framed justice as a cohesive
10 concept that encompasses employees' subjective assessments of fairness within
11 their organization. Expanding on earlier models, Colquitt in 2001 identified four
12 interconnected yet conceptually separate dimensions of organizational justice:
13 procedural, distributive, interpersonal, and informational justice (p. 398).
14 Procedural justice pertains to how fair the decision-making processes are
15 perceived to be (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). A process is considered fair when it
16 is applied consistently, remains unbiased, is based on accurate information, and
17 provides individuals an opportunity to express their views and seek corrections
18 when necessary (Leventhal, 1980). Distributive justice relates to how individuals
19 perceive the fairness of the outcomes they receive, assessed through the lenses
20 of equity, equality, or need. Interpersonal justice reflects how much respect,
21 courtesy, and dignity individuals feel they receive from those in authority
22 (Colquitt & Rodell, 2015).

23 Informational justice pertains to how adequate, transparent, and honest
24 individuals perceive the explanations and justifications given during decision-
25 making processes (Colquitt & Rodell, 2015). Initially included within the
26 broader category of interactional justice, Colquitt (2001) later distinguished
27 between the dimensions of interpersonal and informational justice to enhance
28 conceptual clarity and analytical precision. This four-dimensional framework of
29 organizational justice provides a useful lens for understanding how people assess
30 and react to the fairness of an organization's procedures and decision-making
31 results (Adamovic, 2023; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Its
32 robustness and reliability in predicting various employee-related outcomes have
33 been validated by empirical studies across diverse industries (Ambrose &
34 Schminke, 2009; Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007).

35 Studies indicate that how justice is perceived plays a significant role in
36 various essential outcomes within organizations, such as trust in leadership,
37 employee commitment, job satisfaction, performance levels, and openness to
38 change (Adamovic, 2023; Colquitt et al., 2001; Colquitt, LePine, Piccolo,
39 Zapata, & Rich, 2012). Trust is influenced not only by the fairness of the
40 outcomes received (known as distributive justice) but also by the perceived
41 integrity, consistency, and transparency of the processes that lead to these
42 outcomes (referred to as procedural justice) (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011; Fulmer &
43 Gelfand, 2012).

44 In the realm of education, the way fairness is perceived is crucial for
45 building trust, encouraging collaboration, and establishing a nurturing
46 atmosphere for transformation. When faculty members believe that decision-

1 making processes are fair, transparent, and inclusive, they are more likely to
 2 support institutional reforms (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). Conversely, feelings of
 3 injustice can undermine the legitimacy of institutions, increase resistance, and
 4 diminish the effectiveness of governance structures (Adamovic, 2023; Colquitt
 5 et al., 2015). The faculty's perception of organizational justice serves as a key
 6 mediator between leadership style and academic outcomes. Notably,
 7 transformational leadership proves to be more effective in boosting academic
 8 performance when institutional processes are seen as fair and just (Khan, Gan,
 9 Khan, & Saif, 2023).

10 Colquitt's (2001) framework has faced its share of critiques. Observations
 11 have been made regarding the conceptual overlaps among different justice
 12 dimensions, an excessive reliance on self-reported data, and a neglect of cultural
 13 and structural elements that shape perceptions of fairness (Cropanzano et al.,
 14 2007; Rupp et al., 2017). Adamović (2023) has called for a broader and more
 15 context-sensitive perspective on organizational justice, one that recognizes
 16 identity-based injustices and the persistent structural power disparities that exist
 17 within institutional environments.

18 When considered collectively, the theories of organizational trust, justice,
 19 and commitment offer a comprehensive framework for examining faculty
 20 perceptions and reactions to academic reforms. The theory of organizational
 21 trust emphasizes the relational aspects between faculty members and
 22 institutional leaders, highlighting how perceptions of competence, benevolence,
 23 and integrity affect receptiveness to change. The organizational commitment
 24 model explores the motivational underpinnings of faculty involvement,
 25 differentiating among affective attachment, dependence based on continuance,
 26 and normative responsibilities. Meanwhile, organizational justice theory adds a
 27 normative layer, illustrating how perceptions of fairness in decision-making and
 28 communication practices impact the legitimacy and acceptance of reform efforts.

