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Continuance Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors among Moroccan University Faculty: The Mediating Role of Academic Leadership and Social Justice

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Abstract: University faculty members play a central role in knowledge production and student development. In Moroccan public universities, however, academic staff operate in challenging conditions characterized by limited recognition, weak academic leadership, and perceived organizational injustice. These conditions tend to foster continuance commitment, driven primarily by job security and constrained labor market opportunities, raising questions about its impact on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between organizational commitment—particularly continuance commitment—and OCB among Moroccan university faculty members, while assessing the mediating roles of academic leadership and perceived social justice. A quantitative research design was adopted, based on survey data collected from faculty members in Moroccan public universities. The hypothesized relationships were tested using structural equation modelling. The results show that continuance commitment does not directly promote OCB. While academic leadership significantly influences perceptions of social justice, neither leadership nor social justice mediates the relationship between commitment and OCB. Citizenship behaviors appear instead to be primarily driven by normative obligations and professional responsibility rather than by managerial or governance mechanisms. Qualitative insights further reveal a strong professional focus on teaching and research, accompanied by distancing from administrative and managerial processes. These findings highlight a distinctive contextual pattern in Moroccan higher education, where OCB develops independently of leadership and justice mechanisms. The study contributes original empirical evidence from a non-Western academic context and underscores the need to rethink governance, leadership development, and human resource management practices in public universities.

Keywords: *Organizational commitment; Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB); Leadership; Organizational justice; Higher education, Morocco*.

1. Introduction

Higher education plays a central role in the development of societies by training future generations and producing the scientific knowledge required for innovation and competitiveness. In Morocco, this sector is undergoing profound transformations marked by the growing demand for education, the massification of student enrollment, and the gradual transformation of university governance models (CSEFRS, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). However, these changes are accompanied by persistent dysfunctions, including limited financial resources, administrative burdens, and inequalities between disciplines and institutions.

Within this complex environment, faculty members are increasingly solicited beyond their traditional teaching mission. They are expected to contribute to scientific research, participate in institutional life, and assume administrative or managerial responsibilities, often under constraining working conditions. Empirical studies show that difficult work environments, limited institutional recognition, and insufficient organizational support tend to orient teachers' organizational commitment toward continuance commitment, motivated more by job stability and lack of alternatives than by affective or normative attachment (Ahsina, 2017)

At the same time, administrative positions in universities are often perceived as sources of financial compensation or career advancement rather than as opportunities for collective service and academic leadership (El Antaki, 2010; Bryman, 2007). This situation generates tensions and even intra-departmental competition, where rivalry for managerial roles undermines cooperation and weakens the emergence of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB).

Theoretically, organizational commitment—conceptualized by Meyer and Allen (1991)—is a major determinant of OCB, defined by Organ (1988) as discretionary behaviors that promote cooperation, solidarity, and the effective functioning of organizations. Research has shown that affective commitment, fair leadership,

and perceived organizational justice enhance the expression of OCB, such as altruism, cooperation, and voluntary participation in collective activities (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000; Lapointe, Vandenberghe, & Panaccio, 2011; Bélanger & Paquet, 2007).

However, in Moroccan universities, academic leadership is often weakened by institutional paradoxes—such as the lack of transparency in appointments, limited evaluation culture, and the prevalence of relational or political logics. These practices tend to reduce perceptions of organizational justice (Greenberg, 1990; Colquitt, 2001) and reinforce rivalry among academics, thereby constraining altruism and cooperation.

While international studies have extensively explored the link between commitment, justice, and citizenship behaviors, research in the Moroccan higher education context remains scarce. Existing studies highlight that working conditions, professional autonomy, and recognition are key determinants of teachers' motivation and collective participation (Ahsina, 2017). These findings underline the importance of examining how commitment, leadership, and social justice interact to foster—or hinder—the development of organizational citizenship behaviors in universities.

