Research Paper

The Relationship Between Perception of Organizational Justice and Managerial Performance Mediated by Role Clarity: Evidence from Administrative Technicians at a Federal University

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study aims to analyze the relationship between the perception of organizational justice and managerial performance mediated by the role clarity.

Methodology: The methodology involved a survey distributed to 133 Administrative Technicians at a Brazilian federal university, with the subsequent application of structural equation modeling through Partial Least Squares (PLS).

Results: The results confirmed the hypothesis that role clarity functions as a mediator in the association between the perception of organizational justice and managerial performance.

Research limitations: The theoretical contribution of this study addresses a previously unexplored gap in the literature, offering new empirical evidence to support the mediating effect of role clarity in this context.

Originality: This study provides empirical evidence of the mediating role of role clarity in the relationship between organizational justice and managerial performance, focusing on a public university context. It expands the literature by applying PLS-SEM to a public management setting and offering practical insights for improving performance in public institutions.

Keywords: *Public Servant; Role Clarity; Organizational Justice; Managerial performance.*

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1. Introduction

Organizational behavior integrates theories and empirical findings across disciplines to understand how in organizational settings are shaped by cognitive processes, values, and learning (Nga, 2012). Among the key constructs in this field, organizational justice, employees´ perceptions of fairness in procedures, interactions, and outcomes, has a critical influence on attitudes and behaviors related to performance (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1990).

Rooted in moral philosophy and social norms, fairness perceptions affect motivation, trust, and commitment, and have been empirically linked to reduced turnover, greater job satisfaction, and enhanced managerial effectiveness (Rupp et al., 2017; Martinson et al., 2010; Baldwin, 2006).

Another pivotal factor is role clarity, understood as employees' awareness of their responsibilities and what is expected of them in their positions (Kahn et al., 1964). By reducing ambiguity, clear roles support better alignment with organizational goals, enhance fairness perceptions, and contribute positively to performance outcomes (Mukherjee & Malhotra, 2005; Newman et al., 2015; Lau, 2015).

In contrast, role ambiguity, or the lack of clear expectations, can elevate stress levels and hinder creativity and effectiveness, thus undermining both individual performance and perceived fairness (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Given the sensitivity of managerial outcomes to both psychological and structural conditions, it is essential to understand how role clarity functions as a mechanism linking justice perceptions and managerial performance.

While the private sector has seen extensive study of the links between clarity, fairness, and performance (Lee & Idriss, 2017; Sahu, 2018; Kundu et al., 2020), the public sector remains underexplored. Public organizations face distinct institutional constraints and governance demands, which warrant a contextualized analysis of these dynamics.

Accordingly, this study investigates: How do perceptions of organizational justice relate to managerial performance, and to what extent is this relationship mediated by role clarity among public employees? Drawing on a Brazilian sample, this research advances theoretical understanding while offering practical recommendations for improving public sector management.

For practitioners, the findings underscore the importance of fostering both fair treatment and well-defined roles to improve effectiveness. By emphasizing transparency and accountability, this study offers guidance for human resource strategies aimed at strengthening engagement and performance in public administration.

2. Literature Review

In the past decades, research in human resource management has highlighted the need to study how perceptions of organizational justice relate to organizational effectiveness (Fatt et al., 2010). These researchers believe that employees feel most content when they think they're fairly rewarded for their work, with rewards reflecting their true contributions and aligning with the organization's reward policies.

Eberlin and Tatum (2008) note that several classifications of organizational justice have been proposed, yet the categorization by Greenberg (1993) is particularly well-supported by research. Greenberg identifies three main components of organizational justice: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice (McDowall & Fletcher, 2004).

Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of outcomes received from the organization, assessed by comparing one's outcomes to others (Alsalem and Alhaiani, 2007). Procedural justice concerns the fairness of the rules and processes that lead to these outcomes (Nabatchi et al., 2007). Interactional justice refers to the fairness in interpersonal treatment, particularly during decision-making processes (Baldwin, 2006).