29 While trust, justice, and commitment are recognized as significant constructs,
 30 their impact on faculty reactions to higher education reform in Morocco is still
 31 underexplored. Drawing from the theories outlined earlier, this research explores
 32 how faculty members' perceptions of reforms influence their levels of trust,
 33 justice, and commitment. It evaluates a theory-based model to analyze both the
 34 direct and indirect psychological routes through which perceptions of reform
 35 affect faculty commitment, utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
 36 testing the following hypotheses:

37 38 **Direct effects**

- 39
40 **H1:** Perceived educational reforms will positively influence OT.
 41 **H2:** Perceived educational reforms will positively influence OJ.
 42 **H3:** Perceived educational reforms will positively influence OC.
 43 **H4:** OT will positively influence OC.
 44 **H5:** OJ will positively influence OC.
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1 Indirect effects (mediation)

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3 H6: OT mediates the relationship between perceived educational reforms and OC.

4 H7: OJ mediates the relationship between perceived educational reforms and OC.

7 Methods

9 *Design*

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11 This research was situated within a post-positivist framework and utilized a
12 quantitative, cross-sectional approach to evaluate a theory-driven model. Given
13 the multifaceted characteristics of the primary constructs (OT, OC, and OJ), a
14 SEM was employed for the analysis. SEM facilitates the assessment of both
15 direct and indirect causal links among latent variables while also accounting for
16 measurement errors (Kline, 2023). The theoretical framework suggests that
17 faculty members' views on educational reforms have a direct effect on their
18 commitment, as well as an indirect effect mediated by trust and justice.

20 *Population and Sampling Strategy*

21
22 The study included assistant, associate, and full professors from twelve
23 public universities spanning a range of disciplines. These individuals were
24 specifically chosen due to their significant involvement in comprehending and
25 addressing current reforms. They came from varied geographic areas and
26 institutional categories, encompassing both open-access and limited-access
27 institutions. A non-random sampling method that integrated purposive and
28 convenience sampling was employed. This strategy did not seek to achieve
29 statistical generalization; instead, it focused on the empirical testing of a theory-
30 driven model. Such an approach is appropriate in contexts where the population
31 is clearly defined yet challenging to access via random sampling (Etikan, Musa,
32 & Alkassim, 2016).

34 *Questionnaire Design and Structure*

35
36 The measurement items were selected and adapted from validated
37 instruments to operationalize the theoretical constructs evaluated in this study.
38 To assess OT, a set of items were adapted from the work of Mayer and Davis
39 (1999). OC was assessed using the scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1991),
40 while organizational justice OJ was measured through Colquitt's (2001)
41 multidimensional framework. The final survey comprised 30 self-report items
42 divided into four sections: trust, commitment, justice, and sociodemographic
43 information. A total of 23 items were utilized to assess the latent constructs, with
44 8 items each for OT and OC, and 7 items for OJ, all rated on a 5-point Likert
45 scale (1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Additionally, 7 items gathered
46 sociodemographic and contextual data, including gender, age range, academic
47 position, years of service, institution, field of study, and university affiliation.

1 Each construct was designed in line with its defined theoretical dimensions.
2 OT was assessed through three specific sub-dimensions: ability, benevolence,
3 and integrity. Sample items for measurement included: “My institution
4 implements reforms effectively” (ability), “Leaders within the institution
5 demonstrate integrity when executing reforms” (integrity), and “My institution
6 prioritizes the interests of its faculty” (benevolence). OC was evaluated using
7 Meyer and Allen’s (1991) dimensions of affective, continuance, and normative
8 commitment. The items used were: “I have a strong emotional connection to my
9 institution” (affective), “Departing from my institution would entail
10 considerable personal and/or professional repercussions” (continuance), and “I
11 feel a sense of moral duty to stay with my institution” (normative).

12 OJ was evaluated across four key dimensions: distributive, procedural,
13 interpersonal, and informational justice, as outlined by Colquitt (2001). The
14 assessment included statements such as: “I find the decisions made regarding the
15 reforms to be equitable” (distributive), “The institution seeks input from faculty
16 before enacting reforms” (procedural), “The rights and dignity of faculty
17 members are honored in the reforms” (interpersonal), and “The goals of the
18 reforms are effectively communicated to faculty” (informational).

19 20 *Validation of the Instrument*

21
22 The items in the questionnaire were rigorously adapted from English-
23 language instruments to reflect the Moroccan academic environment, while
24 maintaining their conceptual soundness (Beaton, Bombardier, Guillemin, &
25 Ferraz 2000). Subsequently, they were translated into French, the language of
26 instruction at the university, and then back-translated to verify semantic
27 equivalence (Brislin, 1970). To evaluate content validity, two professors
28 reviewed all the items to improve clarity, cultural appropriateness, and
29 theoretical coherence.