This study adopts this perspective by proposing a conceptual framework linking the dimensions of organizational commitment, academic leadership, and social justice, while integrating internal rivalry as a contextual factor. It seeks to answer a central question: To what extent does organizational commitment influence the expression of OCB, and how do academic leadership and perceived social justice mediate this relationship within Moroccan universities?

2. Literature Review

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) in the University Environment

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) refer to discretionary and voluntary actions that are not formally rewarded but contribute to organizational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). In academic institutions, these behaviors take on a particular significance due to the centrality of professional autonomy, peer regulation, and collegial norms. Faculty OCB typically includes cooperation among colleagues, voluntary involvement in committees, mentoring of students and junior staff, and informal contributions to institutional life.

Early research in the sociology of education has emphasized that a substantial part of academic work remains invisible and weakly recognized. Tardif and Lessard (1999), for instance, underline that teaching relies heavily on informal practices of availability, emotional support, and adaptive efforts that extend well beyond contractual obligations. More recent studies confirm that such discretionary behaviors play a key role in sustaining positive work climates and reinforcing professional solidarity within educational institutions (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018).

In universities, OCB also contributes to institutional legitimacy and academic vitality by supporting collective governance, collaborative research, and community engagement (Biron, Brun & Ivers, 2008). However, these behaviors remain fragile and contingent. They are largely driven by intrinsic motivation and are highly sensitive to perceptions of fairness, recognition, and leadership practices (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). When these conditions deteriorate, faculty members may reduce their discretionary involvement, prioritizing individual strategies over collective interests. Thus, OCB constitutes a relevant indicator of organizational health in higher education, revealing the extent to which faculty members are willing to transcend formal role requirements in favor of the academic common good.

The Role of Leadership in Academic Settings

Leadership is widely recognized as a key driver of engagement and organizational citizenship behaviors (Bass, 1985). In higher education, however, leadership cannot be reduced to hierarchical authority. Universities operate within professional bureaucracies characterized by strong norms of autonomy, peer legitimacy, and plural missions encompassing teaching, research, and service activities.

Research conducted in North American contexts has shown that transformational and distributed leadership styles are particularly effective in fostering OCB in academic environments. Lapointe, Vandenberghe and

Panaccio (2011) demonstrate that faculty members who perceive their leaders as supportive, accessible, and fair are more inclined to cooperate, share knowledge, and engage beyond formal job requirements. Similarly, Bélanger and Paquet (2007) highlight the importance of inclusive leadership practices capable of reinforcing trust and procedural equity, both of which are essential conditions for discretionary behaviors.

In the Moroccan context, academic leadership faces specific structural tensions. University leaders are often former faculty members appointed through competitive or elective procedures, sometimes influenced by political or relational networks. Their role tends to emphasize external representation and institutional visibility, while internal management and human resource regulation receive comparatively less attention. Operational responsibilities are frequently delegated to academic or administrative coordinators drawn from the faculty body, who may lack formal managerial training. This configuration often limits managerial legitimacy and encourages informal authority structures.

More recent reforms have attempted to appoint leaders with managerial backgrounds external to the academic field. While this approach aims to professionalize governance, it may generate legitimacy conflicts when managerial authority clashes with academic status hierarchies. In some cases, this tension leads to resistance, disengagement, or symbolic compliance rather than genuine cooperation. Despite their differences, both configurations may produce similar outcomes: weakened trust, deteriorated work climates, and limited capacity to stimulate OCB. These dynamics underscore the importance of leadership legitimacy and managerial competence in fostering cooperation and discretionary engagement in universities.

Organizational Justice and Its Effects on OCB

Organizational justice represents a central theoretical framework for understanding discretionary behaviors at work. According to Greenberg (1990) and Colquitt (2001), employees' perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice strongly influence their willingness to invest effort beyond formal role expectations. Numerous studies have established a positive relationship between perceived fairness, organizational commitment, and OCB across sectors, including education (Biron, Brun & Ivers, 2008; Lapointe et al., 2011).