Although these dimensions are conceptually distinct, some studies report high correlations between them—especially between distributive and procedural justice—suggesting that some individuals may perceive justice more holistically (Colquitt, 2001). Nevertheless, this study adopts Greenberg's (1993) multidimensional framework.

Greenberg also classified justice along a second dimension: whether it relates to structural aspects (e.g., rules, procedures, outcomes) or interpersonal treatment. Thus, procedural and distributive justice focus on structural fairness, while interactional justice highlights the social context in which decisions are communicated (Hassan & Hashim, 2011).

Employees' perceptions of fairness significantly shape their emotions and workplace behavior (Robbins & Judge, 2007). A perceived lack of fairness may lead to frustration,

reduced performance, or even thoughts of quitting. In contrast, fair treatment enhances not only job satisfaction but also collegial relationships, reinforcing a positive organizational climate.

More broadly, perceived organizational justice influences how employees evaluate the fairness of workplace procedures, interpersonal interactions, and outcomes. These perceptions directly affect performance and behavior, thus impacting organizational success. This view expands earlier models that emphasized work stress, control, and coworker support as the primary factors affecting job satisfaction and effectiveness (Baldwin, 2006).

Ghosh et al. (2017) suggested that fairness perceptions strengthen employees' sense of belonging, which is critical for job performance. They also found that procedural justice strongly contributes to the perception of fairness in outcome distribution.

Swalhi et al. (2017) examined how different types of justice influence job performance, considering the mediating role of affective commitment. Their results confirmed that affective commitment helps explain the justice–performance relationship, and that overall justice perception had a stronger impact than any individual justice dimension.

Shan et al. (2015) explored the mediating role of leader-member exchange in the relationship between organizational justice and job performance. Studying university library staff in Islamabad, they found that all three justice dimensions—distributive, procedural, and interactional—affect job performance. However, interactional justice and the quality of the leader–member relationship had the most significant impact. According to the exposed arguments and evidence from previous studies, the second research hypothesis is enunciated:

H1: The perception of organizational justice positively influences managerial performance.

The research by Mutebi et al. (2022) highlights the complications arising from multifaceted interdepartmental functions within organizations that may lead to role ambiguity during the execution of tasks by employees. Organizations failing to delineate clear roles for each employee within their respective departments are more prone to inefficiencies, such as task non-completion and the wasteful use of resources due to duplicative efforts across departments.

Attention to the issue of role clarity is essential within the realm of human resource management. Newman et al. (2015) found that in environments where clarity of roles is deficient, adherence to ethical behavior is diminished. Conversely, Zheng et al. (2016) suggest that role clarity contributes to more favorable outcomes in terms of expected returns for a company. Rizzo et al. (1970) contribute to this dialogue by arguing that role ambiguity—the opposite of role clarity—is characterized by a lack of clearly defined behavioral expectations that guide individuals' conduct within organizations.

Hence, having clearly defined expectations is vital for employees' perceptions of the quality of service they provide (Mukherjee & Malhotra, 2006). Managers who understand their roles and responsibilities are more likely to perceive the organizational system as fair and just (Lau, 2015). This indicates that such perceptions directly influence work behaviors and, consequently, task performance.

The existing literature on the role of employees' clarity within the fields of management and accounting underscores its importance. For example, the study by Capitano et al. (2021) investigates indicators of socialization such as task mastery, role clarity, and social acceptance. Their findings suggest that, across various occupations, achieving role clarity and social acceptance is more challenging and time-consuming than achieving task mastery. They also note that unstructured work environments and greater autonomy in decision-making can extend the period newcomers need to acquire clarity in their roles.

Mutebi et al. (2022) sought to discern how the concepts of organizational networks and organizational learning, seen as complex adaptive systems, contribute to both the adaptability of an organization and role clarity within humanitarian logistics. The study found that both organizational networks and learning significantly affect adaptability and clarity of roles. It was also noted that adaptability plays a partial mediating role in how organizational networks and learning are linked to this clarity.

Sitepu et al. (2020) delved into the nexus between the interactive use of budgets, role clarity, and individual creativity. The research suggests that while there is no direct link between the interactive use of budgets and individual creativity, there could be an influence on creativity through clearly defined roles.

Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) investigated the impact of role clarity, its precursors, and its outcomes on how employees perceive service quality. The findings underscore that role clarity is pivotal in shaping employees' views on service quality. Moreover, the study

reveals that staff feedback, their involvement, and support are influential in enhancing role clarity, which subsequently affects job satisfaction and commitment to the organization.

Altaf et al. (2021) highlighted the salience of brand role clarity and employee commitment to the brand by exploring how employee commitment to the brand moderates the relationship between role clarity and brand equity within an Islamic banking context. The findings point to the significant role that clarity around the branding role plays in enriching the connection between employees. The research also confirms that an employee's commitment to the brand is crucial in influencing how their role relates to the brand's equity.

Zheng et al. (2016), applying attribution theory, provided a theoretical framework for understanding the interplay between role clarity and supervisor satisfaction. Their research aimed to pinpoint leadership traits that might alter the effects of developmental feedback from supervisors and their interpersonal fairness. The study's findings suggest that role clarity's influence is contingent on the supervisor's degree of interpersonal justice and their focus on development. High levels of role clarity correlated with diminished supervisor satisfaction when accompanied by high levels of these moderating factors. Conversely, in the absence of such factors, increased role clarity displayed a plateau effect in its relation to supervisor satisfaction.

Finally, Lau (2015) explored whether procedural justice, clarity of roles, or a combination of both serves as a mediator in the nexus between non-financial measures and managerial performance. The findings underscore that it is indeed role clarity that significantly mediates this relationship. Consequently, the research posited the following hypothesis:

H2: The clarity of roles positively mediates the relationship between the perception of organizational justice and managerial performance.

In Figure 1, the theoretical model of the study is presented with the elucidation of the hypothesis.
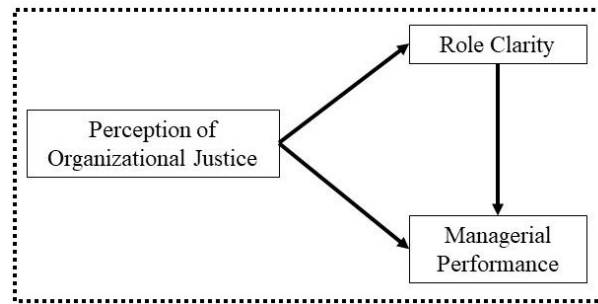
Figure 1: Theoretical Model of the study

Source: Own authorship (2025)

The observed data indicates that perceptions of organizational justice exert a notable influence on managerial performance. Moreover, this relationship is further mediated by the clarity of roles within the realm of managerial performance.

3. Methodology

This study aims to examine the relationship between the perception of organizational justice and managerial performance, focusing on the mediating role of role clarity. To achieve this, a descriptive research design was employed, aligned with the study's objectives, using a quantitative approach and survey data collection.

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The research was conducted with a sample of 133 Administrative Technicians at a federal university. The sample was non-probabilistic and selected based on accessibility. The sample size was determined to ensure adequate statistical power, considering a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, and power $(1-\beta) = 0.80$, according to calculations performed using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009). Data collection took place from March to November 2021.

The minimum number of responses required to proceed with the analyses was 95. To assess potential non-response bias, an independent samples t-test was conducted comparing the first and last 24 respondents, revealing no statistically significant differences ($p > 0.05$), indicating no evidence of non-response bias (Wåhlberg & Poom, 2015).

3.2 Research Instrument, Constructs, and Statistical Analysis

The survey instrument consisted of four sections comprising a total of 38 items, with constructs and sources detailed in Table 1. The first section included 20 items measuring the perception of organizational justice, based on Neihof and Moorman (1993). The second section measured managerial performance with 3 items adapted from Mahama and Cheng (2012). The third section assessed role clarity through 9 items following Zheng et al. (2016). The final section contained 6 demographic questions.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Construct reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The proposed mediation effect was tested using multiple regression analysis with bootstrapping to estimate indirect effects, following procedures recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008).

