



Organisational Justice, Support, Transformational Leadership, and Brand-Personality Congruence as Predictors of Faculty Commitment and Trust in Chhattisgarh Private Universities

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ABSTRACT

Fair organisational practices, supportive employment relationships, credible leadership, and symbolic alignment with an institution may shape faculty attitudes in private higher education. This study examined the associations of organisational justice, perceived organisational support, and transformational leadership with institutional brand-personality congruence, affective organisational commitment, and organisational trust among faculty members in four private universities in Chhattisgarh, India. A cross-sectional survey yielded 400 usable responses. Composite scores were analysed using Pearson correlations, multiple regression, and path analysis; confidence intervals for standardised indirect associations were estimated through 5,000 parametric-bootstrap replications. Justice, support, and transformational leadership jointly explained 58.0% of the variance in brand-personality congruence. The four predictors explained 83.3% of affective commitment and 78.2% of organisational trust. Brand-personality congruence showed the strongest direct association with commitment ($\beta = 0.422$) and a strong association with trust ($\beta = 0.414$). All six indirect associations through congruence were positive. The findings indicate that faculty commitment and trust are associated with both workplace practices and alignment between faculty self-concepts and the university's symbolic personality. Causal interpretation remains limited by the cross-sectional, same-source design. Because coefficient alpha values ranged from 0.96 to 0.99, the composite-score results should be interpreted cautiously pending item-level factor analysis and omega-based reliability assessment.

1. INTRODUCTION

HEIs rely on academic employees who are willing to stay emotionally engaged with the HEI, work beyond what is specified in a contract, and trust any HEI decision. It has also been extremely important in private universities where faculty members are simultaneously tasked with teaching, supporting research, mentoring students, and representing the university to external stakeholders and are also involved in accreditation. While commitment and trust are individual attitudes in those environments, they are also a

result of how employees feel when making decisions, being supported, being led and when they experience institutional identity.

Organisational justice is related to worker perceptions of fairness with regard to outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment and explanations [1, 2]. Perceived organisational support is an overall perception of the organisational value of one's contribution and concern for his/her welfare [3, 4, 5]. Transformational leadership consists of the behaviours of the leader which convey a vision, offer individual consideration, foster new thinking and demonstrate authentic values [6, 7]. Such fair and supportive exchanges are linked to affective commitment and trust, as it is an indicator that the organisation and the representatives are reliable.

Another aspect that has received less attention is the extent to which workers believe that their perception of their self-concept fits with the human face of their university. Brand personality is the collection of human traits that are attributed to a brand [8]. According to the self congruity theory, individuals are more likely to react positively to the brands whose symbolic representations are congruent with their own self-concept [9, 10]. This approach has parallels in the employment context with person-organisation fit and organisational identification but is distinct. Person-organisation fit is defined as a fit in values, needs or attributes [11, 12], while institutional brand-personality congruence is concerned with the perceived fit between the image of the person and the symbolic characteristics of the institution, for example, brand personality of being innovative, caring, competent or ethical.

It could be particularly significant in a higher education setting. The characteristics of a university are projected on mission statements, through leadership practices, daily interactions, in the image of the University, and in its public reputation; faculty members are internal carriers of that image. If the institutional image aligns with the image that faculty members have of themselves, the employment relationship can be more personal. On the other hand, if internal practices are not consistent with external brand statements, the identification and trust may be undermined. Therefore, internal- and employer-branding scholarship is a theory that highlights the need to strengthen the relationship between the identity of the organisation and the lived experience of employment [13, 14, 15, 16].

The present study deals with the intersection between organisational behaviour and internal branding in private universities of Chhattisgarh. It has three objectives: firstly, to examine the relationship between justice, support and transformational leadership and affective organisational commitment and organisational trust; secondly, to explore whether workplace experiences are associated with institutional brand-personality congruence; and thirdly, to test an indirect statistical path between workplace experiences and commitment and trust through congruence. The word indirect is used intentionally because the data are cross-sectional and so temporal and causal mediation cannot be established.

The study contributes by focusing on faculty members as internal stakeholders and by separating symbolic brand-personality alignment from person-organisation fit, and by providing region-specific evidence in an under-researched higher education context. The premise of the practice is that internal branding cannot take the place of Justice, Support or credible leadership. Instead, an authentic institutional character should emerge from and be supported by fair systems, supportive employment relationships and leader action that reflects the University's stated values.

