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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR: EVIDENCE FROM HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN PAKISTAN

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Organizational Justice, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Citizenship behavior, and Higher Educational Institutions.
Introduction

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Abstract

Background: *This research aims to investigate the relationship of organizational justice with organizational citizenship behavior, the mediating effect of organizational commitment between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior, among the teaching faculty of higher educational institutions of Punjab, Pakistan.*

Methods: *This survey-based study was conducted in selected higher educational institutions of Punjab, Pakistan. The data was collected from 284 respondents of selected universities who completed the questionnaire used for analysis by using SPSS 25 and (SEM AMOS) software.*

Results: *The results of the research revealed a significantly positive relationship of organizational citizenship behavior with both oranizational justice and organizational commitment. Furthermore, a mediating relationship or organizational commitment has been proven significant between the relationship of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior.*

Contribution: *This study is one of the few studies conducted in this field and will help the management and policy makers of higher educational institutions in Punjab, Pakistan, to transform and encourage fair practices (OJ) to enhance discretionary work behavior (OCB) among faculty members to enhance organization performance.*

INTRODUCTION

Organizational justice (OJ) the extent to which employees perceive fairness in decision-making processes, outcomes, and interpersonal treatment plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational attitudes and behaviors among higher education faculty (Majid et al., 2024). In Pakistan's university sector, perceptions of fairness have been positively associated with enhanced psychological capital, organizational commitment, and job performance among faculty in public universities.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) refers to voluntary discretionary actions such as mentoring, helping colleagues, sportsmanship, and promoting institutional reputation that are vital for institutional effectiveness but lie beyond formal job descriptions. Although direct research linking OJ to OCB in Pakistani HEIs is still emerging, the broader literature on social exchange theory supports the notion that fairness perceptions motivate OCB.

Importantly, organizational commitment (OC) the psychological attachment of employees to their institutions, typically conceptualized via affective, continuance, and normative dimensions often acts as a key mediator. A comparative study of public and private higher education institutions in Punjab revealed nuanced differences: public university faculty exhibited moderately higher overall commitment, especially continuance commitment, while private faculty showed relatively higher affective and normative attachment(Abdul Hameed Qamar et al., 2024) .These findings suggest that institutional context affects how fairness translates into commitment.

Existing evidence from other sectors further underscores the mediating role of OC. Migration Letters studies examined Pakistani teachers and bank employees, demonstrating that organizational commitment mediated the relationship between OJ and critical outcomes including job performance and OCB-like behaviors. Specifically, OJ positively predicted OC, which in turn enhanced outcome variables, even in the absence of direct OJ → OCB effects.

Social exchange theory offers a compelling explanatory framework: when faculty perceive fairness, they reciprocate with stronger psychological commitment; committed faculty are then more likely to engage in extra-role behaviors that support institutional goals. Yet in spite of the plausibility of OJ → OC → OCB pathways no study published in 2024 or early 2025 has directly tested this mediation model within Pakistani higher education institutions.

This study addresses that gap by empirically examining the mediated relationship: Organizational Justice influences Organizational Citizenship Behavior indirectly via Organizational Commitment. We hypothesize that higher perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice among HEI faculty will strengthen affective, continuance and normative commitment, thereby fostering greater OCB (altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy and sportsmanship) across academic staff. This research contributes to the literature by integrating recent empirical findings on justice perceptions, commitment, and citizenship behaviors in organizations, while shedding light on the psychological mechanism (OC) through which fairness translates into proactive, discretionary contribution and committed employees within universities of Punjab Pakistan.

Research Objectives

This research will have the following objectives

a) To what extent do organizational justice influence the organizational commitment and OCB among teaching faculty of higher educational institutions?

b) To evaluate the mediating role of organizational commitment between organizational justice and OCB.

c)

Significance

This research aims to analyze the OCB amongst the teaching faculty members at the university level in Pakistan. By considering the objectives, OCB's importance is increasing in studying higher educational institutions. The factors contributing to OCB's development are marked as the key factors in the success and performance of higher educational institutions. This research will illustrate organizational justice in developing organizational commitment and OCB. Organizational justice increases the organizational commitment that influences OCB among the teachers of higher education institutions in Pakistan. To achieve this aim, data will be collected using questionnaires and distributed randomly amongst faculty members of universities who will be selected as a sample.