Table 1: Characterization of the independent variables adopted in the investigation, regarding measurement and theoretical foundation

Construct		Measurement	Theoretical basis
Perception of Organizational Justice	Distributive Procedural Interpersonal	Questions (20) Likert Scale from 1 to 5 (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	Adapted from Neihoff & Moorman (1993)
Managerial Performance		Questions (3) Likert Scale from 1 to 5 (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)	Mahama & Cheng (2012)
Role Clarity	Goal Process	Questions (9) Likert scale from 1 to 5 (Very unclear - very clear)	Zheng et al., (2016)

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025)

Perception of Organizational Justice and Role Clarity were treated as second-order constructs. Managerial Performance, assessed through work accuracy, user satisfaction, and the ability to meet delivery deadlines, was modeled as a first-order construct and treated unidimensionally, with validated internal consistency confirmed via confirmatory factor analysis.

To test the proposed hypotheses, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed, as outlined by Hair Jr., Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2009). SEM facilitates the understanding of complex relationships among multiple variables simultaneously.

It is important to highlight that relationship parameters indicate the effect of independent variables on dependent variables, following Marôco (2010). To verify the reliability of

the measurement model, three criteria were used: Cronbach's Alpha (CA), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Cronbach's Alpha values close to 1 indicate higher reliability, with values above 0.7 considered acceptable (Cronbach, 1951).

Hair et al. (2009) emphasize that Cronbach's Alpha does not account for measurement errors in the indicators, which makes Composite Reliability essential. CR also considers internal consistency and accepts values above 0.7. Average Variance Extracted evaluates the amount of variance captured by the construct relative to measurement error, with acceptable values exceeding 0.5 (Hair Jr. et al., 2005a).

To assess discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) was conducted, ensuring that constructs are distinct and measure unique aspects not captured by other constructs. The HTMT criterion requires each measured item to relate to only one latent construct (Hair et al., 2009).

For further validity testing, the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion was applied, comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct with the correlations between constructs. Given that the data originated from a single survey source (same respondents, same response format, same data collection time), the Harman's single-factor test was performed to assess common method bias (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

This test does not differentiate between the structural model (relationships between latent variables) and the measurement model (relationships between indicators and latent variables). Instead, it estimates an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) including all items simultaneously, using the unrotated principal components method (Bido, Mantovani & Cohen, 2018). Common method bias is indicated if a single factor emerges or if one factor accounts for most of the variance in the data set (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003).

4. Results

We crafted strong results through structural equation modeling using a symmetric model that outlines the linear connections between both latent and observable variables. Initially, we appraise the measurement model to check the instrument's reliability and validity (Hair Jr. et al., 2016). A composite reliability index (CR) above 0.70 confirms the

instrument's reliability. Similarly, an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.50 establishes convergent validity. Lastly, the Fornell and Larcker criterion provides evidence of discriminant validity (Hair Jr. et al., 2016).

Table 2 illustrates the measurement model, encompassing the instrument's reliability, its validity, and convergent validity.

Table 2: Measurement model

Constructs	CR	AVE	Discriminant Validity					
			CO	CP	MP	PJD	PJI	PJP
RCG	0.934	0.738	**0.859**					
RCP	0.919	0.740	0.561	**0.860**				
MP	0.891	0.732	0.546	0.508	**0.856**			
PJD	0.884	0.608	0.333	0.548	0.276	**0.780**		
PJI	0.975	0.815	0.464	0.277	0.381	0.316	**0.903**	
PJP	0.953	0.774	0.605	0.344	0.523	0.331	0.783	**0.880**

Note: RCG=Objective Clarity; RCP=Process Clarity; MP=Performance; PJD=Perception of Distributive Justice; PJI=Perceived Interpersonal Justice; PJP=Perception of Procedural Justice

Source: survey data (2025)

The results in Table 2 satisfy the measurement model's criteria. The constructs' reliability is verified, as all latent variables exhibit a composite reliability (CR) greater than 0.70. Construct validity is further established since the average extracted variance (AVE) exceeds 0.50 for all variables, demonstrating each construct's capacity to account for the variance of its indicators (Hair Jr. et al., 2009).