1.1 Organisational Justice

Organisational justice has four components: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational [1]. Distributive justice refers to the equity of compensation, promotion, workload and recognition. Procedural justice has to do with the consistency, neutrality, accuracy, and correctability of the processes used to make decisions. Interpersonal justice is about respectful and dignified treatment; informational justice is about the quality of explanations, which are adequate, honest, and timely. In faculty work, decisions about justice are commonplace, whether it is how to allocate time for teaching, how to evaluate faculty performance, support for research, leaves, promotion, and access to institutional resources. Well-considered and well-justified decisions convey respect and predictability and foster commitment and trust. Further, recent findings have remained consistent in linking organisational justice to engagement and affective commitment, and to work attitudes, such as in the university and longitudinal contexts [17, 18].

1.2 Perceived Organisational Support

POS is the result of employees' interpretation of positive behaviour, recognition and concern, which serves as a sign of the organisation's appreciation of their performance and its concern for their welfare [3, 5]. It is reciprocally logical, which is in line with social exchange theory [19]. Employees with positive attitudes are more likely to have positive emotions towards their work and show emotional attachment [4, 5, 20]. In

universities, support can be manifested in the availability of research facilities, mentorship, flexibility to accommodate individual needs, the recognition of academic accomplishments, and in providing credible help to address professional difficulties. These practices should further strengthen the commitment to and trust in the institution.

1.3 Transformational Leadership

The purposeful communicator, the role-model, the intellectual stimulator, and the individual developer are aspects of the transformational leader [6, 7]. These behaviours are applicable to a learning environment where one is expected to be professionally independent, intellectually challenged, focused on priorities, and fairly compensated. Transformational leadership has been linked with Trust and Commitment because it can help to reduce uncertainty, show integrity and link individual work with shared goals [21, 22, 23]. These recent higher education studies also correlate transformational leadership with academic productivity and organisational change [24]. In the current cross-sectional study, however, these findings are only considered associations, not cause and effect.

1.4 Institutional Brand-Personality Congruence

For this analysis, institutional brand-personality congruence is defined as the perceived overlap between the personal characteristics of a faculty member and the qualities of the university. This construct is more specific than person-organisation fit. It is not about the breadth of value, need-supply and demand-ability compatibility that is examined in fit research [11, 25], but rather concerns symbolic identity meanings. It also contrasts with organisational identification, which is related to feeling one with the organisation [26]. Congruence is suggested as a precursor to attachment and trust because symbolic congruence can enhance the psychologically "whole" nature of institutional membership, and make it more self-expressive.

Justice, support and transformational leadership can be congruent themselves. The personality of an institution is deduced by faculty members based on its resource allocation, treatment of its employees, and behaviour of its leadership. Fair procedures can convey an ethical and reliable image of the University; Support can convey care; and Transformational leadership can convey competence, inspiration and innovation. Therefore, brand-personality congruence must not be taken in isolation as a marketing action. To a large extent, it is made up of lived organisational practices.

1.5 Affective Organisational Commitment and Organisational Trust

In general, organisational commitment is defined as affective, continuance and normative commitment [27]. In the present study, affective organisational commitment, that is, emotional attachment, identification with and involvement in the institution, is emphasised. This is done on a consistent basis since all three components were not assessed by the questionnaire. Organisational trust is characterised by 'accepting vulnerability, having positive expectations about what the organisation does and expects to do' (p. 712) [28, 29]. The focus is on the university as an organisation, not just the supervisor.

1.6 Hypotheses

Based on the foregoing theoretical arguments, the following hypotheses were formulated (Figure 1; the theoretical and empirical foundations are summarised in Table 1).

- H1: Organisational justice is positively associated with affective organisational commitment.
- H2: Perceived organisational support is positively associated with affective organisational commitment.
- H3: Transformational leadership is positively associated with affective organisational commitment.
- H4: Institutional brand-personality congruence is positively associated with affective organisational commitment.
- H5: Organisational justice is positively associated with organisational trust.
- H6: Perceived organisational support is positively associated with organisational trust.
- H7: Transformational leadership is positively associated with organisational trust.
- H8: Institutional brand-personality congruence is positively associated with organisational trust.
- H9a-H9c: Organisational justice, perceived organisational support and transformational leadership are each positively associated with institutional brand-personality congruence.
- H10a-H10c: Justice, support and transformational leadership have positive indirect statistical associations with affective commitment through institutional brand-personality congruence.

