

The Influence of Transformational Leadership , Perceived Organizational Justice on Employee Performance: The Role of Job Satisfaction (A Conceptual Paper on University of Tripoli)

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ABSTRACT

Employee performance (EP) is crucial for the effectiveness and sustainability of public universities, especially in fragile and resource-constrained environments. The University of Tripoli, as one of the largest Libyan governmental universities, faces persistent challenges related to staff motivation, job satisfaction, and performance, alongside broader systemic pressures such as financial constraints and organisational instability. Existing studies on Libyan higher education emphasize the significance of leadership behavior, fairness perceptions, and reward systems in shaping staff attitudes and outcomes; however, they often examine these factors in isolation and rarely at the level of a single institution. This conceptual study develops an integrative framework to explain EP at the University of Tripoli by focusing on three organisational antecedents—transformational leadership (TL), perceived organisational justice (POJ), and financial and moral incentives (FaMI)—and the mediating role of job satisfaction (JS). Drawing on recent empirical and review studies in higher education and public-sector organisations, the framework proposes that each of these three antecedents has both a direct effect on EP (task and contextual) and an indirect effect transmitted through job satisfaction. The study formulates a set of propositions that specify these relationships and position job satisfaction as the central psychological mechanism linking organisational conditions to performance. By focusing on a single Libyan governmental university and modeling leadership, justice, and incentives jointly rather than separately, the framework provides a context-sensitive and theoretically grounded basis for future empirical research. It also provides practical guidance for university leaders and policymakers seeking to improve EP through targeted interventions in leadership development, fairness-enhancing practices, and incentive design at the University of Tripoli.

Keywords: Transformational leadership (TL); Perceived Organisational justice (POJ); Financial and moral incentives (FaMI); Job satisfaction (JS); Employee performance (EP); University of Tripoli; Libyan higher education; Conceptual framework.

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I. Introduction

Employee performance is central to how universities achieve their core purposes of teaching, research, and community engagement. High-performing employees contribute to effective service delivery, research productivity, and the quality of student learning, whereas low performance undermines institutional efficiency and reputation. Recent meta-analytic and empirical evidence indicate that JS is positively related to individual performance and other desirable work behaviors, confirming that psychological states are an important channel through which organizational conditions shape performance outcomes (Gazi et al., 2024; Katebi, 2022; Wartenberg et al., 2023). In Libya, higher education is mainly dominated by the public universities and one of the largest and most influential out of such universities is the University of Tripoli. Research on this university places emphasis on internal management and organisational processes in respect to institutional effectiveness. To illustrate, the case of Aboudaber (2022) reveals that the standards of strategic planning and measurement statistically influence the general performance of the University of Tripoli, which was based on the results of 458 employees. The same graduate tracer study of the Faculty of Nursing, University of Tripoli, correlates the quality of curriculum and graduate outcomes with the quality and efficiency of internal processes and quality control mechanisms that rely heavily on the daily performances of academic and administrative staff (Lesaca,