30 The survey questionnaire underwent a pilot test involving a group of nine
31 faculty members. Although this participant count was insufficient for statistical
32 validation, the qualitative feedback indicated that the questions were well-
33 articulated and consistent with the intended purpose. Prior to distribution, the
34 complete questionnaire was revised by a bilingual management professor with
35 extensive expertise in the reforms within Moroccan higher education.

36 37 *Data Collection Procedure*

38
39 Between April and June 2025, around 420 questionnaires were administered
40 online via Google Forms. The survey link was sent through WhatsApp groups
41 that included only faculty members from the chosen universities. This method
42 of communication is frequently utilized within academic circles and facilitates
43 engagement with a geographically varied academic community. Prior to filling
44 out the survey, participants were informed about the study's aims, as well as the
45 anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Consent was gathered through
46 WhatsApp before participation, which was completely voluntary.

1

2 *Statistical Analyses and Reliability Assessment*

3

4 Statistical analyses were performed utilizing R (Version 4.3.1; R Core
5 Team, 2023), with the lavaan package (Version 0.6-15) employed for SEM. To
6 evaluate the internal consistency of each latent construct, Cronbach's alpha was
7 calculated. All three constructs exhibited satisfactory reliability, with α values
8 surpassing the established threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Items
9 that displayed low factor loadings or cross-loadings were scrutinized and
10 discarded only when both theoretical justification and statistical evidence
11 supported such actions. The dataset underwent screening for multivariate
12 outliers through multiple factor analysis (MFA), and any atypical cases were
13 removed before the SEM estimation to enhance the robustness of the model.

14

15

16 **Results**

17

18 Following the standards for factorial validity and measurement quality
19 outlined in the methodology section, 18 out of the initial 23 items were kept due
20 to their factor loadings and theoretical significance. The latent variables
21 encompassed perceptions of educational reform, OT, OJ, and OC. Data analysis
22 was conducted using R (version 4.3.1) along with the lavaan package (version
23 0.6-15), utilizing the maximum likelihood (ML) estimation approach.

24 To evaluate the internal consistency of each construct, an inter-item
25 correlation matrix was analyzed. The correlations varied from .45 to .78,
26 demonstrating moderate to strong relationships among the items within each
27 latent factor, which reinforces the conceptual integrity of the measurement
28 model. Five items were excluded because of inadequate factor loadings or a lack
29 of theoretical alignment: "Institutional leaders act with integrity in implementing
30 reforms," "I feel involved in decisions related to institutional reforms," "I
31 actively participate in the implementation of reforms," "Recent reforms have
32 strengthened my sense of belonging to the institution," and "Reforms respect the
33 rights and dignity of faculty members."

34 Furthermore, Figure 1 displays a correlogram that depicts the Pearson
35 correlations among the mean scores of the latent variables. This graphical
36 representation was utilized to investigate the interconnections between the
37 constructs within the context of the theoretical model.

38

1 **Figure 1.** *Correlogram displaying the Pearson correlations between the variables*



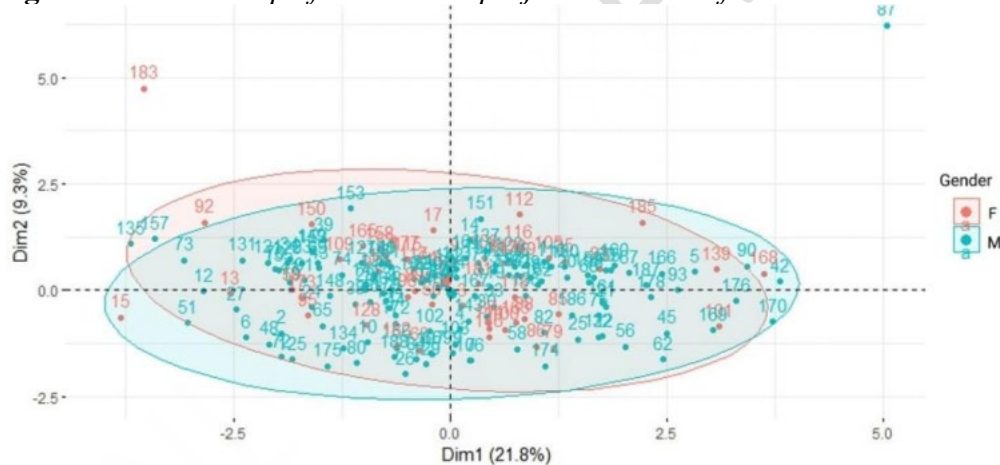
2
3

4 The circles' size and colors indicate the strength of the relationships among
5 the latent variables. The results revealed correlations that varied from moderate
6 to strong, thus supporting the conceptual coherence of the constructs and
7 reinforcing the convergent validity of the measurements. Significant
8 relationships were identified, particularly among OT, OC, and OJ.