H11a-H11c: Justice, support and transformational leadership have positive indirect statistical associations with organisational trust through institutional brand-personality congruence.

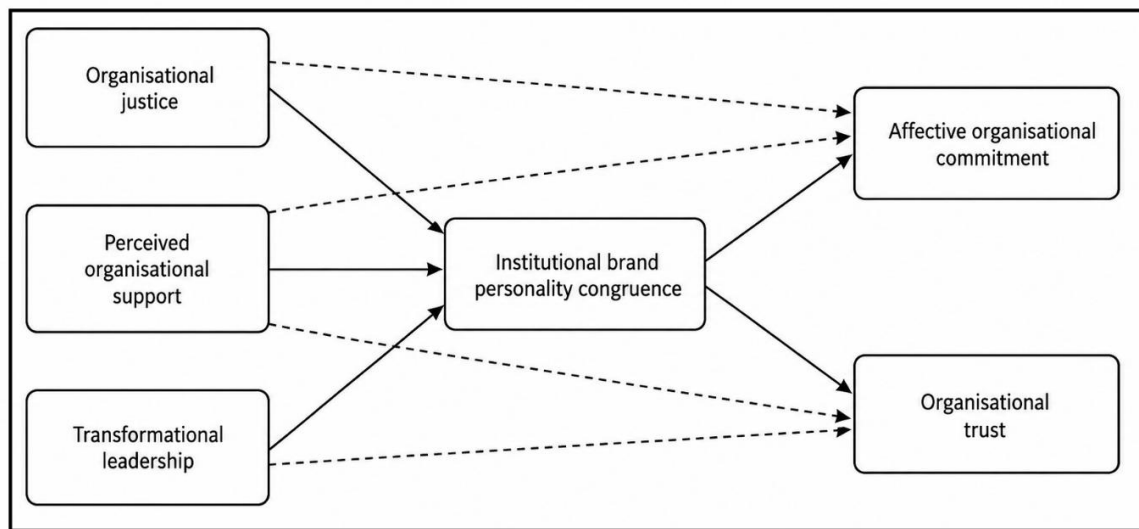


Figure 1. Proposed observed-variable path model.

Table 1. Selected theoretical and empirical foundations

Source	Primary construct	Core contribution	Role in the present study
Colquitt [1]	Four-dimensional organisational justice	Validated distributive, procedural, interpersonal and informational justice as distinguishable fairness dimensions.	Provides the conceptual basis for the justice measure.
Eisenberger et al. [3]; Rhoades and Eisenberger [4]	Perceived organisational support	Support reflects the belief that the organisation values contribution and well-being and is associated with affective commitment.	Supports the social-exchange pathway from support to employee attitudes.
Podsakoff et al. [22, 23]	Transformational leader behaviours	Transformational behaviours are associated with trust, satisfaction, commitment and citizenship behaviour.	Supports leadership associations with commitment and trust.
Aaker [8]; Sirgy [10]	Brand personality and self-congruity	Human-like brand traits and self-image congruence shape favourable relational responses.	Provides the symbolic-congruence mechanism.
Cable and DeRue [11]; Edwards and Cable [25]	Person-organisation fit	Value congruence and perceived fit are related to identification and work attitudes.	Clarifies the boundary between general fit and symbolic brand congruence.
Backhaus and Tikoo [13]; Lievens et al. [15]	Employer brand and organisational identity	Employee experience and organisational identity should reinforce the employment brand.	Connects internal organisational practices with institutional branding.
Meyer and Allen [27]; Meyer et al. [30]	Organisational commitment	Affective commitment is distinct from continuance and normative commitment.	Justifies the outcome label used in the present study.
Mayer et al. [28]; Schoorman et al. [29]	Organisational trust	Trust involves willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations.	Clarifies the institutional target of trust.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Study Design and Setting

The study adopted the cross-sectional quantitative survey design. The data were collected between July and September 2025 from four private universities in various districts of Chhattisgarh, India. Participating institutions were not identified for institutional confidentiality. The design had the advantages of being applicable to the analysis of correlations among employee perceptions at a single time point, but it could not provide evidence of temporal precedence or causation.

2.2 Participants and Sampling

The respondents comprised teaching staff from assistant professor to professor rank. Sampling clusters were universities, and faculty members within the selected sampling clusters were selected from the staff lists available at the universities. The questionnaire was sent to 500 people, and 423 were returned (84.6%). There were 23 questionnaires that were not completely filled, so 400 were used (Table 2). The dependence that could occur when respondents were clustered at the institution level could not be modelled in the present analysis, and is recognised as a limitation.