2021). These results suggest that the improvements and cognitions of EP in the University of Tripoli are no longer a human resource concern but also the strategic focus of institutional quality and sustainability. Libyan state universities such as the University of Tripoli are at the system level experiencing some dire challenges in employee retention and motivation. The recent analysis of the Libyan higher education institutions reveals that the determinants of JS are pay, career growth prospects, and organisational commitment, which subsequently is highly associated with turnover intention among academic employees (Aljarid and Azam, 2024). These findings imply that the attitude of employees in the Libyan higher education is determined by the way institutions establish and make their internal organization. The other line of the Libyan research has shown that FaMI has a considerable positive influence on EP in governmental universities and that the reward and recognition mechanisms play a central role in the environment of Libyan public university (Elkwafi and Yeşilada, 2024). However, the existing literature related to Libyan higher education, and specifically the University of Tripoli, remains fragmented in several important ways. First, studies typically focus on specific organisational topics—such as strategic planning (Aboudaber, 2022), graduate quality assurance (Lesaca, 2021), or JS and turnover in Libyan public universities more broadly (Aljarid & Azam, 2024)—without integrating leadership behaviour, perceptions of fairness, and incentive systems into a single explanatory framework for EP at the University of Tripoli. Second, while Libyan research confirms the importance of FaMI for performance at governmental universities (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024), this work does not explicitly model how such incentives interact with leadership style or POJ at the level of a specific university. Third, although JS and turnover intention have been examined among faculty in Libyan public universities, JS has rarely been theorised as a mediating mechanism linking organisational conditions to EP in the concrete setting of the University of Tripoli (Aljarid & Azam, 2024). The broader international literature provides strong theoretical and empirical support for focusing on three organisational drivers of EP in higher education: TL, POJ, and FaMI. TL—defined by idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration—has repeatedly been shown to enhance employees’ JS and performance in higher education settings (Bai & Ghazali, 2024; Henkel & Ade, 2025). Bai and Ghazali (2024) find a significant positive relationship between TL and JS among university teachers, with work motivation mediating this link, supporting the view that leadership behavior is a primary antecedent of staff attitudes in academic institutions. POJ—employees’ perceptions of fairness in the allocation of outcomes (distributive justice), in decision-making procedures (procedural justice), and in interpersonal treatment (interactional justice)—is another well-established predictor of JS and work outcomes. A recent meta-analysis by Savaş (2024) synthesises empirical work and concludes that organisational justice is positively associated with JS, organisational commitment, trust, and performance. Complementing this, Yetgin (2024) shows that employees’ perceptions of organisational justice have a significant positive effect on both psychological capital and JS, reinforcing the argument that fairness perceptions are a critical psychological resource in organisational life. Although these studies are not set in Libya, they provide robust theoretical and empirical reasons to treat POJ as a key antecedent of JS and, indirectly, of performance. The Libyan evidence on incentives aligns with this international picture. Elkwafi and Yeşilada (2024) report that both financial incentives (such as salary, allowances, and bonuses) and moral incentives (such as recognition, appreciation, and opportunities for advancement) significantly improve EP in Libyan governmental universities. Their results suggest that the design of incentive systems is a powerful lever for changing employee behaviour in the Libyan public higher education context—a finding that is particularly relevant for the University of Tripoli as a large governmental institution. At the same time, the general organisational behaviour literature consistently shows that the effects of rewards on performance are often transmitted through JS and related attitudes (Gazi et al., 2024; Nashiroh & colleagues, 2024). Across these streams of research, JS emerges as a central mediating construct. Meta-analytic work confirms that JS is positively related to various indicators of job performance and negatively related to counterproductive outcomes such as turnover intention and absenteeism (Katebi, 2022; Wartenberg et al., 2023). More recent large-scale analyses further reinforce that JS is a “critical job behaviour” that shapes performance-related behaviours across organisational settings (Gazi et al., 2024). Thus, there are solid theoretical grounds for conceptualising JS as a mediating mechanism through which TL, POJ, and FaMI influence EP at the University of Tripoli. Despite the accumulation of relevant evidence, no study has yet proposed an integrated, context-specific conceptual framework that explains EP at the University of Tripoli through the combined influence of TL, POJ, and FaMI, with JS as a mediating variable. Existing Libyan studies either focus on institutional-level performance in relation to strategic planning (Aboudaber, 2022), examine graduate outcomes and quality assurance at the faculty level (Lesaca, 2021), analyse JS and turnover intention at the level of Libyan public universities as a whole (Aljarid & Azam, 2024), or investigate incentives and performance across governmental universities without differentiating specific institutions (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024). None of these studies models how leadership, fairness perceptions, and incentive systems jointly shape the performance of employees—academic and administrative—within the University of Tripoli. This research fills this gap by developing an EP conceptual framework specifically for the University of Tripoli, which is

explicitly based on four important elements derived from recent academic research. The independent variables used in the study are: 1. TL, 2. POJ, 3. FaMI. The mediating variable used in this research is JS, while EP is the dependent variable and it includes task performance as well as contextual performance (i.e., OCB). This research uses only published literature, both empirical studies and systematic reviews, to recommend theoretically based relationships between the variables and formulate propositions that will support future empirical research conducted at the University of Tripoli. Thus, while the research is a conceptual study and does not contain new empirically based data, it makes a contribution by compiling recently published evidence and applying it to a specific institutional context (the only Libyan government university) and allowing an analytical basis for future quantifiable or qualitative studies.

II. Literature Review

Employee performance (EP) in the context of the University of Tripoli

Employee performance in universities generally refers to the extent that academic and administrative staff perform their formal assigned duties (i.e., task performance) and also engage in behaviours that support their institution through cooperation, initiative and service to students (i.e., contextual performance). Recent empirical and review studies show that employee performance in higher education is closely related to motivation, satisfaction and the internal management of the institution (Gazi et al., 2024; Wartenberg et al., 2023). The University of Tripoli has several studies demonstrating that internal organisational practices, as well as staff performance, heavily impact the effectiveness of the institution. Aboudaber (2022) researched strategic planning practices at the University of Tripoli and reported that quality of the strategic planning and implementation of that strategy significantly affect employees' perceptions of performance at the institution. Collecting data from university employees, the study concluded that quality strategic planning and its associated implementation significantly affect the institution's performance as perceived by its employees. A graduate tracer study of the Faculty of Nursing at the same university shows that the quality of the curriculum, graduate employability, and graduates' satisfaction with their work are closely related to how effectively the faculty manages teaching and support processes, which depend on the performance of academic and administrative staff (Lesaca, 2021). Beyond the University of Tripoli, research on Libyan public universities more broadly indicates that compensation, career development, and organisational commitment are key determinants of JS and turnover intention among academics (Aljarid & Azam, 2024). Studies on Libyan governmental universities also show that FaMI have a significant positive impact on EP (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024). Together, these results suggest that performance at the University of Tripoli is likely to be shaped by leadership behavior, perceptions of fairness, and incentives, through their effects on staff attitudes, such as JS.