9 The MFA illustrated in Figure 2 analyzed how response patterns differed by
10 gender.

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Figure 2. *Factor Map of Individuals projected onto the first two Dimensions*



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15 The MFA was conducted to explore the overall data structure based on
16 gender (male/female). This phase was designed to identify any potential
17 multivariate outliers that might skew model estimates. The MFA plot illustrated
18 individuals mapped onto the first two principal dimensions, which accounted for
19 21.8% of the total variance in Dimension 1 and 9.3% in Dimension 2. Gender-
20 differentiated ellipses representing 95% concentration highlighted how
21 respondents were distributed within the factorial space. Certain individuals,
22 specifically 183 and 87, emerged as multivariate outliers, positioned outside the
23 primary data cluster. In accordance with multivariate analysis protocols (Hair,
24 Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014), these atypical cases were removed to
25 strengthen the model's reliability. Ultimately, the final sample for SEM consisted
26 of 175 observations, facilitating a more precise model fit and a reliable
27 interpretation of the relationships among latent variables.

The SEM was then performed to evaluate the connections between the latent variables. The estimated direct effects obtained from the analyzed model are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Estimated Structural Equation Model

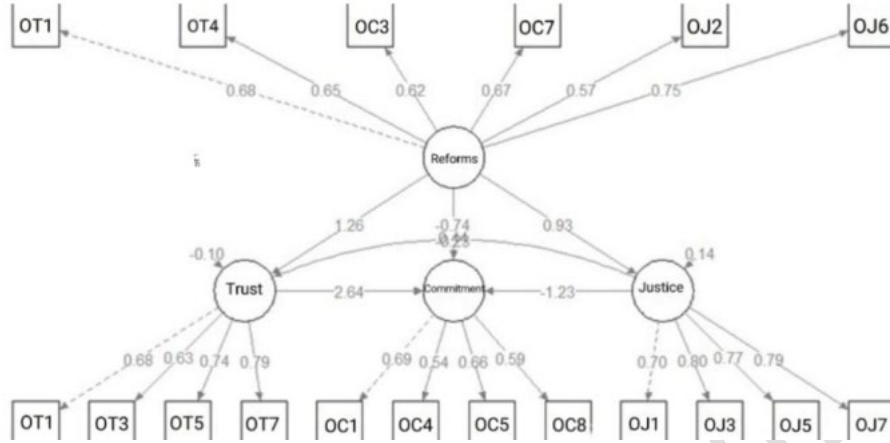


Table 1 provides the estimated coefficients for the direct, indirect, and total effects of the SEM, including their statistical significance.

Table 1. Estimated Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of the SEM Model

Relation	Standardized Effect (β)	Standard Error	p-value	Interpretation
Reforms \rightarrow Justice	0.97	0.145	< .001	Significant direct effect
Reforms \rightarrow Trust	1.26	0.544	.020	Significant direct effect
Reforms \rightarrow Commitment	-0.74	1.451	.589	Insignificant direct effect
Justice \rightarrow Commitment	-1.23	0.965	.196	Insignificant direct effect
Trust \rightarrow Commitment	2.64	1.311	.034	Significant direct effect
Reforms \rightarrow Trust \rightarrow Commitment	3.31	1.976	.075	Marginally significant indirect effect
Reforms \rightarrow Justice \rightarrow Commitment	-1.21	1.022	.236	Insignificant direct effect

The estimated coefficients were analyzed across direct, indirect, and total effects to evaluate the validity of the proposed hypotheses. The results displayed in Table 1 provide partial validation for the suggested theoretical model. Hypothesis H1, which predicted a direct influence of reforms on OJ, received support ($\beta = 0.97, p < .001$), as did Hypothesis H2, which predicted an influence of reforms on organizational trust (OT) ($\beta = 1.26, p = .020$). These outcomes indicate that faculty members view reforms favorably when they are linked to

1 enhanced norms of justice and trust. This observation aligns with the
2 organizational commitment model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991).