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents (n = 400)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	216	54.0
	Female	184	46.0
Age (years)	20-30	92	23.0
	31-40	123	30.8
	41-50	118	29.5
	Above 50	67	16.8
Teaching experience (years)	0-4	106	26.5
	5-9	139	34.8
	10-14	92	23.0
	15 or more	63	15.8
Academic rank	Assistant Professor	210	52.5
	Associate Professor	126	31.5
	Professor	64	16.0

2.3 Measures

The items were rated on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 indicated strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree. Organisational justice was measured using 12 items covering four dimensions of organisational justice proposed by Colquitt [1], namely distributive, procedural, interpersonal and informational justice. Perceived organisational support: A set of eight adapted items from Eisenberger was used to assess perceived organisational support [3]. Using the definitions of Bass and Bass and Riggio, transformational leadership was measured with 12 items that consisted of four elements: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration[6-7]. The congruence items related to the institutional brand-personality were adapted from the brand-personality and self-congruity studies [8, 10, 31]. Meyer and Allen [27] adapted nine items for affective organisational commitment, and Mayer et al. [28] and Podsakoff et al. [23] adapted six items to measure organisational trust. The complete anonymised item wording and adaptation notes are provided as supplementary material with the article, subject to applicable permissions.

2.4 Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed in hard copy to participants and submitted in self-addressed, self-enclosed envelopes. They were told that the information they provided was voluntary, that their answers would be kept confidential and that only the aggregate results would be reported. No identifying information was included in the analytical file.

2.5 Data Preparation and Measurement Checks

Less than 3% of the item responses were missing, and mean substitution was only applied when calculating composite scores. The results should be interpreted with caution since this method may reduce variance and bias the covariance estimates. Future replications should include item-level missingness and should employ multiple imputation or full-information maximum likelihood. After coding and range checks, scores were derived for each of the six constructs in the form of a composite score. The coefficient alpha values were between 0.96 and 0.99 (Table 3). The values are very high and should not be used as evidence of unidimensionality or better measure quality. Alpha may rise as the quantity of items and the similarity of the items increase and can be overstated by redundant or close-to-redundant wording; contemporary methodological advice suggests evaluating factor structure and reporting omega along with alpha [32, 33]. Additional psychometric re-analysis was not possible during revision as the original item-level response matrix was not submitted. Hence, it was impossible to establish omega coefficients, item-level factor loadings, residual correlations, and other measurement models without obtaining results that are not supported. The α is therefore only reported as a descriptive property of the composite scores. In particular, the high scores for transformational leadership and institutional brand-personality congruence should be considered as potential signs of item redundancy, and the regression and path results are tentative until item-level evaluation of these measures is done. Correlations among the constructs were between 0.31 and 0.84, and variance-inflation factor values were less than three; these tests are for checking for collinearity between composite predictors, but do not ensure the unidimensionality or discriminant validity of the underlying scales.

Table 3. Measures and coefficient alpha estimates (reported descriptively)

Construct	Items	Principal source(s)	Coefficient alpha
Organisational justice	12	Colquitt [1]	0.96
Perceived organisational support	8	Eisenberger et al. [3]	0.97
Transformational leadership	12	Bass [6]; Bass and Riggio [7]	0.99
Institutional brand-personality congruence	4	Aaker [8]; Hosany et al. [31]; Sirgy [10]	0.99
Affective organisational commitment	9	Meyer and Allen [27]	0.97
Organisational trust	6	Mayer et al. [28]; Podsakoff et al. [23]	0.96

2.6 Statistical Analysis

There was initially a descriptive analysis and Pearson correlations. Three ordinary least-squares models were then estimated with the standardised composite scores. The hypothesised Model 1 was tested on organisational justice, perceived organisational support and transformational leadership. Models 2 and 3 regressed affective organisational commitment and organisational trust, respectively, on the three workplace predictors and congruence. The standardised coefficients, standard errors, t values, the p value, 95% confidence intervals, the R-squared, the adjusted R-squared and the model F statistic are reported.

The indirect statistical associations were determined by multiplying each antecedent-to-congruence coefficient with the congruence-to-outcome coefficient. Confidence intervals for the parameters were determined using a parametric bootstrap simulation with 5,000 replications, based on the number of observations and the observed covariance matrix. This is a procedure that defines uncertainty in the context of a multivariate-normal covariance model, and should not be interpreted as a non-parametric bootstrap of the cases. All variables were measured concurrently, so that the indirect pathways are not claimed to be causal pathways mediated over time [34]. The alpha value was set at 0.05 for two-tailed tests.