Transformational leadership (TL)

TL is characterized by four main behaviors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Leaders who use this style create an appealing vision which they demonstrate through their actions while they motivate staff members to generate innovative solutions and they focus on meeting personal requirements of their team members. Research shows that TL practices in higher education institutions lead to better staff performance and improved operational efficiency of institutions. Bai and Ghazali (2024) investigated how higher education teachers use TL and JS and discovered that these variables have a positive connection which work motivation acts as the connecting factor. Leaders at universities who demonstrate Transformational Leadership (TL) establish workplaces which lead to higher teacher satisfaction and motivation levels. A more general study by Giliç (2024) on educational institutions reports that transformational and transactional leadership have a positive impact on JS, and that JS, in turn, improves organisational performance. The higher education system requires TL as an essential tool during times of political and economic instability which creates turbulent educational environments. The authors Henkel and Ade (2025) state that universities operating in turbulent environments need transformational leaders to preserve employee commitment and institutional success because these leaders provide direction and backing and purpose during times of uncertainty. The University of Tripoli requires this argument because it operates under two major challenges which include national instability and insufficient resources. The evidence therefore supports two key points: (1) TL is a strong predictor of JS in higher education, and (2) TL has a positive effect on performance and organisational outcomes. It is thus theoretically appropriate to include TL as a first independent variable that influences both JS and EP at the University of Tripoli.

POJ

Employee evaluations of how fairly treated they feel by their employer relate to POJ. There are three aspects of fairness evaluated by organisational POJ: 1) Distributive fairness- fairness of outcomes (e.g., rates of pay, promotions); 2) Procedural fairness- fairness of how a decision was made; and 3) Interactional fairness- the manner in which employees were treated respectfully and without prejudice when interacting with others.

Studies conducted through metaanalyses and empirical studies confirm the strong association between organisational justice and JS. In Turkey, for instance, one metaanalysis found strong support for the relationship between organisational justice and JS with average correlation coefficients of about 0.60; thus, it can be concluded that perceived fairness is a leading indicator of employee satisfaction (Savaş, 2024). Additionally, Yetgin (2024) provides evidence that organisational justice effectively predicts both an employee's psychological capital and JS, highlighting the importance of organisational justice for the development of positive organisational attitudes. Most recently, organisational justice appears to have a measurable relationship with an employee's performance. Research across various sectors, including service and telecommunications, demonstrates a positive association between an employee's perception of fairness in their workplace and their performance with JS being one of many mediators (Zaki Sayed, 2025; Hartini, 2018; Hartini, 2023). In the higher education sector, Ayalew and Walia (2024) demonstrate that POJ among non-academic staff in Ethiopian public universities significantly predicts organisational citizenship behaviour, and that this effect is partially mediated by JS. Although there is limited direct evidence on organisational justice at the University of Tripoli, the Libyan literature on JS and turnover suggests that academics are particularly sensitive to fairness-related issues, such as equitable compensation, promotion opportunities, and organisational support (Aljarid & Azam, 2024). These are core aspects of distributive and procedural justice. It is therefore conceptually consistent to include POJ as a second independent variable in the framework, which influences JS and, both directly and indirectly, EP at the University of Tripoli.

Financial and moral incentives (FaMI)

FaMI comprise monetary rewards (e.g., salary, allowances, bonuses) and non-monetary forms of recognition (e.g., appreciation, awards, letters of thanks, opportunities for advancement). In public universities, where base salaries are often centrally regulated, moral incentives and symbolic recognition can be just as important as financial rewards. In the Libyan context of public higher education, there is direct empirical evidence on this construct. Elkwafi and Yeşilada (2024) examined employees in Libyan governmental universities and found that both FaMI have a statistically significant positive effect on EP. Their findings show that when employees perceive incentives as adequate and meaningful, their performance improves. A later project on public universities in Libya confirms these results and suggests that moral incentives (such as recognition and respect) can be especially powerful in a context where financial resources are limited. International studies also support the link between incentives, JS, and performance. Gazi et al. (2024) found that JS, influenced by factors such as rewards and recognition, significantly predicts job performance in an industrial setting. Other work has shown that well-designed financial and non-financial rewards enhance performance partly because they increase employees' satisfaction with their work and organisation. These findings justify including FaMI as a third independent variable in the model. For the University of Tripoli, where staff often report dissatisfaction with compensation and recognition, incentives represent a concrete and policy-relevant lever that can shape JS and performance.

Job satisfaction (JS)

JS is typically defined as an overall positive evaluation of one's job, encompassing feelings about work tasks, pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, colleagues, and working conditions. It is one of the most widely studied constructs in organisational behaviour. A recent meta-analysis by Katebi (2022) confirms a significant positive relationship between JS and job performance across many studies and sectors. Wartenberg et al. (2023) synthesise evidence on teachers' JS and demonstrate that it is positively related to favourable educational outcomes and negatively related to turnover intentions and absenteeism. Gazi et al. (2024) further show that higher JS predicts better job performance and more desirable job behaviours in an industrial context. In Libya, Ali and Dafous (2024) validated the Generic JS Scale (GJSS) among Libyan Arab workers, reporting satisfactory reliability and validity indices. This indicates that JS can be measured reliably in the Libyan context. For Libyan public universities, Aljarid and Azam (2024) demonstrate that compensation, career development, and organisational commitment are significant predictors of JS, and that lower satisfaction is strongly associated with higher turnover intentions. Conceptually, these studies position JS as an affective mechanism through which organisational conditions (such as leadership, justice, and incentives) are translated into behavioural outcomes (such as performance and turnover). It is therefore appropriate to treat JS as a mediating variable in the proposed framework for the University of Tripoli.