3 Unexpectedly, the data did not support Hypothesis H3, which predicted a
4 significant direct influence of reforms on OC ($\beta = -0.74$, $p = .589$), revealing a
5 statistically insignificant connection. Likewise, Hypothesis H5, which predicted
6 a direct positive influence of OJ on commitment, was not statistically significant
7 ($\beta = -1.23$, $p = .196$). The presence of these non-significant coefficients indicates
8 that neither reforms nor the perception of justice significantly contribute to
9 variations in OC on their own. This trend highlights the potential importance of
10 indirect effects and emphasizes the necessity for further investigation into the
11 mediating processes that might link reforms to commitment.

12 Hypothesis H4, which posited that organizational trust (OT) would have a
13 direct and positive influence on OC, was supported ($\beta = 2.64$, $p = .034$). This
14 finding underscores the important role that perceived trust plays in fostering
15 faculty commitment. The outcome is consistent with OJ frameworks, which
16 emphasize the essential nature of perceptions of legitimacy in encouraging
17 behaviors linked to commitment (Colquitt, 2001).

18 Hypothesis H6, which suggested that OT mediates the relationship between
19 perceived educational reforms and organizational commitment, was not
20 supported ($\beta = 3.31$, $p = .075$). Although the result approaches significance, it
21 does not meet conventional thresholds ($p < .05$), and thus the mediating role of
22 trust could not be confirmed.

23 Hypothesis H7, which predicted that OJ would act as a mediator in the
24 relationship, did not receive support ($\beta = -1.21$, $p = .236$). This indicates a
25 potential gap between how fairness is perceived and the subsequent levels of
26 commitment. The findings may be influenced by contextual or cultural elements,
27 implying that perceptions of justice by themselves do not automatically lead to
28 commitment unless they are paired with adequate acknowledgment or support
29 from the organization.

30 Finally, although the direct relationship between reforms and commitment
31 (H3) did not show significance, the overall effect was significant ($\beta = 0.88$, $p <$
32 $.001$). This result, interpreted in line with Hypothesis H8, suggests that the
33 impact of educational reforms on commitment mainly unfolds through
34 underlying psychological processes instead of direct connections. It emphasizes
35 that OC is shaped not only by alterations at the structural or policy level but also
36 by intermediary elements such as trust.

37 The structural equation model demonstrated a good overall fit to the data:
38 $\chi^2/df = 2.50$, RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.91, SRMR = 0.05. These
39 indicators reinforce the model's validity and imply that the suggested
40 relationships accurately reflect the observed data.

43 Discussion

44
45 This research examined how faculty members at Moroccan public
46 universities perceive educational reforms and how these perceptions influence

1 organizational trust, justice, and commitment. By SEM based on organizational
2 theory, the study explored both direct and indirect relationships between
3 perceptions of reform and organizational commitment. The results revealed that
4 the reforms notably improved perceptions of trust and justice, with trust having
5 a substantial direct influence on commitment. However, the direct influence of
6 reforms and justice on commitment did not reach statistical significance. Still,
7 the overall effect of reforms on commitment was significant, highlighting the
8 critical role of indirect pathways, especially through trust. In summary, the
9 findings emphasize that trust plays a more pivotal role than justice in shaping
10 faculty reactions to reform efforts.

11 However, although SEM was employed, the cross-sectional nature of the
12 design limits the capacity to make causal inferences. It remains unclear whether
13 trust affects commitment or if a greater level of commitment influences one's
14 perception of trust, as such determinations require longitudinal studies or
15 experimental controls. Similarly, the non-random sampling introduces potential
16 selection bias, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The sample did
17 not adequately represent the larger population of Moroccan faculty, and those
18 who are more actively involved in the reforms may not have been included.
19 Moreover, all variables were assessed through self-report questionnaires, which
20 are susceptible to social desirability bias and common method variance,
21 particularly significant when examining abstract psychological concepts such as
22 trust and commitment.