However, it is not possible to exclude the possibility of common method bias as all variables were self-reported using a single survey. Evaluation apprehension was minimised by anonymity and also by sealed returns, but Harman's single-factor test was not considered to be evidence of an absence of method bias. This is especially notable because of the high correlations and reliability values [35, 36].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The mean scores for all constructs were above the scale midpoint (Table 4). Institutional brand-personality congruence and affective commitment were highly correlated ($r = 0.84$), as were institutional brand-personality congruence and organisational trust ($r = 0.81$). There was a high correlation (0.79) between commitment and trust. The three organisational antecedents were correlated and ranged from 0.31 to 0.43, indicating that justice, support and transformational leadership were not synonymous but correlated.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations and inter-construct correlations (n = 400)

Construct	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Organisational justice	4.82	0.98	-					
2. Perceived organisational support	4.75	0.92	0.31	-				
3. Transformational leadership	4.88	0.94	0.43	0.36	-			
4. Institutional brand-personality congruence	5.02	0.97	0.51	0.58	0.63	-		
5. Affective organisational commitment	5.11	0.93	0.59	0.67	0.71	0.84	-	
6. Organisational trust	5.08	0.96	0.64	0.60	0.68	0.81	0.79	-

Note. All non-zero correlations are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

3.2 Predictors of Institutional Brand-Personality Congruence

The three variables of Justice, support and transformational leadership together accounted for 58.0% of the variance in institutional brand-personality congruence, $F(3, 396) = 182.00$, $p < 0.001$. Transformational leadership, perceived organisational support and organisational justice contributed the most with standardised coefficients of $\beta = 0.402$, 0.366 and 0.224 , respectively. Therefore, the adjusted associations for H9a-H9c were retained as positive (Table 5).

Table 5. Regression predicting institutional brand-personality congruence

Predictor	Standardised beta	SE	t	p	95% CI
Organisational justice	0.224	0.037	6.09	<0.001	0.151, 0.296
Perceived organisational support	0.366	0.036	10.30	<0.001	0.296, 0.436
Transformational leadership	0.402	0.037	10.75	<0.001	0.329, 0.476

Model statistics: R-squared = 0.580; adjusted R-squared = 0.576; $F(3, 396) = 182.00$, $p < 0.001$.

3.3 Predictors of Affective Commitment and Organisational Trust

The commitment model explained 83.3% of variance, $F(4, 395) = 491.46$, $p < 0.001$ (Table 6). The highest adjusted association with affective commitment was with institutional brand-personality congruence ($\beta = 0.422$), followed by perceived organisational support ($\beta = 0.274$), transformational leadership ($\beta = 0.271$), and organisational justice ($\beta = 0.173$). Confidence intervals did not contain zero, which was in favour of H1-H4.

The trust model explained 78.2% of the variance, $F(4, 395) = 354.02$, $p < 0.001$. Again, there was a strong association ($\beta = 0.414$) with congruence. Organisational justice possessed the highest coefficient out of the three workplace antecedents ($\beta = 0.268$), while transformational leadership and perceived organisational support possessed the medium ($\beta = 0.235$) and low ($\beta = 0.192$) coefficients among the three antecedents. H5-H8 were supported (Figure 2).

Table 6. Regression models predicting commitment and trust

Predictor	AC beta	SE	t	p	95% CI	OT beta	SE	t	p	95% CI
Organisational justice	0.173	0.024	7.15	<0.001	0.126, 0.221	0.268	0.028	9.70	<0.001	0.214, 0.323

Predictor	AC beta	SE	t	p	95% CI	OT beta	SE	t	p	95% CI
Perceived organisational support	0.274	0.025	10.84	<0.001	0.224, 0.324	0.192	0.029	6.67	<0.001	0.136, 0.249
Transformational leadership	0.271	0.027	10.09	<0.001	0.218, 0.324	0.235	0.031	7.65	<0.001	0.174, 0.295
Institutional brand-personality congruence	0.422	0.032	13.29	<0.001	0.360, 0.484	0.414	0.036	11.41	<0.001	0.342, 0.485

Note. AC = affective organisational commitment; OT = organisational trust. Commitment model: R-squared = 0.833, adjusted R-squared = 0.831, $F(4, 395) = 491.46$, $p < 0.001$. Trust model: R-squared = 0.782, adjusted R-squared = 0.780, $F(4, 395) = 354.02$, $p < 0.001$.