Conceptual Framework and Propositions

This conceptual framework explains EP at the University of Tripoli through the joint influence of three organisational factors—TL, POJ, and FaMI—and the mediating effect of JS. The model is anchored in recent empirical and review studies in higher education and public-sector organisations and is tailored to the institutional context of a large Libyan governmental university. In the proposed framework, TL, POJ,

and FaMI are treated as independent variables. JS is positioned as a mediating variable that transmits part of the effect of these three antecedents to the dependent variable, EP, which is understood to include both task performance (the effective completion of formal duties) and contextual performance (extra-role behaviors that support colleagues and the organization). Textually, the model can be described as follows: leaders' behaviours, fairness perceptions, and incentive systems at the University of Tripoli shape how satisfied employees feel with their jobs; this satisfaction, in turn, influences how well they perform. At the same time, leadership, justice, and incentives may also have direct effects on performance, independent of JS.

1. TL and employee outcomes

TL is expected to play a central role in shaping both JS and performance at the University of Tripoli. Leaders who communicate a clear vision, act as role models, stimulate innovative thinking, and provide individualised support create a work environment in which employees feel valued and motivated. Empirical evidence from higher education shows that TL is positively associated with JS among university teachers, and that this relationship is partially mediated by work motivation (Bai & Ghazali, 2024). Equally, studies in educational institutions report that TL improves both JS and organisational performance (Gılıç, 2024). Meanwhile, research on universities in turbulent contexts emphasises the importance of TL for sustaining staff engagement and institutional effectiveness (Henkel & Ade, 2025). In the University of Tripoli, which operates under resource constraints and external instability, TL is therefore expected to enhance employees' satisfaction and, as a result, their performance. In addition, TL is likely to have a direct positive effect on performance by clarifying expectations, encouraging effort, and modelling high standards.

Proposition 1: TL is positively related to JS among employees at the University of Tripoli.

Proposition 2: TL is positively related to EP (task and contextual) at the University of Tripoli.

2. POJ and employee outcomes

POJ captures employees' sense of fairness in outcomes, procedures, and interpersonal treatment. A large body of recent research indicates that organisational justice is one of the strongest predictors of JS. Meta-analytic evidence shows robust positive associations between justice perceptions and JS, organisational commitment, and trust (Savaş, 2024). Empirical work demonstrates that justice improves psychological capital and JS (Yetgin, 2024). In public higher education, Ayalew and Walia (2024) find that POJ among non-academic staff in Ethiopian universities significantly predicts organisational citizenship behaviour, and that this effect is partially mediated by JS. Although organisational justice has not yet been studied systematically at the University of Tripoli, the determinants of satisfaction identified in Libyan public universities—equitable compensation, fair promotion opportunities, and supportive organisational practices—are closely linked to distributive and procedural justice (Aljarid & Azam, 2024). This supports the assumption that employees' fairness perceptions at the University of Tripoli will be strongly related to their level of satisfaction and performance.

Proposition 3: POJ is positively related to JS among employees at the University of Tripoli.

Proposition 4: POJ is positively related to EP (task and contextual) at the University of Tripoli.

3. FaMI and employee outcomes

FaMI constitute a third major antecedent in the framework. In Libyan governmental universities, empirical research indicates that both financial incentives (salary, allowances, and bonuses) and moral incentives (recognition, appreciation, and symbolic rewards) have a statistically significant positive impact on EP (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024). The conclusion of this study is that, through the application of appropriate reward systems, it is possible to create the environment to facilitate productive behavior within the Libyan public higher education system. The findings of the research conducted by Gazi et al (2024) are in agreement with earlier work of many different researchers who support the theory of earnings-related job satisfaction (JS) as positive predictors of job performance as a result of the relationship between JS and the perceived value of the earnings and recognition bestowed upon employees. The findings are further supported by motivational theories. The higher the value the employee places on his/her earnings, the more satisfied he/she will be with their work, and as a result, the more productive the employee will be. For staff at the University of Tripoli, where dissatisfaction with pay and recognition is a recurrent concern, it is therefore reasonable to expect that better FaMI will increase both JS and performance.

Proposition 5: Perceived adequacy of FaMI is positively related to JS among employees at the University of Tripoli.

Proposition 6: Perceived adequacy of FaMI is positively related to EP (task and contextual) at the University of Tripoli.

4. JS as a mediating mechanism

JS is conceptualized as the central psychological mechanism through which the three organizational conditions—TL, organizational justice, and incentives—affect EP. Meta-analytic and empirical studies consistently show that JS is positively associated with individual performance and negatively associated with withdrawal behaviours such as turnover intention and absenteeism (Katebi, 2022; Wartenberg et al., 2023; Gazi et al., 2024). In the context of Libyan public universities, JS has been found to be linked to workplace conditions, such as compensation and career development, as well as turnover intention (Aljarid & Azam, 2024). Combining this evidence with the findings discussed above, it is reasonable to argue that at the University of Tripoli: – TL increases satisfaction by providing vision, support, and recognition; – Organisational justice increases satisfaction by ensuring fair outcomes, procedures, and interpersonal treatment; – FaMI increase satisfaction by signalling that the university values employees' contributions. Higher levels of JS, in turn, are expected to be reflected in better task performance and more frequent contextual behaviours such as cooperation, extra effort, and positive student-oriented actions.