In universities, justice perceptions are closely tied to leadership practices, particularly with regard to evaluation procedures, allocation of responsibilities, and access to career opportunities. Transparent and consistent decision-making processes reinforce trust in leadership and encourage cooperative behaviors among faculty members.

In the Moroccan higher education system, however, organizational justice is often challenged by the fragility of governance structures. Despite the existence of formal regulatory frameworks, the absence of clear and operational evaluation systems leaves room for informal arrangements. Appointments to managerial roles, distribution of teaching loads, and access to resources may be perceived as opaque or influenced by favoritism. Such perceptions undermine trust and weaken the motivational foundations of OCB.

Under these conditions, faculty members may adopt defensive or competitive strategies aimed at protecting individual interests rather than engaging in altruistic and collective behaviors. In line with OCB theory (Organ, 1988), perceived injustice thus constrains discretionary involvement and contributes to organizational fragmentation. Overall, the articulation between leadership and organizational justice appears critical: contested or weak leadership undermines fairness perceptions, which in turn limits the emergence of citizenship behaviors and compromises organizational vitality in universities.

Organizational Commitment among Faculty Members

Organizational commitment remains a foundational concept for analyzing faculty work dynamics. The three-component model developed by Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) distinguishes affective commitment (emotional attachment), normative commitment (a sense of obligation), and continuance commitment (perceived costs of leaving). This framework has been extensively mobilized in educational research to account for career stability and professional engagement (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Bélanger, 2007). Earlier sociological perspectives also highlight the multidimensional nature of commitment, emphasizing both individual motivations and structural constraints (Becker, 1960).

In the Moroccan public university system, organizational commitment assumes a distinctive configuration. Academic positions offer high job security and very low turnover, particularly compared to other sectors of the labor market. Faculty members thus often remain in their positions not solely out of affective attachment, but because alternative academic opportunities are scarce and public employment provides stable income and social protection (El Adraoui, 2016).

Many faculty members complement their income through part-time teaching in private institutions while maintaining their public status. Others seek administrative or managerial responsibilities, which may offer additional allowances and symbolic recognition. In this context, continuance commitment tends to dominate, reflecting engagement grounded more in stability and career security than in emotional attachment (El Adraoui, 2025).

This specific pattern of commitment provides a relevant analytical lens for examining organizational citizenship behaviors in Moroccan universities, particularly when considered alongside leadership and justice perceptions. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for designing policies and practices that foster both professional engagement and cooperative behaviors in higher education institutions.

3. Methodology

Hypotheses and Research Model

This study aims to examine how the organizational commitment of Moroccan university faculty shapes the expression of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), while accounting for the mediating effects of academic leadership and perceived social justice within institutions. The research model is inspired by Organ's (1988) theoretical framework of OCB, enriched with attributes specific to the academic context identified in Canadian and international literature (Biron, Brun & Ivers, 2008; Lapointe, Vandenberghe & Panaccio, 2011; Bélanger & Paquet, 2007), particularly student assistance, pedagogical availability, and knowledge sharing.

The hypotheses formalize the expected relationships between organizational commitment, OCB, and the two mediating variables—leadership and social justice—while acknowledging that some citizenship behaviors may be more reliably observed by students, which constitutes one of the methodological originalities of this study.

Our research hypotheses are as follows:
H1: The organizational commitment of university faculty is positively associated with organizational citizenship behaviors.
H2: Academic leadership mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and OCB, such that fair and inspiring leadership strengthens the expression of OCB.
H3: Perceived social justice acts as a mediator in the relationship between organizational commitment and OCB, such that higher perceptions of justice increase faculty members' citizenship engagement.
H4: Academic leadership positively influences perceptions of social justice, thus establishing an additional indirect link between commitment and OCB through this dual mechanism.