Literature Review

Organizational Justice and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational justice (OJ) and OCB are positively associated, and OJ has a direct positive impact on OCB (Obedgiu et al., 2020); Employee perception of justice is directly linked with organizational justice; therefore, the OJ has attained remarkable attention in the literature (Demir, 2015; Elma, 2013; Roch & Shanock, 2006). The conceptualization of OJ among the employees helps to present positive attitudes and behavior towards the job (Colquitt et al., 2005). Sheeraz et al. (2020) investigated the perception of fairness in private higher educational institutions in Pakistan and concluded a significant positive

association of organizational justice with OCB. Organizational justice and OCB are significantly related to local government civil servants in Uganda (Obedgiu et al., 2020).

Similarly, Al Afari and Elanain (2014) found that organizational justice positively and significantly impacts the OCB of UAE public healthcare sector faculty. Yardan et al. (2014) revealed in a study to test the relationship between the perception of fairness and OCB in hospital employees that organizational justice has a significantly positive relation with OCB. The positive perception of employees about salary distribution, bonus or promotional offers help them to enhance OCB. Saifi and Shahzad (2017) tested the relationship between organizational justice and OCB in private and public organizations and concluded that organizational justice has a significant positive relationship with OCB. Tepper and Taylor (2003) also found a significant positive relationship between the justice perceptions of organizational members and their OCB performance. Another study also found supporting evidence that organizational justice proved a significant predictor of OCB among teachers from Turkish secondary schools (Bökeoğlu & Yılmaz, 2008).

Contradictory to these researches, a study conducted in Iran by Najafi et al. (2011) found justice's positive but indirect influence on OCB among educational experts working in universities. Among all the dimensions of OCB, procedural justice is the strongest determinant of OCB among subordinates and their supervisors (Moorman et al., 1998). However, in another research, distributive justice was found to be a stronger predictor of turnover intentions, job satisfaction and OCB than perceived procedural fairness (Nadiri & Tanova, 2010). And according to Fassina et al. (2008), interactional justice is the strongest unique predictor of OCB. Moreover, Ehigie and Otukoya (2005) identified that perceived fair interpersonal treatment strongly influences employees' OCB.

Lastly, a study on OCB in the Pakistani education sector targeting respondents from different branches of Punjab University reveals that procedural justice has a positive and significant impact on employees' citizenship behaviors and distributive justice was found to have a positive but insignificant impact on employee extra-role (Iqbal et al., 2012). On the contrary, Cho and Treadway (2011) asserted that the social exchange theory did not provide a complete and comprehensive explanation of the psychological processes of OJ and OCB. However, Jehanzeb and Mohanty (2019) revealed an insignificant relationship between organizational justice and OCB while studying Pakistan's workers in the banking sector. However, the relationship between organizational justice with OCB is reported as insignificant by Batool (2013), Yardan et al. (2014) and Hasyim and Palupiningdyah (2021) in the context of Asian countries. So these contradictory findings have encouraged the researcher to reinvestigate this relationship in a different population (higher educational institutions in Pakistan). Several new researchers, e.g., Abbasi et al. (2022), applied Social Exchange Theory and found that there is a positive impact of OJ on OCB and a negative impact on workplace deviance. Similarly, Bakeer et al. (2022) found that OJ is positively associated with OCB. Therefore, it is hypothesized that;

H1: Organizational justice has a positive impact on organizational citizenship behavior.

Organizational Justice and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is highly discussed in many studies on organizations (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Productivity, improved work efficiency, increased performance, and OCB are only some positive outcomes linked to employee and organizational commitment shown in the literature on organizational commitment (Ohana & Meyer, 2016) Affective connection to the organization grows when workers believe their contributions are treated fairly (Meyer et al., 1991). There was also a strong relationship between distributive, procedural, and interpersonal fairness and an employee's commitment to his company. Moreover, Ohana and Meyer (2016) found that employees of French non-profit service organizations who valued distributive justice were more committed to their organizations.