Proposition 7: JS is positively related to EP (task and contextual) at the University of Tripoli.

Proposition 8: JS mediates the relationship between TL and EP at the University of Tripoli.

Proposition 9: JS mediates the relationship between POJ and EP at the University of Tripoli.

Proposition 10: JS mediates the relationship between perceived adequacy of FaMI and EP at the University of Tripoli.

III. Methodology

This study presents a conceptual framework. It does not report empirical results, but it specifies a clear methodological design that can be used in future research to test the proposed model at the University of Tripoli. Following recommendations for model-type conceptual studies, the methodology is presented in terms of a planned quantitative survey design, including sample and data collection, measurement of constructs, and data analysis procedures (Jaakkola, 2020).

Sample and data collection

The proposed empirical study, based on this framework, will focus on employees of the University of Tripoli, a major Libyan governmental university. The target population will include both academic staff (lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors) and administrative staff (officers, supervisors, specialists, and similar positions) who are employed on a full-time basis. This choice of population reflects the central role of both groups in determining institutional performance. It is consistent with previous studies on Libyan public universities that have examined JS and turnover intention among academic staff (Aljarid & Azam, 2024) and the impact of incentives on performance in governmental universities (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024). To ensure that respondents have sufficient exposure to leadership behaviour, incentive systems, and organisational procedures at the University of Tripoli, an inclusion criterion of at least one year of continuous work experience at the university will be applied. This is similar in spirit to earlier leadership–performance research, which required a minimum tenure so that employees could realistically evaluate their leaders and work environment (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Data will be collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. Depending on logistical conditions, the questionnaire may be distributed in either study form or electronically (for example, via institutional email or an online survey platform). A brief cover letter will accompany the questionnaire, explaining the research purpose, emphasizing voluntary participation, and assuring respondents of anonymity and confidentiality, in line with best practices in leadership and organizational behavior surveys (Bai & Ghazali, 2024; Pradhan & Jena, 2017). Sampling will aim to obtain a sufficiently large and diverse number of respondents to support multivariate analyses such as structural equation modelling. A sample of approximately 300–400 employees is envisioned, with proportional representation from various faculties and central administrative units, as well as from both academic and administrative staff. Where feasible, a stratified random sampling strategy will be used, stratifying by faculty/unit and staff category. Prior to data collection, ethical approval will be sought from the relevant research ethics committee at the University of Tripoli. All participants will be informed that their responses are confidential and will be used solely for research purposes.

Measures

The constructs in the conceptual framework—TL, POJ, FaMI, JS, and EP—will be measured using established scales from previous studies, adapted to the University of Tripoli context. Unless otherwise indicated, all items will be rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). TL will be assessed with items adapted from the TL subscale of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio (1997). This instrument measures four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The MLQ has been widely

used in leadership research and has demonstrated good reliability and validity across many organisational settings, including educational institutions (Bai & Ghazali, 2024; Henkel & Ade, 2025). Items will be reworded to reflect the university setting, for example: “My immediate supervisor communicates a clear and inspiring vision for our department” or “My immediate supervisor encourages me to think about problems in new ways.” Respondents will be asked to evaluate the behaviour of their direct supervisor or head of unit. POJ will be measured using a multidimensional organisational justice scale based on Colquitt’s (2001) instrument, which operationalises distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. This scale has been widely applied and is strongly associated with JS and performance in recent research (Savaş, 2024; Yetgin, 2024). Items will be adapted to capture fairness in outcomes (e.g., pay, workload), procedures (e.g., promotion and evaluation processes), and interpersonal treatment at the University of Tripoli. Example items include: “Decisions about my workload are made fairly,” “Procedures for promotion are applied consistently,” and “I am treated with respect by my supervisors.” FaMI will be measured using items derived from recent research on incentives and performance in Libyan governmental universities (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024), supplemented by reward items from broader HR and motivation studies. The scale will distinguish between financial incentives (salary, allowances, bonuses) and moral or non-financial incentives (public recognition, appreciation, certificates, opportunities for professional development). Typical items may include: “My salary and allowances are adequate in relation to my responsibilities,” “Outstanding performance is recognised and appreciated in my unit,” and “I receive sufficient non-financial recognition for my work.” Elkwafi and Yeşilada (2024) have already shown that perceived FaMI are positively related to EP in Libyan governmental universities, which supports the relevance of these items for the University of Tripoli. JS will be assessed using a validated global JS measure, such as the Generic JS Scale (GJSS) originally developed by Macdonald and MacIntyre, which has recently been validated in Libyan samples (Ali & Dafous, 2024). Ali and Dafous (2024) report satisfactory reliability and construct validity for the GJSS among Libyan Arab workers, supporting its cultural suitability. Items will measure overall satisfaction and key facets of the job, for example: “I am satisfied with my job as a whole,” “I am satisfied with the way my supervisor treats me,” “I am satisfied with my chances for promotion in this university,” and “I am satisfied with my current salary.” EP will be conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comprising task performance and contextual performance. It will be measured using the scale developed by Pradhan and Jena (2017), which distinguishes task, adaptive, and contextual performance and has been applied in various organisational settings. The contextual dimension, capturing behaviours similar to organisational citizenship, is particularly relevant for universities. Items will be adapted to the University of Tripoli context, such as: “I complete my work tasks efficiently and on time,” “I adjust well to changes in work procedures,” and “I willingly help colleagues who have heavy workloads.” In line with many leadership–performance studies, self-rated performance will be used initially (Pradhan & Jena, 2017), and future studies may incorporate supervisor ratings to reduce common method bias. All instruments will be translated into Arabic and then back-translated into English, following standard translation–back–translation procedures to ensure conceptual equivalence. A pilot test with a small group of University of Tripoli employees (approximately 20–30 participants) will be conducted to assess item clarity, cultural appropriateness, and completion time, as is commonly done in survey research in higher education (Bai & Ghazali, 2024; Aljarid & Azam, 2024). Feedback from the pilot will be used to refine wording before full data collection.