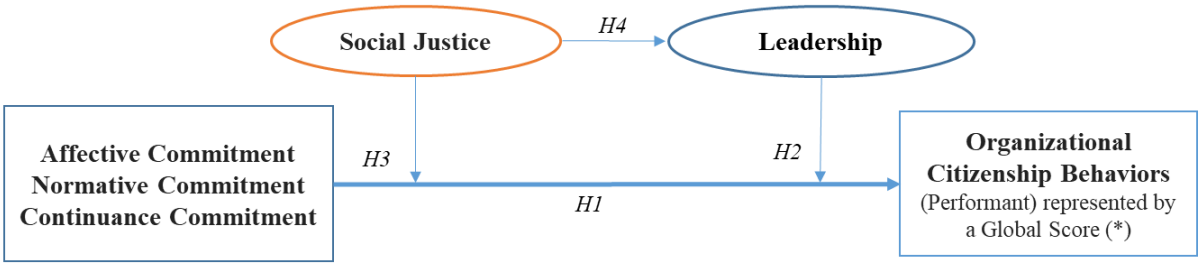
In his foundational model, Organ (1988) identifies five core dimensions: altruism (spontaneous assistance), conscientiousness (adherence to rules and duties), courtesy (conflict prevention and relational harmony), organizational loyalty (promotion and protection of the organization), and civic virtue (active participation in collective life). These attributes constitute a major theoretical foundation widely mobilized in international research and have been adapted to various sectors. In this study, Organ's (1988) model is used as the starting point and expanded to reflect the specificities of the higher education context. Following recommendations from Canadian and international studies (Biron, Brun & Ivers, 2008; Lapointe, Vandenberghe & Panaccio, 2011; Bélanger & Paquet, 2007), we added attributes particularly relevant to academia, such as student collaboration, pedagogical knowledge sharing, and citizenship oriented toward pedagogical innovation. Furthermore, to capture the actual perception of these behaviors, we incorporated an original dimension: behaviors observed by students, enabling a direct evaluation of teacher availability, pedagogical support, and motivational capacity.

The empirical approach is twofold. First, we used an adapted OCB scale administered to faculty members to measure their self-perceived and self-declared citizenship engagement. Second, we collected responses from

100 university students to triangulate these behaviors through external observation, thus enhancing the study's validity. This methodology allows us to move beyond self-reported measures, often criticized for social desirability bias, and to propose a contextualized and robust measure of OCB in higher education.

Accordingly, the final research model integrates Organ's (1988) foundational attributes with contextual extensions for academia, contributing both to the intercultural validation of the construct and to a deeper understanding of faculty citizenship behaviors in Moroccan higher education.

Figure 1: Research Model (Developed by the Author)



(*) The attributes derived from Organ's (1988) model, revised with two attributes from the literature and three additional attributes proposed by the students.

Measurement Instruments and Sample

The study was conducted with 51 faculty members and 100 students from several Moroccan universities. Given the sensitivity of the questions, many colleagues chose not to participate. To ensure anonymity and obtain reliable responses, participants were recruited outside the institution where the author works, thereby guaranteeing confidentiality and meaningful contributions. Among participating faculty, 20% had previously abandoned managerial responsibilities due to tensions with colleagues, while 10 faculty members currently hold managerial roles. The sample also included 15 female faculty members, some of whom avoided both the study and managerial positions due to family responsibilities.

The use of student responses is a methodological originality of this research. Certain organizational citizenship behaviors—such as assistance to students, availability, and resource sharing—are more accurately observable by students themselves. This dual evaluation corrects and complements faculty self-assessments and provides a more comprehensive measure of observable behaviors within the academic environment.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was assessed according to Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model, adapted to the Moroccan academic context:

Affective Commitment: emotional attachment to the university.
Examples:

- "I am proud to be part of this university."
- "I feel deeply attached to my institution."

Continuance Commitment: remaining in the university due to security and costs associated with leaving.
Examples:

- "I would remain in this institution mainly because it would be difficult to find an equivalent position elsewhere."
- "Leaving my institution would mean losing significant advantages or opportunities."