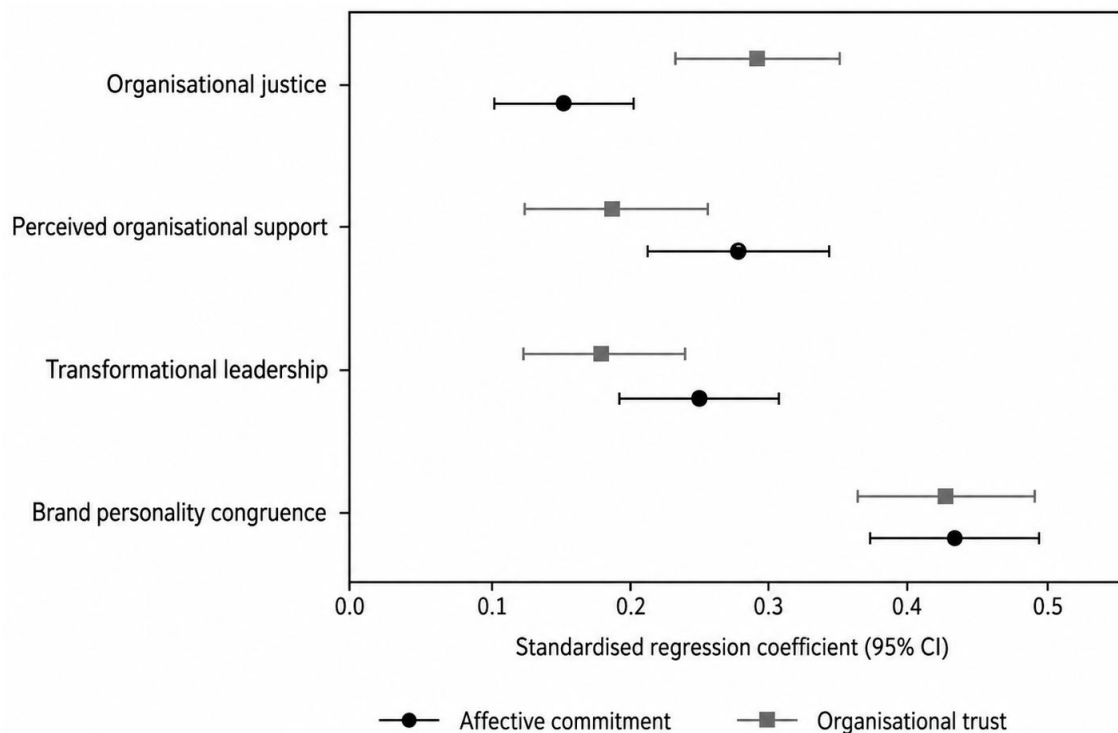


Figure 2. Standardised coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for the commitment and trust models

3.4 Indirect Statistical Associations through Congruence

The values of all six product-of-coefficients estimates were positive, and all parametric-bootstrap confidence intervals did not contain zero. The indirect associations for affective commitment were between 0.094 and 0.170 for organisational justice and transformational leadership, respectively. They were between 0.093 for organisational justice and 0.166 for transformational leadership with respect to organisational trust. The other four columns—H10a-H10c and H11a-H11c—were therefore included as tentative statistical relationships. The direct coefficients were still positive with the addition of congruence, consistent with complementary partial pathways. The results should not be considered to be evidence of a longitudinal mediation (Table 7).

Table 7. Standardised indirect associations through institutional brand-personality congruence

Antecedent	Outcome	Indirect effect	95% parametric-bootstrap CI
Organisational justice	Affective commitment	0.094	0.063, 0.129
Perceived organisational support	Affective commitment	0.154	0.119, 0.191
Transformational leadership	Affective commitment	0.170	0.131, 0.209
Organisational justice	Organisational trust	0.093	0.061, 0.127
Perceived organisational support	Organisational trust	0.151	0.115, 0.191
Transformational leadership	Organisational trust	0.166	0.127, 0.210

Note. Confidence intervals are based on 5,000 parametric bootstrap replications from the observed covariance matrix. They should be confirmed with a case-resampling bootstrap using the original participant-level data.