IV. Data analysis

The proposed data analysis strategy follows common practice in empirical research on leadership, justice, satisfaction, and performance. After data collection, statistical analyses would be conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for preliminary analyses and SmartPLS or a similar structural equation modelling (SEM) software for measurement and structural model assessment (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). This combination of tools mirrors approaches used in previous leadership–performance research and in studies of Libyan public universities (Wen, Ho, Kelana, Othman, & Syed, 2019; Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024). In the first stage, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis) and correlations among the variables will be computed. Data will be examined for missing values, outliers, and basic assumptions. Demographic characteristics (age, gender, position, years of experience, faculty or unit) will be summarised to describe the sample. In the second stage, the measurement model will be evaluated. Internal consistency reliability will be assessed using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability for each construct. Convergent validity will be examined through factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity will be assessed using criteria such as the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations, following recent methodological guidelines for SEM. This procedure aligns with the validation approaches employed in previous studies that utilized MLQ, justice scales, JS instruments, and performance measures (Bai & Ghazali, 2024; Ali & Dafous, 2024; Pradhan & Jena, 2017). In the third stage, the structural model will be tested to examine the hypothesised relationships. Path coefficients from TL, POJ, and FaMI to JS and EP will be estimated, together with the path from JS to EP. Mediation effects will be

evaluated by estimating indirect effects and using bootstrapping procedures to obtain confidence intervals for these effects, consistent with recommended practices for testing mediating relationships in organisational research (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Coefficients of determination (R^2) for JS and EP, effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) will be reported to assess the explanatory power of the model. Because this study is conceptual, these analytical procedures are presented as a methodological blueprint rather than as a series of completed empirical steps. They provide a rigorous, transparent plan for how future researchers can empirically test the proposed framework at the University of Tripoli and evaluate the relationships among TL, POJ, FaMI, JS, and EP.

V. Discussion

This conceptual study proposes an integrated framework for understanding EP at the University of Tripoli, focusing on three organisational antecedents—TL, POJ, and FaMI—and one central mediating construct: JS. Because the study is theoretical, the discussion does not interpret empirical findings from this study. Instead, it examines how the proposed relationships are supported by previous research and how the framework advances knowledge in the context of a Libyan governmental university. The first core assumption is that TL will be positively related to both JS and EP at the University of Tripoli. This is consistent with evidence from higher education institutions in other countries, where TL has been shown to enhance teachers' JS, partly through increased work motivation (Bai & Ghazali, 2024). Studies in broader organisational settings similarly report that leaders who articulate an inspiring vision, provide intellectual stimulation, and offer individualised support tend to foster stronger positive attitudes and performance among employees (Henkel & Ade, 2025). In a large, resource-constrained public university such as the University of Tripoli, where external turbulence and internal complexity are pronounced, such leadership behaviours are particularly important for sustaining morale and performance. The second assumption is that POJ will exert a strong positive influence on JS and, directly and indirectly, on EP. Recent meta-analytic work shows that perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice are among the most powerful predictors of JS, organisational commitment, and trust (Savaş, 2024). Empirical studies also indicate that organisational justice has significant positive effects on outcomes such as organisational citizenship behaviour and performance, often through the mediating role of JS (Ayalew & Walia, 2024; Yetgin, 2024). In Libyan public universities, satisfaction and turnover intention among academics are strongly influenced by fairness-related issues, such as compensation, promotion opportunities, and organisational support (Aljarid & Azam, 2024). The present framework extends this line of work by explicitly modelling organisational justice as a distinct antecedent of satisfaction and performance at the University of Tripoli, rather than leaving fairness embedded implicitly in broader constructs such as “work environment”. The third assumption concerns the role of FaMI. In the Libyan public higher education context, there is direct empirical evidence that both FaMI significantly predict EP in governmental universities (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024). This suggests that reward and recognition systems are a central lever for influencing behaviour in this sector. International research likewise indicates that financial and non-financial rewards contribute to better performance, often by enhancing JS and related attitudes (Gazi et al., 2024). In the proposed model, incentives are therefore treated as a separate independent variable with both direct and indirect (via satisfaction) paths to EP. Across these three antecedents, JS is conceptualized as the key psychological mechanism linking organizational conditions to employee behavior. Meta-analytic evidence confirms that JS is positively associated with job performance and negatively associated with withdrawal behaviours such as turnover intention and absenteeism (Katebi, 2022; Wartenberg et al., 2023). In Libyan public universities, JS has been shown to mediate the relationship between workplace conditions (e.g., compensation, career development) and turnover intention among academics (Aljarid & Azam, 2024). The present framework generalizes this logic from withdrawal outcomes to performance, proposing that TL, fair treatment, and meaningful incentives improve performance partly because they first increase employees' JS. Table 1 summarises the main relationships in the conceptual framework, their theoretical logic, and examples of supporting evidence from previous studies.