Normative Commitment: moral obligation toward the institution.
Examples:

- "I feel obliged to stay in this institution out of loyalty."
- "I must contribute to the success of my university even if I could work elsewhere."

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB)
OCB was measured using an adapted version of Organ's (1988) scale, enriched for academia based on Canadian and international studies (Paillé, 2007; Biron, Brun & Ivers, 2008; Lapointe, Vandenberghe & Panaccio, 2011; Bélanger & Paquet, 2007). These adaptations add attributes specific to higher education, such as collaboration with students and knowledge sharing.

Measured attributes and sample items:
Altruism / Assistance to colleagues and students
- "I take time to help colleagues even when not formally required."
- "I support students beyond class hours to facilitate their learning."

Conscientiousness / Compliance with rules
- "I respect departmental and university procedures."
- "I actively participate in meetings and academic obligations even when they are not mandatory."

Civic Virtue / Voluntary Involvement
- "I voluntarily participate in projects or committees that improve university functioning."
- "I propose initiatives to improve teaching quality or academic management."

Courtesy and Collaboration (added based on academic literature)
- "I communicate respectfully and constructively with colleagues and students."
- "I avoid unnecessary conflicts and promote cooperation."

Knowledge-Sharing and Innovation-Oriented Citizenship (academic context adaptation)
- "I share pedagogical knowledge and resources with colleagues."
- "I participate in collective initiatives aimed at improving teaching methods."

Behaviors Observed by Students (original contribution)
Availability:
- "This instructor responds quickly to my questions and requests."
- "He/she is accessible outside class hours to help me."

Pedagogical Support:
- "The instructor provides clear and detailed explanations."
- "He/she offers additional resources to support learning."

Encouragement and Motivation:
- "This instructor encourages me to participate actively in class."
- "He/she values our efforts and ideas."

OCB was measured using two distinct data sources: 51 faculty self-assessments and 100 student evaluations. For analytical purposes and to ensure comparability, a subsample of 51 student responses was randomly selected from the 100 collected. This strategy balances the weight of both groups and reduces the risk of bias from overrepresentation. Based on this, we computed a mean score for each OCB dimension by aggregating faculty and student evaluations. Although exploratory, this approach serves two purposes: (1) combining actor and observer perspectives to strengthen convergent validity, and (2) providing a global indicator usable for SPSS regression analyses. Acknowledging the limitations of this approach, we view it as a pragmatic first step before more sophisticated analyses (CFA, multi-source SEM) in future research.

Academic Leadership
Adapted to the Moroccan academic context, items refer to the institution's director or academic leader:

Vision and Inspiration:
- "The director clearly communicates objectives and inspires academic staff."
- "The director's orientations motivate my professional engagement."

Support and Recognition:
- "The director acknowledges my efforts and supports my professional development."
- "I receive useful guidance and encouragement for my academic progress."

Justice and Fairness:
- "Decisions regarding responsibilities and promotions are fair."
- "The director treats staff with respect and consideration."

Organizational Justice
Evaluated according to Colquitt (2001), with adaptations for universities:

Distributive Justice:
- "Workload and benefits are distributed fairly."
- "Opportunities for advancement are accessible to everyone in a fair manner."

Procedural Justice:
- "Rules for accessing managerial positions are clear and transparent."
- "Important decisions follow coherent and understandable procedures."

Interactional Justice:
- "The director treats me with respect and listens to my concerns."
- "Interactions with the director are constructive and respectful."

Reliability and Analysis
A Cronbach reliability test conducted on all scales yielded α = 0.80, indicating good internal consistency. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS and included descriptive statistics, correlations, and mediation tests to examine the role of leadership and social justice in the relationship between continuance commitment and OCB.

4. Results

The data were analyzed using SPSS to examine the relationships between organizational commitment, academic leadership, perceived social justice, and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). The reliability of the measurement scales was satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80, indicating good internal consistency.