Similarly, Swalhi et al. (2017)), who performed research to examine the connection between employees' perceptions of fair treatment on the job and their dedication to their companies, found that

workers' impressions of fair treatment had a beneficial impact on their commitment to their employers. . Organizational justice was proven to be a significant predictor of employee loyalty by (Cheng, 2014)

Safdar and Liu (2020) study on bank workers in Pakistan found that workers' perceptions of fairness significantly and favourably affected their dedication to the company. Informational justice was proven to have a favourable effect on organizational engagement in Pakistan's healthcare industry by (Saleem et al., 2018). Organizational justice considerably affects employees' commitment to their companies in Pakistan's banking sector (Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2019). Therefore, it is hypothesized that;

H2: Organizational justice has a positive impact on organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

The connection between OC and OCB has been explained using the social exchange theory. According to this idea, workers who have positive experiences with the company act in advantageous ways to both the organization (OCB) and other workers (Saxena & Saxena, 2015) Moreover, research generally discovered a clear correlation between OCB and OC (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Chen & Francesco, 2003; Dash & Pradhan, 2014). As previously mentioned, certain researchers did not discover a connection between OC or its dimensions and OCB (Alotaibi, 2001; Williams & Anderson, 1991). However, Affective commitment and OCB were found to be significantly positively correlated in numerous research (Feather & Rauter, 2004; Nuzula & Nurmaya, 2020; Prayitno et al., 2022), as well as normative commitment and OCB (Gautam et al., 2005; Meyer et al., 2019; Ridwan et al., 2020)

While some studies (Devece et al., 2016; Nguni et al., 2006; Abid & Farooqi, 2015) revealed a substantial positive link between continuation commitment and OCB, other studies reported a negative or insignificant relationship (Jorbonian et al., 2014; Shore & Wayne, 1993). But, in most cases, strong positive correlations between the two constructs were discovered through Meta-analyses of the OCB-OC connection (LePine et al., 2002). Based on the outcomes of previous empirical studies and Meta-analyses on the link between OC and OCB (Cetin et al., 2015; Prasetio et al., 2017; Tharikh et al., 2016), in recent study, Anjum and Yusof (2025) found a positive significant relationship of organizational commitment and organizational justice among the faculty of higher educational institutions of Pakistan. Thus the following hypothesis is formulated.

H3: Organizational commitment has a positive impact on organizational citizenship behavior.

Organizational Commitment as a Mediator between Organizational Justice and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB is influenced by levels of commitment to the organization, which is the primary focus of the current investigation. There is a correlation between teachers' organizational commitment and their students' organizational citizenship actions. Educators who reported higher levels of OCBs were more likely to have established organizational commitment (Aftab et al., 2020). Also, workers' actions in the workplace are heavily influenced by how they feel their employer treats them fairly. The availability of fair decision-making systems, the equitable distribution of awards and the timely transmission of important communications to employees are all signs of an organization's commitment to fairness (Hasyim & Palupiningdyah, 2021). Workers will be more committed to the company when this is in place, and they see that their concerns have been heard (Bakhshi et al., 2009). When workers believe they are being treated fairly, they are more invested in the success of the company, as found by (Mahmoudi et al., 2017).

Moreover, employees dedicated to their jobs are more inclined to act in ways that benefit their employers. Highly engaged employees in their organizations also tend to have a positive self-image when faced with adversity (Aftab et al., 2020). Their actions outside of their job description (also known as "OCB") reflect this view. Previous studies corroborate this assumption by showing that a strong sense of organizational commitment is a positive and considerable mediator between organizational justice and employee citizenship behaviour (Jehanzeb & Mohanty, 2019; Mahmoudi et al., 2017). Therefore, it is proposed that:

H4: Organizational commitment positively mediates between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior.

Consequently, SET can be used to characterize the employee-organization exchange relationship by laying the groundwork for good corporate citizenship. So, this research aims to use social exchange theory as a basis for uncovering the various factors that contribute to OCB. The rule of reciprocity is included in the practice of SET in organizational behaviour since it is based on the idea of trade (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). So, it is generally accepted that an employee's relationship with his employer is based on reciprocity (Liaquat & Mehmood, 2017). Based on this theoretical framework and literature review, following conceptual framework is developed (Figure 1).