The discriminant validity was also approved by the Farnell and Larcker test, as it showed that more than 50% of the variances of the assertions that compose them are explained by the constructs. And by meeting the discriminant validity, it was observed that the constructs are different from each other. There was also no collinearity between the items of each construct, given that the VIF index was less than 0.5 in all models (Hair Jr et al. 2016). Then, Henseler et al., (2016) suggest that the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) test be developed, with the aim of reinforcing the validity of the constructs. For this purpose, Table 3 shows the HTMT ratio.

Discriminant validity is corroborated by the Fornell and Larcker criterion, which demonstrates that the constructs explain over 50% of the variances of their respective indicators. This also confirms that the constructs differ from one another. Additionally, the absence of collinearity among the items within each construct is evidenced by a

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) below 0.5 in all models (Hair Jr. et al. 2016). Pursuing further validation, Henseler et al. (2016) recommend the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) test to reinforce construct validity. Table 3 presents the HTMT ratios.

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	CO	CP	Desem	PJD	PJI	PJP
RCG						
RCP	0.615					
MP	0.634	0.590				
PJD	0.319	0.542	0.294			
PJI	0.479	0.287	0.421	0.295		
PJP	0.644	0.367	0.590	0.319	0.811	

Note: RCG=Objective Clarity; RCP=Process Clarity; MP=Performance; PJD=Perception of Distributive Justice; PJI=Perceived Interpersonal Justice; PJP=Perception of Procedural Justice

Source: survey data (2025).

The data in Table 3 reaffirm the validity of the constructs since their values are below the 0.85 cutoff (Henseler et al., 2016), signifying clear distinction among the constructs. It is critical to note that meeting the measurement model criteria is a necessary precursor for initiating bootstrapping. Once these preliminary conditions are satisfied, the examination of the structural model can begin.

The structural model is then established to guide the rotation of 5,000 sub-samples and 5,000 interactions, based on a confidence interval that is bias-corrected and accelerated, employing a two-tailed test with a 5% significance level (Hair Jr. et al., 2016). These parameters are set using the Bootstrapping technique, which is instrumental in affirming or refuting the hypotheses of the study. Table 4 show the relationship between the constructs.

Table 4: Relationship between constructs

Construts	Coef.	T-Value	P-Value	Hypothesis	
Perception of Justice → Performance	0.203	1.879	0.000**	H1	Confirmed
Perception → Role Clarity → Performance	0.268	5.172	0.000**	H2	Confirmed

Note1:*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Source: survey data.

Expanding on the analysis to include the full structural model, which encompasses both primary and secondary variables, Hypothesis H1 posited that the perception of

organizational justice has a positive impact on managerial performance. Overall, our results indicate that the perception of organizational justice—encompassing distributive, interpersonal, and procedural justice—enhances the managerial performance of administrative technicians at Brazilian Federal Universities ($\beta = 0.203$, $p < 0.05$). With a confidence level of 95%, this evidence supports the non-rejection of H1.

The findings of this study reveal that employees demonstrate higher levels of proactivity when they are satisfied with their work environment. This supports Fatt et al. (2010), who emphasized the role of organizational justice in enhancing organizational efficiency. Specifically, the results affirm that fair treatment—including procedural, distributive, and interpersonal justice—contributes to improved managerial performance, expanding the discourse beyond the narrow lens of financial compensation.

The data also show that perceived injustice is associated with emotional volatility and reduced productivity, reinforcing the predictions of equity theory (Baldwin, 2006; Robbins & Judge, 2007). In contrast, satisfaction with job conditions and interpersonal relationships emerged as significant positive influences on job performance, corroborating Ghosh et al. (2017), who highlighted the importance of distributive and procedural justice in supporting individual performance outcomes.

Hypothesis H2, which proposed that role clarity positively mediates the relationship between organizational justice and managerial performance, was supported by the analysis. This suggests that when administrative technicians understand the expectations and procedures related to their roles, they are more likely to perceive justice in their organization, which, in turn, enhances their performance. The result reinforces the theoretical framework proposed by Mutebi et al. (2022), indicating that organizational structures lacking clearly defined roles may undermine perceptions of fairness and, ultimately, institutional effectiveness.