Commitment Dimensions as Predictors of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors
Correlation analyses (see Table 1) reveal contrasted relationships between the three dimensions of organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix (SPSS Output)

		Affective Commitment Index	Continuance Commitment Index	Normative Commitment Index	OCB Score
Affective Commitment Index	Pearson Correlation	1	0,078	0,161	0,006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,586	0,259	0,967
	N	51	51	51	51
Continuance Commitment Index	Pearson Correlation	0,078	1	,402**	,371**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,586		0,003	0,007
	N	51	51	51	51
Normative Commitment Index	Pearson Correlation	0,161	,402**	1	,921**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,259	0,003		0,000
	N	51	51	51	51
OCB Score (pour Organizational Citizenship Behavior Score)	Pearson Correlation	0,006	,371**	,921**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,967	0,007	0,000	
	N	51	51	51	51

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

Affective commitment is not significantly related to OCB (r = 0.006, p = 0.967). This result indicates that emotional attachment to the institution does not, in itself, translate into discretionary or voluntary behaviors among faculty members in the context studied.

Continuance commitment shows a moderate and statistically significant association with OCB (r = 0.371, p = 0.007). Faculty members whose attachment to the institution is driven by job security and professional stability tend to exhibit certain citizenship behaviors, mainly those related to cooperation and compliance with institutional norms.

Normative commitment displays a very strong and highly significant relationship with OCB (r = 0.921, p < 0.001). Faculty members who feel a moral obligation toward their institution are the most likely to engage in citizenship behaviors, suggesting that perceived duty and adherence to professional norms play a central role in fostering extra-role behaviors.

Qualitative data support these quantitative findings. Faculty responses indicate that, even in situations of dissatisfaction or disagreement with institutional management, they continue to fulfill their responsibilities toward students and colleagues. This commitment is frequently described as a matter of professional conscience rather than personal attachment. Overall, the results show that organizational citizenship behaviors among Moroccan faculty members are primarily associated with normative commitment, followed by continuance commitment, while affective commitment does not exhibit a significant effect.

To deepen these insights, it is necessary to assess the influence of academic leadership and perceived social justice. Regression analyses allow the examination of their potential mediating effects in the relationship between commitment and OCB, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of the factors that promote—or inhibit—citizenship behaviors in Moroccan universities.

Table 2: Relationship Between Leadership and Social Justice (SPSS Output)

Coefficients[a]

Model				Standardized Coefficients Bêta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1,017	0,360		2,824	0,007
	Leadership Index	0,617	0,126	0,575	4,914	0,000

a. Dependant variable : Social Justice Index

The results (see Table 2) show a positive and significant relationship between academic leadership and perceived social justice (r = 0.617, p < 0.001). This confirms that fair, structured, and inspiring leadership enhances perceptions of justice—consistent with findings on transformational and distributed leadership in Canadian universities (Lapointe, Vandenberghe & Panaccio, 2011; Biron, Brun & Ivers, 2008). In this context, social justice emerges as a direct consequence of legitimate leadership capable of regulating internal rivalries and promoting cooperation, conditions essential for the expression of OCB.

These results also highlight the specificities of Moroccan universities, where faculty are predominantly motivated by stability and job security. The absence of a significant link between affective commitment and OCB diverges from findings in Canadian studies, where emotional engagement typically plays a central role. This underscores a contextual singularity: citizenship behaviors among Moroccan faculty are more strongly influenced by institutional and normative factors than by affective or intrinsic motivations.

Thus, the study underscores the potential mediating role of leadership and social justice in the relationship between organizational commitment and OCB, confirming that equitable management strategies and fair organizational practices can reinforce citizenship behaviors even when commitment is primarily normative or continuity-based.

Mediation Effects of Leadership and Social Justice in the Relationship Between Organizational Commitment and OCB

The results reveal a strong and significant relationship between leadership and perceived social justice ($r = 0.617$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that leadership quality has a direct influence on fairness perceptions within universities. Legitimate, structured, and credible leadership appears essential for regulating internal relations and reinforcing perceptions of equity.