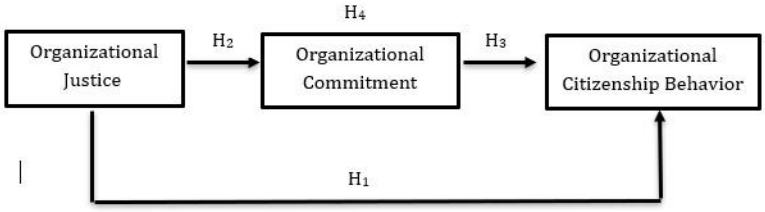


Figure1. Theoretical Framework

Research methodology

Scholars are guided that they must fully understand the philosophical assumptions of worldviews Creswell and Clark (2017) because failure to determine the philosophical issues influences the research process quality (Bryman, 2016). The paradigm of this study is a positivistic approach widely used for quantitative studies.

The population is referred to every relevant case that can participate in research or study (Babbie, 2020; David & Sutton, 2010). The faculty members of 82 higher educational institutions of Punjab Pakistan are target population of this study. (Government of Pakistan, 2024). Out of 82 HEIs, 31 universities are private, and the remaining 51 institutions are functioning under the umbrella of public bodies (PHEC, 2024). However, these institutes include 58000 teaching faculty members working in higher educational institutions in Pakistan as per the Higher Education Department(Finance Division, 2023). Hence, the sampling technique for collecting data was Multi-stage stratified cluster sampling

A well-calculated sample enables the researcher to make accurate inferences about the broader population based on a representative group. As emphasized Al-Worafi (2024). For this study, the researcher applies the widely used Yamane (1973) formula, which is particularly suitable when the total population is known (Osahon & Kingsley, 2016; Yamane, 1973). This method offers a straightforward and practical means to calculate an adequate sample size. So the sample size for this research was **397.** 10% is also added as a no-response allowance which make the sample size **437.**

Self-administered survey method was used for data collection. Section "A" of the questionnaire was designed to collect the demographic information of the respondents. This information includes company name, gender, age, marital status, education level, and employment sector, years of experience and designation.

Section "B" consists of questions relevant to the variables of this study. All of these variables have different no. of questions, but these questions were answered using a 10-point Numerical Interval Scale with 1 indicating strongly disagreeing and 10 indicating strongly agreeing. The 10-point scale, provides more variance to determine the variable, increases measurement accuracy, reduces the leniency problem, provides independence for data measurement, reduces central tendency and the "halo effect" associated with scales, and is appropriate for parametric and advanced statistical analysis techniques (Awang et al., 2016; Coelho & Esteves, 2007; Hill et al., 2007).

Independent Variable

- 22 items of Organizational Justice on 3 dimensions were adapted from (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993)

Dependent Variable

- **OCB** construct was measured by adapting a scale of Podsakoff et al. (1990). This scale consists of five dimensions i.e. Altruism (5 items), Courtesy (5 items), Civic virtue (4 items), Conscientiousness (5 items) and Sportsmanship (5 items).

Mediating variable

- Organizational Commitment was measured by adapting the 23-item scale of Allen and Meyer (1990). It consists of three dimensions: affective Commitment (7 items), Continuity Commitment (7 items), and Normative Commitment (9 items).

Data is collected through a self-administered questionnaire from selected public and private higher educational institutions. Out of 437 questionnaires distributed, 284 were usable responses, so the usable response rate is 71%. SPSS 25 and SEM AMOS are used for data analysis and hypothesis testing.

Organizational Justice – Organizational Commitment – Organizational Citizenship Behavior

This model explains the relationship between OJ with OCB (H1), OJ with OC (H2), OC with OCB (H3) and mediating role of OC between OJ and OCB (H4). This model is given in Figure 2. Further, the statistical results that discuss the significance of direct relationships are given below in Table 1.