Table 8. Summary of hypothesis tests

Hypothesis group	Statement	Result
H1-H4	Justice, support, leadership and congruence are positively associated with affective commitment.	Supported
H5-H8	Justice, support, leadership and congruence are positively associated with organisational trust.	Supported
H9a-H9c	Justice, support and leadership are positively associated with institutional brand-personality congruence.	Supported
H10a-H10c	The three antecedents have positive indirect statistical associations with commitment through congruence.	Supported
H11a-H11c	The three antecedents have positive indirect statistical associations with trust through congruence.	Supported

3.5 Discussion

The results indicate that faculty commitment and organisational trust are associated with a complex of workplace treatment, leadership and symbolic institutional alignment. All three regression models accounted for a large amount of variance, and the reported coefficients, standard errors and confidence intervals indicate that each predictor had its own unique association when controlling for the other constructs. The size of these associations should be evaluated with the same-source, cross-sectional design and with the exceptionally large scale reliabilities in mind. The outcomes of the hypothesis tests are summarised in Table 8.

The direct effect of institutional brand-personality congruence was the strongest with affective commitment and similar with organisational trust. This extends brand-self congruity and brand-relationship reasoning from external customers to internal academic stakeholders [37]. Rather than a university's brand being observed from the outside, it is interpreted and lived out in the day-to-day of the academic life of the faculty member. When faculty members' self-perceptions of innovative, ethical, caring or competent align with the university's reputation, it can serve as a more significant connection point. The conclusion supports the self-congruity theory [10] as well as arguments by Backhaus and Tikoo [13] and Lievens et al. [15] that the identity of an organisation needs to be credible to existing members.

The construct should at the same time be conceptually limited. The brand-personality congruence is not an alternative to person-organisation fit or organisational identification. The general fit refers to the fit of values, needs and capabilities, while the brand-personality congruence refers to the fit of symbolic human-like traits. Organisational identification is a relational product where one feels a feeling of being one with the organisation. For future research, all three constructs should be measured concurrently, and congruence should be tested to explain incremental variance over and above value congruence and identification.

Congruence was found to be highly correlated with POS and transformational leadership. This pattern indicates that institutional personality is surmised from in vivo experiences of work. A supportive practice can make a university look caring and dependable; transformational leadership can make it look purposeful, innovative and development-oriented. Organisational justice also played an independent role, suggesting that an ethical and trustworthy institutional personality should be based on just distribution, processes and interactions. If branding is not aligned with practice, then it is unlikely to create long-term employee alignment.

Support and transformational leadership had comparable adjusted coefficients for affective commitment, and justice had a smaller, but significant association after the other predictors and congruence were controlled. Amongst the three workplace antecedents, organisational justice showed the strongest association with organisational trust. Theoretically, support and inspirational leadership may be particularly relevant to emotional attachment, while trust is particularly sensitive to predictability, fair decision processes and respectful treatment. However, the cross-sectional design does not offer any information as to the order of development for the perceptions.

The indirect pathway is consistent with the hypothesis that congruence represents one psychological link between experiences in the workplace and employee attitudes. But the more defensible interpretation is that the more congruent justice, support and leadership are, the more congruent the subsequent variables of commitment and trust are. Changes in justice, support, or leadership lead to changes in congruence, and employee outcomes cannot be claimed based on longitudinal or experimental evidence.

3.6 Theoretical Implications

The first contribution from the findings is the linkage of social-exchange explanations to symbolic identity processes. The association of favourable treatment and its creation of a felt obligation and positive expectations is explained by social exchange, and the personal expression of an institution by self-congruity. These processes do not compete; they seem complementary. Faculty can be committed when they feel supported and fairly treated and when the institution embodies their identity or what they want to be. These justice-based insights also carry into the wider debate on the future of work, where fair treatment and trustworthy decision processes remain central as organisations adopt algorithmic and data-driven management [38].

Second, institutional brand personality is defined as a phenomenon experienced internally. The brand is performed in higher education in governance, academic leadership, recognition, student relationships and day-to-day communication. This is an ‘inside-out’ approach to taking the construct away from logos and marketing messages.

Third, the study is able to narrow the term of constructs, focusing specifically on affective organisational commitment and organisational trust in the university. This way, instead of commitment being a monolithic concept, it is not equated with trust of an individual leader.