Table 1. Summary of proposed relationships and supporting evidence

Relationship	Theoretical logic	Example empirical support	Expected pattern at the University of Tripoli
TL → JS	Leadership provides vision, support, and recognition, increasing positive affect and motivation.	TL–satisfaction link among higher education teachers (Bai & Ghazali, 2024)	Higher perceived TL is associated with higher JS
TL → Performance	Leadership clarifies expectations and stimulates extra effort and innovation.	TL is positively related to performance in HEIs (Henkel & Ade, 2025)	Direct positive effect on task and contextual performance
Organisational justice → JS	Fair outcomes and procedures generate perceptions of equity and respect	Strong justice–satisfaction correlations (Savaş, 2024; Yetgin, 2024)	Higher fairness perceptions are associated with higher JS
Organisational justice →	Fairness fosters trust,	Justice predicting OCB and	Direct positive effect on

Performance	commitment, and extra-role behaviour	performance via satisfaction (Ayalew & Walia, 2024)	performance and cooperative behaviours
FaMI → JS	Adequate, meaningful rewards increase the perceived value of work and reduce frustration.	Rewards influencing satisfaction and behaviour (Gazi et al., 2024)	Better incentives are associated with higher JS
FaMI → Performance	Rewards and recognition signal appreciation and align effort with institutional goals.	FaMI predicting performance in Libyan universities (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024)	Direct positive effect on perceived task and contextual performance
JS → Performance	Satisfied employees invest more effort and exhibit more positive discretionary behaviours.	Satisfaction–performance association in meta-analyses (Katebi, 2022; Wartenberg et al., 2023)	Higher satisfaction is associated with stronger performance.
TL/Justice/Incentives → Satisfaction → Performance	Organisational conditions shape affective states, which then shape behavioural outcomes.	Satisfaction mediating effects of leadership, justice, and rewards (Bai & Ghazali, 2024; Ayalew & Walia, 2024)	Significant indirect effects through JS, in addition to direct effects

Beyond aligning with existing findings, the framework makes theoretical contributions in several ways. First, it integrates three major organisational drivers—leadership, justice, and incentives—that have typically been studied separately in Libyan higher education. Research on Libyan public universities has examined JS and turnover intention (Aljarid & Azam, 2024) and the role of FaMI in performance (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024); however, it has not combined these factors into a single explanatory framework centered on a specific institution. By consolidating these strands, the framework moves the discussion from isolated determinants to a more holistic explanation of EP at the University of Tripoli. Second, the framework emphasises JS as the central mechanism linking organisational conditions to performance. Internationally, JS is well established as a predictor of performance (Katebi, 2022; Gazi et al., 2024; Wartenberg et al., 2023). In the Libyan context, however, satisfaction has mainly been studied as an antecedent of turnover rather than as a mediator between organisational antecedents and performance. The framework, therefore, extends the interpretation of JS in Libyan public universities from a “retention issue” to a broader performance mechanism: improving satisfaction through better leadership, greater fairness, and more meaningful incentives is expected to enhance both task and contextual performance. Third, the framework translates general organisational theories into a context-specific model for a single Libyan governmental university. Social exchange theory suggests that employees reciprocate favourable treatment (in the form of supportive leadership, fair procedures, and adequate incentives) with positive attitudes and behaviours. Equity theory emphasises the importance of a fair balance between inputs and outcomes. By embedding TL, organisational justice, and incentives within a single structure and linking them to satisfaction and performance, the model demonstrates how these theoretical concepts can be operationalised in the specific institutional environment of the University of Tripoli. Table 2 summarises the main theoretical and practical contributions of the conceptual framework.

Table 2. Main contributions of the conceptual framework

Dimension	Contribution
Theoretical integration	Combines TL, organisational justice, and incentives into a single performance model.
Mechanism specification	Positions JS as the key mediating construct connecting organisational conditions to performance.
Contextual focus	Tailors general theories and international evidence to the specific case of the University of Tripoli.
Link to Libyan research	Reinterprets findings on satisfaction, turnover, and incentives in Libyan public universities within a single model.
Research roadmap	Provides explicit propositions and measurement choices for future empirical testing.
Managerial relevance	Identifies three actionable levers (leadership behaviours, fairness, incentives) for improving performance.

Because this is a conceptual (theoretical) study, the relationships described remain expectations rather than empirically verified results for the University of Tripoli. Future research should test the proposed model using survey data and structural equation modelling, compare the relative strength of the three antecedents, and explore potential moderators (e.g., workload, faculty type). Nevertheless, by aligning each path in the model with recent empirical and meta-analytic evidence and by grounding the framework in the specific context of a Libyan governmental university, the discussion supports the plausibility and relevance of the proposed conceptual structure.