However, mediation analyses (Table 3) indicate that neither leadership nor social justice mediates the relationship between organizational commitment and OCB. For continuance commitment, the direct effect on OCB remains significant ($c' = 0.110$, $p = 0.006$), while indirect effects through leadership or justice are not significant. Similarly, for normative commitment, the direct relationship with OCB remains extremely strong ($c' \approx 0.982–0.996$, $p < 0.001$), without any mediating influence.

Faculty testimonies illustrate this autonomy from managerial processes:

"I focus on my courses and leave the institution without engaging in internal affairs."
"When the academic director invites me for coffee, I know he wants to involve me or make me sign something; I decline and go home."
"I prefer stopping by the cafeteria after class, where I have a better chance of meeting the academic director to discuss concrete issues."
"I do not understand what happens at the administrative level. Invitations to participate in decisions are rare."
"I don't have time; a teacher must teach and publish—the rest is not my responsibility."
"Institutional management does not interest me; I focus on my work and my students."
"Administrative discussions are not part of my role; I prefer focusing on teaching and research."
"I am rarely asked to participate in internal decision-making; I do not feel involved in governance."

These statements confirm that citizenship behaviors are largely disconnected from leadership and governance structures and instead rooted in individual professional norms and continuity-based motivations.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analyses (SPSS Output)

Variable X	Variable Y	Effet of X on Y	c *(global effect)*	c' *(direct effect)*	Coefficient a (Effect of X on M) M: Social Justice	Coefficient b (Effect of M on Y)	Mediation effect (a*b)
Normative Commitment	CCO (*)	*Confirmed*	c=.990 sig .000	c'=.982 sig .000	a= -.137 sig.509	b=-.058 sig .166	0.008
Continuance Commitment		*Confirmed*	c=.107 sig .007	c'=.110 sig .006	a= .024 sig.000	b=-.139 sig .160	-0.003
Affective Commitment		*Non significant*					

Variable X	Variable Y	Effet of X on Y	c *(global effect)*	c' *(direct effect)*	Coefficient a (Effect of X on M) M : Leadership	Coefficient b (Effect of M on Y)	Mediation effect (a*b)
Normative Commitment	CCO (*)	*Confirmed*	c=.990 sig .000	c'=.996 sig .000	a= .154 sig.426	b=-.044 sig .329	0.007
Continuance Commitment		*Confirmed*	c=.107 sig .007	c'=.110 sig .008	a= .087 sig.089	b=-.033 sig .769	-0.003
Affective Commitment		*Non significant*					

(*) organizational citizenship behaviors

Discussion

The findings reveal a specific configuration within Moroccan higher education that diverges from dominant models in organizational behavior. Contrary to evidence from Western and Canadian contexts, academic leadership and perceived organizational justice do not directly foster organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). Instead, OCB appears to be primarily driven by normative and continuance forms of organizational commitment.

Although academic leadership significantly shapes perceptions of social justice, this influence does not extend to citizenship behaviors. Faculty members tend to adopt autonomous and task-oriented postures, focusing mainly on teaching and research activities while remaining distanced from administrative and managerial dynamics. This separation between professional practice and institutional governance limits the effectiveness of managerial mechanisms traditionally viewed as central drivers of extra-role behaviors.

These results contribute to the literature by highlighting the contextual boundaries of established models linking leadership, justice, and OCB. In environments characterized by strong employment stability, limited participatory governance, and weak managerial legitimacy, citizenship behaviors may develop independently of leadership practices and fairness perceptions. This finding challenges the assumed universality of leadership- and justice-based explanations of prosocial behavior at work.