23 On the other hand, the psychometric validation of the instrument faces
24 limitations due to the limited number of faculty who participated in the pilot test
25 and the impact of cultural differences. Perspectives on concepts such as "justice"
26 and "commitment" can differ greatly across various cultural contexts, potentially
27 affecting the construct validity. While the sample size satisfies the minimum
28 requirements for basic SEM analysis, as noted by Hair et al. (2014), it does not
29 provide enough power for more intricate modeling or comparisons among
30 subgroups, such as by gender or academic rank. During the factor analysis, five
31 items were discarded because of low factor loadings or a lack of conceptual
32 alignment, including key theoretical components like integrity and respect for
33 rights and dignity. The removal of these items could undermine the content
34 validity of the constructs. For instance, "integrity," a crucial aspect of
35 organizational trust, was left out. Furthermore, although sociodemographic
36 information such as rank and years of service was gathered, it was not factored
37 into the SEM analysis, which may result in the neglect of significant variations
38 in perceptions of commitment and trust, especially among more experienced
39 faculty who might have different perspectives on reforms.

40 Nevertheless, while acknowledging its constraints and contextual
41 variations, the insights derived from this study become clearer when considered
42 alongside previous research concerning organizational trust, justice, and
43 commitment within the realm of higher education. Importantly, organizational
44 trust serves as a significant mediator in the connection between perceived
45 reforms and commitment, although this mediating effect was found to be only
46 marginally significant (H6). This observation is consistent with the findings of

1 Lashari et al. (2016), who illustrated that organizational trust mediates the
2 relationship between justice and commitment in universities in Pakistan.
3 Likewise, Jung (2022) revealed that trust played a more substantial mediating
4 role in the influence of academic leadership on commitment than organizational
5 culture did in South Korean universities, underscoring the essential
6 psychological function trust fulfills in academic environments where autonomy,
7 legitimacy, and leadership behavior are critically evaluated. When considered
8 collectively, these results indicate that in settings marked by policy changes,
9 uncertainty, or centralized administration, trust serves as a psychological filter
10 through which faculty assess the intentions of their institutions.

11 Trust evolves into both a cognitive judgment regarding the integrity and
12 competence of leadership and an emotional foundation for active participation.
13 This interpretation aligns with the framework established by Mayer et al. (1995),
14 which characterizes trust as the willingness to accept vulnerability, grounded in
15 perceptions of ability, benevolence, and integrity. Faculty members are more
16 likely to show commitment when they perceive institutional representatives as
17 trustworthy, even in contexts where immediate material or procedural fairness is
18 lacking.

19 In contrast, the current research did not identify any significant direct or
20 mediated connections between organizational justice and commitment (H5, H7).
21 This finding stands in opposition to the results presented by Dahleez and
22 Aboramadan (2025), who indicated that both justice and trust played a mediating
23 role in the influence of servant leadership on job satisfaction among Palestinian
24 academics. Similarly, Tahseen and Akhtar (2015) discovered that various
25 dimensions of justice were strong predictors of faculty trust within Pakistani
26 universities. A possible reason for this difference could be that in the Moroccan
27 context, fairness is regarded less as a standardized principle and more as a
28 discretionary action influenced by leadership style and informal networks.
29 Consequently, faculty members might not anticipate uniformity or fairness in
30 institutional procedures, which diminishes the psychological significance of
31 justice perceptions in the development of commitment.

32 Moreover, this discrepancy might be indicative of limitations in
33 measurement and variations in cultural interpretation. The exclusion of certain
34 theoretically significant elements, like respect, dignity, and integrity, during the
35 validation phase may have undermined the study's operationalization of justice.
36 This could shed light on the lack of predictive power for justice, even though it
37 is conceptually pertinent. Furthermore, as pointed out by Snyman, Coetzee, and
38 Ferreira (2023) along with Rupp, Shapiro, Folger, Skarlicki, and Shao (2017), it
39 is crucial to acknowledge that the concept of organizational justice does not
40 function uniformly across various institutional or national cultures. The
41 expectations related to voice, participation, and procedural transparency can
42 differ greatly, indicating that traditional models of justice might not fully capture
43 how faculty members in Morocco perceive or interpret fairness.

44 The finding that reforms do not directly influence commitment (H3), yet
45 exhibit a significant total effect through trust (H8), strengthens this
46 interpretation. Verma and Kaur (2024) identified comparable trends, revealing

1 that the HR climate indirectly influenced faculty retention through
2 organizational trust and commitment. Similarly, Snyman et al. (2023)
3 demonstrated that trust and justice acted as mediators in the relationship between
4 the psychological contract and satisfaction with retention practices. These
5 findings underscore the notion that in knowledge-driven fields such as higher
6 education, changes at the structural or policy level primarily affect outcomes
7 through relational and perceptual pathways, with trust playing a crucial role.