VI. Recommendations and Research Limitations

At the practical level, the proposed framework indicates three main priority areas for the University of Tripoli. First, leadership development programmes for deans, heads of department, and administrative managers should explicitly cultivate transformational behaviours (vision articulation, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration), given robust evidence that such leadership enhances JS and performance in higher education settings (Bai & Ghazali, 2024; Henkel & Ade, 2025). Second, the university should strengthen organisational justice by making procedures for workload allocation, promotion, and performance evaluation more transparent and consistently applied. Meta-analytic and empirical findings show that distributive,

procedural, and interactional justice are among the strongest predictors of JS and positive extra-role behaviour (Savaş, 2024; Ayalew & Walia, 2024; Yetgin, 2024). Third, financial and moral incentive systems should be redesigned so that both monetary rewards and non-financial recognition are perceived as fair, performance-contingent, and visible. Evidence from Libyan governmental universities suggests that FaMI significantly enhance EP (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024). Broader research confirms that rewards operate partly through their impact on JS and work behavior (Gazi et al., 2024; Katebi, 2022). Regular staff surveys on JS should be institutionalised as a strategic monitoring tool, given the consistent link between satisfaction, performance, and withdrawal intentions (Wartenberg et al., 2023; Aljarid & Azam, 2024).

For future research, the framework should be empirically tested at the University of Tripoli using validated scales for TL, organisational justice, incentives, JS, and multidimensional EP, with structural equation modelling to estimate direct and mediated effects (Ali & Dafous, 2024; Pradhan & Jena, 2017). Comparative studies across other Libyan governmental universities, as well as mixed-methods designs (comprising surveys and interviews), are recommended to refine and contextualize the model further. This study is purely conceptual; it synthesises and integrates previous empirical work but does not provide new primary data for the University of Tripoli. As a result, all proposed relationships remain theoretically grounded expectations that require empirical verification. The literature base, although focused and recent, is selective rather than the result of a comprehensive systematic review, and it is biased towards English-language and indexed sources; therefore, relevant local studies may be underrepresented. In addition, the framework deliberately concentrates on three organisational antecedents (TL, POJ, FaMI) and one mediator (JS). Other potentially important constructs—such as work engagement, organisational support, or psychological capital—are not modelled, in order to preserve parsimony. Finally, the model is limited to a single public university in Libya, and its structure is essentially cross-sectional; generalizability to other institutions or national contexts, as well as the dynamic evolution of these relationships over time, remain open questions that future longitudinal and comparative research must address.

VII. Conclusion

This conceptual study has developed an integrated framework to explain EP at the University of Tripoli, treating TL, POJ, and FaMI as the main organisational antecedents and JS as the central mediating mechanism. By synthesising recent empirical findings from Libyan public universities with international research in higher education and organisational behaviour, the framework offers a coherent theoretical explanation of how internal conditions shape the task and contextual performance of academic and administrative staff (Aljarid & Azam, 2024; Bai & Ghazali, 2024; Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024). Rather than focusing on isolated determinants, the model emphasizes that leadership behavior, fairness perceptions, and incentive systems jointly influence employees' affective states, and that these affective states – particularly JS – are key pathways through which performance-related behavior emerges (Gazi et al., 2024; Katebi, 2022). Theoretically, the framework contributes in three principal ways. First, it consolidates fragmented Libyan evidence on satisfaction, turnover intention, incentives, and institutional performance into a single institution-specific model centred on the University of Tripoli. Second, it positions JS, supported by strong meta-analytic evidence linking it to performance, as the core mediator between organisational conditions and employee behaviour, thereby extending the role of satisfaction in Libyan higher education beyond retention outcomes to performance outcomes (Katebi, 2022; Wartenberg et al., 2023). Third, it translates broader theories of social exchange, equity, and justice into concrete, testable propositions for a large governmental university operating under resource constraints and environmental turbulence, consistent with calls for context-sensitive leadership and governance in higher education (Henkel & Ade, 2025; Savaş, 2024). (Practically, the framework suggests that efforts to improve performance at the University of Tripoli should prioritise three levers that are directly under managerial control: strengthening TL capabilities among academic and administrative leaders; enhancing distributive, procedural and interactional justice in key HR-related processes; and redesigning financial and moral incentive systems so that they are perceived as fair, transparent and meaningfully linked to performance) (Elkwafi & Yeşilada, 2024; Yetgin, 2024). At the same time, the study recognises its limitations as a purely theoretical contribution based on a selective (though recent and peer-reviewed) literature base and a cross-sectional logic. The proposed relationships are, at this stage, theoretically grounded expectations, rather than empirically verified results, for the University of Tripoli. Future research should therefore empirically test the proposed model using validated measures and structural equation modelling, examine potential moderators such as workload or perceived organisational support, and compare results across other Libyan governmental universities. Mixed-methods extensions, incorporating qualitative insights into how staff experience leadership, fairness, and incentives, would further refine and contextualise the framework. Despite these limitations, the study provides a clear, evidence-based conceptual foundation for studying and improving EP in one of Libya's most important public universities. It offers a structured research agenda for scholars and practitioners

interested in the organisational dynamics of public higher education in fragile and resource-constrained contexts.

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