Comparatively, Canadian studies emphasize the central role of transformational leadership and organizational justice in promoting cooperation, mutual assistance, and participation among faculty members (Bélanger & Paquet, 2007; Lapointe, Vandenberghe & Panaccio, 2011; Biron, Brun & Ivers, 2008). In these contexts, leadership quality and fairness mechanisms actively structure professional engagement. The Moroccan case, by contrast, reveals a decoupling between managerial action and citizenship behaviors.

As one of the first empirical investigations of these relationships in Moroccan higher education, this study shows that OCB is more strongly rooted in moral obligation and employment continuity than in leadership or justice mechanisms. Faculty testimonies reinforce this pattern, illustrating a professional logic based on duty, stability, and individual responsibility rather than collective governance or managerial involvement.

Overall, the findings point to a structural gap between managerial practices and faculty behaviors. While organizational theory identifies leadership and justice as key levers for encouraging citizenship behaviors (Organ, 1988; Colquitt, 2001), the Moroccan higher education context suggests that these levers remain insufficient in the absence of participatory cultures, transparent evaluation systems, and credible governance structures. This raises important questions about the transferability of mainstream management models and calls for context-sensitive approaches to organizational development in higher education.

5. Practical Implications and Recommendations

Although no mediation effects were observed, the strong and significant relationship between academic leadership and perceived social justice underscores the importance of developing legitimate and competent leadership within Moroccan universities. Leadership quality remains a key lever for improving fairness perceptions, reducing internal tensions, and strengthening institutional cohesion, even if it does not directly translate into higher levels of organizational citizenship behaviors in the present study.

These findings suggest that academic leadership should be strengthened through selection criteria based on managerial competencies, academic legitimacy, and formal leadership training, rather than administrative seniority or political considerations. Such an approach would enhance leadership credibility and contribute to more equitable organizational environments.

In addition, the results highlight the need for structured and professional human resource management systems in Moroccan higher education. Transparent evaluation procedures, objective promotion criteria, and clearer career pathways would help restore trust in institutional processes and support faculty motivation. While these mechanisms may not immediately generate citizenship behaviors, they constitute essential foundations for long-term organizational stability and legitimacy.

From a policy perspective, these recommendations align with national and international guidelines advocating equity, accountability, and professionalism in university governance. Strengthening leadership capacity and institutional justice should therefore be viewed as strategic priorities for higher education reform rather than as short-term behavioral interventions.

Overall, the study emphasizes that leadership and social justice function less as direct drivers of citizenship behaviors and more as structural conditions for improving organizational functioning. Addressing these dimensions is essential for supporting the development, credibility, and sustainability of Moroccan universities, and for creating institutional contexts more conducive to engagement and collective responsibility.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the limited empirical literature on organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) in Moroccan higher education by examining the roles of academic leadership and perceived social justice. The findings reveal a distinctive contextual pattern in which OCB is primarily driven by normative and continuance commitment, while academic leadership and social justice do not exert mediating effects in this relationship.

Faculty members demonstrate a strong sense of professional responsibility toward teaching and students yet remain largely detached from managerial and administrative processes. This professional autonomy highlights a structural separation between academic practice and institutional governance, challenging dominant theoretical assumptions that position leadership and justice as universal drivers of citizenship behaviors.

By contrasting these results with findings from Canadian universities and the Moroccan private sector, where leadership and organizational justice play a central role in fostering OCB, the study underscores the importance of contextual and institutional factors. In Moroccan public universities, the limited participatory culture and the weak legitimacy of managerial structures appear to constrain the influence of conventional motivational mechanisms.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that strengthening academic leadership, improving perceptions of social justice, and professionalizing human resource management systems are essential conditions for enhancing organizational functioning. While these levers may not immediately translate into higher citizenship behaviors, they constitute critical foundations for restoring trust, legitimacy, and long-term engagement within universities.

Finally, this research opens promising avenues for future studies by emphasizing the need to further investigate institutional, cultural, and governance-related determinants of OCB in Moroccan higher education. Such efforts would contribute to the development of more context-sensitive models of engagement and support the ongoing transformation of higher education systems in similar public-sector environments.

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