Table 1: OJ→ OC → OCB Analysis

Hypothesis	Direct paths	β	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	P- value
H1	OJ → OCB	0.537	0.0483	.0083	0.2002	0.0334
H2	OJ→ OC	0.331	0.1076	.0963	0.5235	0.0049
H3	OC → OCB	0.142	0.0438	.0379	0.2118	0.0053
Model fitness indices: $\chi 2/df=2.11$,IFI=.90, TLI=.90, CFI=.90, RMSEA=.08, SRMR=.05						

Table 1 shows that the model is significant, such as, the value of $\chi 2/df$ is 2.11 which indicate a good fit between the model and the data. Furthermore, CFI, IFI and TLI each exhibit value of 0.90, which means the model fits the data adequately. Moreover, RMSEA value of 0.08 indicates a moderate fit and SRMR value of 0.05 indicates an excellent fit. Hence, model fitness indices indicate that the model fits the data adequately, with some indices suggesting a moderate to excellent fit. Therefore, hypothetical relationship can be checked based on this data.

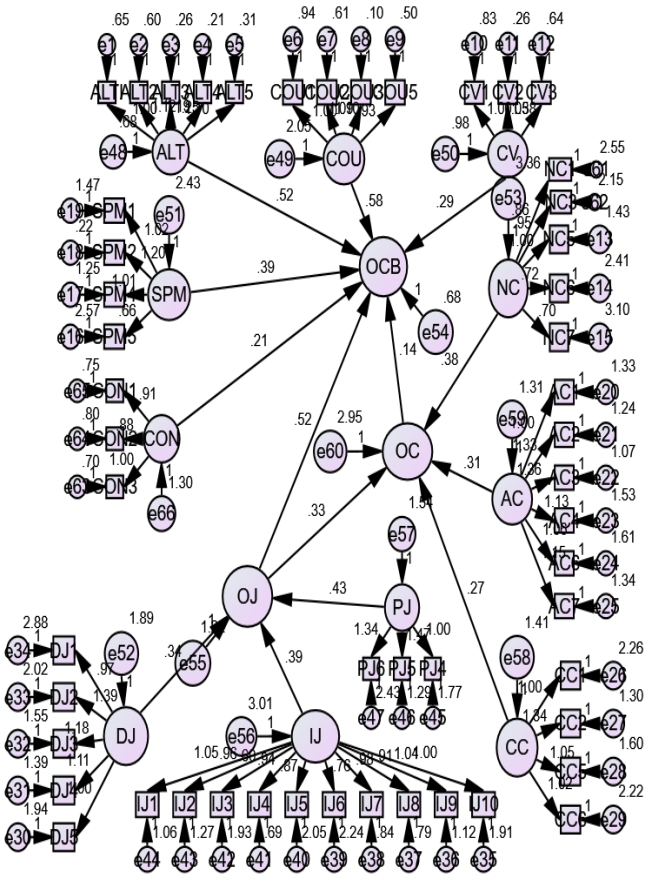
To check the proposed relationships of this research under model, it was found that H1 is supported. As the standardized coefficient (β=0.537, p= 0.0334) for the relationship between OJ and OCB is positive and significant. Furthermore, H2 is also supported by showing a positive and significant relationship (β= 0.331, P= 0.0049) between OJ and OC. Lastly, H3 was also supported according to model by having β value equals to 0.142 with significance value equals to 0.0053. Hence, it also proved that OC and OCB has positive and statistically significant relationship. These relationships have been shown diagrammatically in Figure 2. Furthermore, the results of mediating hypothesis that explains the role of OC between OJ and OCB is given in Table 2. This mediation was checked by using the procedure that is recommended by (Awang et al., 2015) It is suggested that to check mediation effects, researcher needs to calculate indirect effect and direct effect of the proposed relationships. Further, the value of the indirect effect must be less than the value of the direct effect for occurrence of partial mediation (direct effect between IV and DV should also be significant). Whereas, if the value of the indirect effect greater than the value of the direct effect then it means complete mediation exists however, in this case direct effect between IV and DV should be insignificant.