3.7 Practical Implications

Justice, support, leadership and internal branding need to be managed as a system in the participating private-university environment. The transparent workload allocation could be realised by developing a workload matrix by department, identifying the allocated workload for each department by spelling out the who/what/when/where/why/and how of each component of the workload of the classroom teaching, laboratory/studio supervision, student mentoring, research supervision, accreditation, committee and administrative work. For those who wish to use a matrix, it can be circulated for final approval, and feedback from faculty members can be done via a documented feedback loop, allowing for verification of calculations. An annual promotion calendar, published eligibility and scoring criteria, a standard evidence checklist, a publicly announced committee structure and conflict of interest rules, written rationale for decisions, and a time-limited appeals/reviews process all help to promote consistency. These are specific ways of expressing distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. Support should also be evident in the normal routines of everyday institutional life. Seed grants (with published criteria and decision dates), protected research or writing time, transparent rules for conference support, formal mentoring programs for early career faculty, and a system that documents temporary adjustments to workload during serious personal difficulties are examples that may be applicable to the participating universities. Transformational leadership can be expressed in a monthly forum, writing up follow-up to faculty suggestions, one-on-one development plans, and small pilot funds for responsible teaching or innovation in research. As universities manage transitions to increasingly technology-driven administration, such leadership is also central to managing digital transformation effectively [39]. An annual brand audit can be conducted internally to see how a university's image claiming to be innovative, caring, competent, or ethical aligns with anonymous student and faculty member feedback, as well as administrative measures like how long it takes to process grants, how many are completed in a promotion cycle, how often grievances are addressed, and how workloads are distributed. It should be noted that the institutions are anonymised, and administrative records for the institutions were not analysed, so these are proposed implementation mechanisms for the participating setting and do not imply that all institutions follow these mechanisms. It is false to try to create congruence by only hiring those employees who are a narrower brand stereotype. This would in effect limit diversity and stifle constructive debate. The more suited goal is to build an authentic and inclusive institutional identity with values and practices where a diversity of faculty members can see some alignment.

3.8 Limitations and Future Research

There are a number of factors that restrict interpretation. The cross-sectional design rules out causal, or temporal, claims. Justice, support and leadership should be measured at an initial time, congruence at a

later time, commitment and trust should be measured at a later time, and a longitudinal design should be used. Second, all constructs were measured on the same survey; thus, common method bias was a possible threat. It would be beneficial for future research to merge employee surveys with supervisor assessment, administrative records, turnover data or temporally separated measures.

Thirdly, only four universities were included in the study, and the respondents were nested within these universities. Depending on the leadership and policy environment, responses are likely to be interdependent. Since institution-level counts were not available for the current analysis, the models were not able to calculate intraclass correlations or institution fixed effects. Larger numbers of institutions should be sampled, and multilevel modelling and/or a suitable correction of standard errors should be used in future research.

Fourth, the exceptionally high alpha coefficients require item-level re-examination. The absence of the original item-level response matrix at the revision stage prevented estimation of omega, exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis, corrected item-total correlations, and residual correlations. This limitation is stated explicitly; the reported alpha values should not be interpreted as evidence of unidimensionality or discriminant validity [32, 33]. Future validation should screen for duplicated or near-duplicated wording, inspect response patterns and reverse-coded items, estimate omega total and, where theoretically justified, omega hierarchical with confidence intervals, compare plausible factor models, examine heterotrait-monotrait ratios, and shorten redundant scales while preserving content coverage.

Fifth, mean substitution was employed for data preparation. The amount of missing responses was small, but multiple imputation or full-information maximum likelihood would yield less biased uncertainty estimates. Sixth, the four-item congruence measure needs to be further validated against person-organisation fit, value congruence, employer-brand identification and organisational identification. Last, but not least, the attention given to private universities in one state is a restriction on generalisability. Replication is required in the public universities, other states in India and other national systems.

4. CONCLUSION

The results suggest that organisational justice, perceived organisational support, transformational leadership, and organisational brand-personality congruence are all related to faculty members' affective commitment and organisational trust in private universities of Chhattisgarh. The association with congruence remained strong even after controlling for the three workplace antecedents, and justice, support and leadership were each positively associated with congruence. The findings in this study indicate that when the symbolic personality of a university is supported by fair systems, positive relationships and consistent leadership, it becomes credible to the university's employees. The study thus argues for greater linkage of HRM, leadership development, and internal branding and underlines the need for longitudinal, multi-source, and multi-level evidence to support causal claims.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Considerations: Participation was voluntary, responses were anonymous and confidential, and no identifying information was collected; completion and return of the questionnaire implied informed consent.

Data Availability: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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