Moreover, the findings are consistent with Lau (2015), who argued that clarity in managerial roles fosters a perception of justice and contributes to a more equitable work environment. By integrating the concepts of organizational justice and role clarity, this study highlights the synergistic effect they have on enhancing managerial performance. This is aligned with the conclusions of Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) and Altaf et al. (2021), who observed that clear job roles increase satisfaction and commitment, thereby improving work outcomes.

Finally, our results resonate with Ben-Yoav et al. (2010), who found that role clarity moderates the relationship between interpersonal considerations and the pursuit of organizational objectives. Similarly, Lau (2015) demonstrated that both justice and clarity function as mediators in the relationship between non-financial performance measures and managerial effectiveness. Taken together, these findings underscore the strategic importance of fostering role clarity alongside organizational justice—particularly within the context of public institutions such as federal universities—to improve administrative efficiency and professional performance.

The findings of this study, by confirming that perceptions of organizational justice positively influence managerial performance (H1) and that this relationship is mediated by role clarity (H2), are closely aligned with the reviewed literature. Ghosh et al. (2017) emphasized that procedural justice is central to employee integration and engagement, which is consistent with the public sector context analyzed here. Similarly, Mutebi et al. (2022) highlighted that the absence of role clarity undermines both perceptions of fairness and institutional effectiveness, reinforcing the mediating effect identified in this research.

It is noteworthy that while most prior studies have focused on private organizations (Kundu et al., 2020; Sahu, 2018), this study contributes by demonstrating that in public universities, role clarity also amplifies the translation of justice perceptions into enhanced performance. In this way, the study extends the proposition of Lau (2015) by testing it in a setting characterized by greater bureaucracy and normative rigidity, yet equally dependent on equity and transparency to ensure efficiency.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between the perception of organizational justice and managerial performance, emphasizing the mediating role of role clarity. Based on survey data from 133 Administrative Technicians at a federal university, the results support the hypothesis that organizational justice positively influences managerial performance, and that this effect is strengthened when employees have clarity about their roles.

The findings suggest that federal universities, despite not being solely dependent on private resources, must still prioritize managerial efficiency to maintain the quality of public service and justify continued governmental support. Ensuring role clarity and

promoting perceptions of fairness are therefore strategic actions for improving employee engagement and task performance.

Practically, the study underscores the importance of institutional efforts to continuously communicate role expectations and uphold principles of fairness in decision-making processes. These actions contribute not only to higher levels of satisfaction and motivation but also to a culture of innovation and accountability in public administration.

From a managerial perspective, the results underscore that strengthening role clarity and ensuring fairness in organizational practices are not only theoretical concerns but also practical levers for improving the performance of public universities. University administrators should prioritize transparent communication of role expectations, continuous feedback, and equitable decision-making processes to foster trust and engagement among administrative staff. By institutionalizing practices that reduce ambiguity and reinforce perceptions of justice, public universities can enhance efficiency, accountability, and service quality—outcomes that are increasingly critical for sustaining legitimacy and justifying public investment.

The results also highlight a key risk: when role clarity is absent, employees are less likely to perceive justice in organizational processes, which may compromise overall performance. This finding is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Mutebi et al., 2022) and reinforces the notion that justice and clarity are foundational to effective management in the public sector.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the data relied on self-reported perceptions, which may introduce bias. Second, the data collection took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the exceptional working conditions of that period may have influenced the responses. Third, the sample, although adequate for the statistical analyses, was drawn from a single institution, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings.

Finally, the study did not incorporate control variables such as department, tenure, or age, which could affect both perceptions of organizational justice and managerial performance. Future research should replicate this study across different federal universities and regions, as well as include relevant control variables or additional

mediators and moderators—such as leadership style or organizational culture—to strengthen the robustness and applicability of the findings.

Future research should replicate this study across different federal universities and regions to validate and generalize the findings. Expanding the model to include additional mediators or moderators—such as leadership style or organizational culture—could also enrich the understanding of factors influencing managerial performance in public institutions.

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