Table 2: Results for mediation of OJ→ OC → OCB

Results for H4	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Coefficient	0.537 (sig = 0.0083)	0.0470	0.584
Type of mediation	Partial mediation, as direct effect is significant		

Note: 5,000 Bootstraps; 95% CI =confidence interval; *p<0.05

The mediation test was carried out after the direct relationships had been tested. To check the role of OC as a mediator between OJ and OCB, three paths were identified to be assessed. First, path a is from OJ to OC with β= 0.331 (p-value = 0.0049); second path b is from OC to OCB with β= 0.142 (p-value = 0.0053) and direct path c' is from OJ to OCB with β= 0.537 (p-value = 0.0083). Here, direct effect measures the direct impact of OJ on OCB, not accounting for the mediator (OC). Hence, a coefficient of 0.537, with a p-value of 0.0083 (significant at the 0.05 level), indicates that OJ has a significant positive direct impact on OCB. Furthermore, from these three paths indirect and total effects can also be calculated. Such as the 'total effect' represents the overall impact of OJ on OCB, combining both the direct effect and the indirect effect through OC. This coefficient indicates that higher OJ is associated with higher OCB. In addition, the 'indirect effect', calculated as the product of the path coefficients from OJ to OC (a = 0.331) and from OC to OCB (b = 0.142), is 0.0470. This reflects the portion of the effect of OJ on OCB that is mediated by OC. Both paths involved in this mediation are significant, as indicated by their p-values (0.0049 for OJ → OC and 0.0053 for OC → OCB). In short, H4 is supported as the results reveal that indirect effect (0.0470) is positive and contributes to the total effect, which indicates that part of the impact of OJ on OCB is through its influence on OC.



Discussion

The findings of this study confirm a significant positive relationship between organizational justice (OJ) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), with organizational commitment (OC) serving as a mediating variable. This supports the theoretical framework of social exchange theory, which posits that when employees perceive fairness in outcomes, procedures, and interpersonal interactions, they are more likely to reciprocate with behaviors that go beyond formal role requirements (Blau, 1964).

In the context of higher education institutions in Pakistan, faculty who reported higher levels of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice were more inclined to exhibit OCBs such as helping colleagues, mentoring students, and advocating for institutional goals. These behaviors, while not formally required, contribute significantly to institutional performance, especially in resource-constrained academic settings. Organizational commitment, particularly affective and normative commitment, was found to mediate this relationship. Faculty who perceived fair treatment demonstrated a stronger emotional attachment to their institutions, which in turn fostered discretionary behavior. This aligns with recent studies Majid et al. (2024); Abdul Harmeed Qamar et al. (2024) that suggest fairness boosts organizational loyalty and motivates individuals to act in the best interests of the institution. The mediation effect highlights that fairness alone may not directly drive OCB unless it first translates into a sense of commitment.

This finding is particularly relevant in the Pakistani HEI context, where disparities in resources and management practices between public and private institutions may influence justice perceptions and, consequently, employee engagement. The results of this study also confirms the findings of Anjum and Yusof (2025) that emphasize the need for university administrators to strengthen justice practices to build commitment and encourage citizenship behavior. Fair workload distribution, transparent promotion policies, and respectful communication can reinforce faculty dedication and engagement ultimately enhancing institutional effectiveness and student outcomes.

Recommendations, Limitations, and Conclusions

This study highlights the importance of fostering organizational justice to enhance organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) through increased organizational commitment (OC) in higher educational institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan. Based on these findings, it is recommended that university administrators implement fair and transparent policies related to promotions, workload distribution, and performance evaluations.

Faculty development programs should incorporate elements that promote procedural and interactional justice to strengthen trust and commitment. However, this study has certain limitations. First, it employed a cross-sectional design, limiting causal interpretations. Second, the data was collected from a limited number of HEIs, which may affect the generalizability of results across all institutions in Pakistan. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data could introduce response bias.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying discretionary workplace behavior in academia. It confirms that perceptions of fairness influence OCB not only directly but also indirectly through commitment. This mediated relationship underscores the critical role of organizational commitment as a channel for converting fairness perceptions into positive employee behavior. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs, expand geographic scope, or include private-sector institutions to offer broader understanding. Strengthening justice practices remains essential for promoting a committed and cooperative academic workforce.

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