8 Viewing the situation from this angle, the Moroccan example highlights a
9 more extensive theoretical understanding: merely implementing procedural
10 changes in organizational reforms is insufficient to foster faculty commitment.
11 These reforms need to be paired with initiatives aimed at nurturing psychological
12 legitimacy, building relational credibility, and promoting ethical leadership. In
13 the absence of trust, even the most thoughtfully designed reforms might struggle
14 to involve faculty or achieve sustained alignment. Baek and Jung (2015) contend
15 that interpersonal trust gains significance within organizations only when it
16 contributes to institutional trust, a progression that is especially critical in
17 environments where formal justice systems are weak, disjointed, or applied
18 inconsistently.

19 Thus, this research adds to an expanding collection of evidence that
20 emphasizes trust, rather than justice, as the more influential psychological factor
21 influencing organizational behavior in higher education reforms. This
22 perspective questions the conventional beliefs found in numerous Western
23 justice frameworks and urges a focus on trust-building practices that are sensitive
24 to context in the design of reforms. Subsequent studies should explore how
25 elements like the fulfillment of psychological contracts, perceived
26 organizational support, and institutional identification relate to trust and justice
27 in fostering faculty commitment.

30 **Conclusion**

31
32 This study explored the perceptions of faculty members at public
33 universities in Morocco regarding trust, justice, and commitment amidst ongoing
34 educational reforms marked by leadership changes and uncertainty in
35 implementation. The results indicate that these reforms positively influence
36 perceptions of both organizational trust and justice; however, it is trust that exerts
37 a significant direct effect on organizational commitment. While neither
38 perceptions of justice nor those of reform directly predict commitment, the
39 overall indirect effect of reforms, largely mediated by trust, is statistically
40 meaningful. These results underscore that trust, rather than justice, functions as
41 the key psychological mechanism through which faculty members interpret and
42 integrate their experiences with reforms.

43 In theory, this research makes a context-specific addition to the framework
44 of organizational trust theory (Mayer et al., 1995) and, to a lesser degree, to
45 organizational justice theory (Colquitt, 2001). It offers partial validation for the
46 trust model by illustrating that faculty commitment largely hinges on their

1 perceptions of reliable institutional leadership and the integrity of
2 communication. Concurrently, the weak and statistically insignificant influence
3 of justice implies that conventional justice theories may not adequately explain
4 dynamics in settings where institutional processes are seen as unclear or applied
5 inconsistently. Instead of dismissing the importance of justice entirely, these
6 results suggest that its effect may be indirect, becoming significant only when
7 influenced by trust. Thus, this study aids in refining justice theory by redirecting
8 its emphasis from procedural uniformity to the credibility of relationships.

9 From a practical perspective, the results underscore that genuine reform in
10 higher education cannot rely solely on changes to structures or policies. Building
11 trust should be regarded as an ongoing and strategic component of institutional
12 growth. Efforts aimed at enhancing transparency, consistency, and reliable
13 leadership play a pivotal role in transforming reform initiatives into a steadfast
14 organizational commitment. Keeping communication channels open can help
15 reduce uncertainty, while stable and trustworthy leadership is essential for
16 preventing fragmented implementation. Furthermore, engaging faculty in the
17 decision-making process could promote procedural fairness and enhances
18 relational trust, which is an empirically supported method for cultivating
19 enduring commitment. By fostering trust, institutions of higher education can
20 improve the perceived legitimacy of reforms, encourage faculty participation,
21 and foster institutional resilience.

22 Given the methodological and contextual constraints outlined earlier in the
23 discussion section, it is essential for future research to implement longitudinal
24 designs. This would help clarify the sequence and directionality of relationships
25 among trust, justice, and commitment. Conducting comparative case studies
26 across various universities or governance frameworks could also shed light on
27 how different institutional contexts influence faculty reactions to reform
28 initiatives. Furthermore, employing qualitative and mixed-method approaches
29 may uncover the personal interpretations that faculty members associate with
30 concepts like justice and integrity, particularly when standardized tools fail to
31 adequately reflect context-specific meanings. Lastly, utilizing multigroup
32 analyses or configurational modeling could enhance our understanding of how
33 trust and commitment dynamics differ among faculty members, taking into
34 account factors such as rank, exposure to reform, and disciplinary background.

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