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Employee fairness perceptions through social dialogue and proactive communication: evidence from Moroccan organisations

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CITATION

Bensouda A, Ghazi A, Ourdi A. Employee fairness perceptions through social dialogue and proactive communication: evidence from Moroccan organisations. *Human Resources Management and Services*. 2026; 8(4): 6317. <https://doi.org/10.18282/hrms6317>

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Abstract: Employees' fairness perceptions have become increasingly important in contemporary human resource management (HRM) because they are closely associated with employee well-being, workplace relationships and organisational effectiveness. Although organisational justice has received considerable attention as a framework for understanding employees' fairness perceptions, limited evidence explains how participatory, communicative and regulatory organisational mechanisms are jointly associated with these perceptions, particularly in emerging organisational contexts. Addressing this gap, this study examines how social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance are associated with employees' fairness perceptions, as reflected in organisational justice perceptions, while investigating the mediating role of proactive communication. A quantitative explanatory research design was adopted using survey data collected from 300 employees working in Moroccan organisations. Data were analysed using principal component analysis, reliability assessment, correlation analysis, hierarchical regression and bootstrapped mediation analysis with 5,000 resamples. The findings indicate that social dialogue and legal compliance are positively associated with organisational justice perceptions. In addition, social dialogue is positively associated with proactive communication, which is itself positively associated with organisational justice perceptions, while the bootstrapped indirect association through proactive communication is statistically significant and consistent with partial mediation. These findings highlight the complementary role of participatory employment practices and transparent, timely and explanatory communication in employees' fairness perceptions. The study extends organisational justice and HRM research by showing that employees' fairness perceptions are associated with interconnected participatory, communicative and regulatory organisational mechanisms rather than with any single organisational practice considered in isolation. It also provides empirical evidence from the Moroccan organisational context, where evolving employment relations offer a relevant setting for examining these organisational processes. From a managerial perspective, the findings highlight the importance of integrating participatory employment relations, proactive communication and legally compliant human resource management practices to support employees' fairness perceptions.

Keywords: organisational justice; legal compliance; organisational communication; employment relations; human resource management practices; organisational legitimacy.

1. Introduction

Employees' perceptions of fairness have become an increasingly important concern in contemporary organisations. Organisational fairness plays a

fundamental role in shaping employees' well-being, job satisfaction and the development of relationships based on trust and mutual respect between employees and the organisation (Baciu et al., 2023). As organisations operate in increasingly dynamic and participatory environments, employees continuously evaluate how managerial decisions, organisational practices and workplace interactions influence the way they are treated. These evaluations affect not only employees' attitudes towards the organisation but also organisational trust, workplace stability and the quality of employment relationships.

Within this context, organisational justice provides a valuable framework for understanding how employees assess organisational practices and managerial decisions. Employees evaluate fairness not only through the outcomes they receive but also through the transparency of procedures, the quality of interpersonal treatment and the way managerial decisions are communicated. In this respect, effective internal communication has been recognised as an essential managerial practice influencing employees' workplace experiences and their interpretations of organisational actions, whereas inadequate communication may adversely affect organisational functioning (Zhou et al., 2024). Although organisational justice has long been recognised as a key determinant of organisational effectiveness, explaining how employees develop fairness perceptions remains a complex research challenge. Employees rarely assess organisational practices in isolation; rather, they construct fairness perceptions through complementary organisational experiences related to participation, communication and the implementation of organisational rules. Yet, how these complementary organisational processes jointly shape organisational justice perceptions remains insufficiently understood.

Among the organisational processes that may contribute to employees' fairness evaluations, social dialogue has attracted increasing scholarly attention as a mechanism for promoting employee participation, collective voice and constructive employment relationships. Through regular interaction between management and employees, social dialogue may strengthen mutual understanding, enhance trust and reinforce the perceived legitimacy of organisational decisions (Pender et al., 2018). The effectiveness of such participatory mechanisms is nonetheless likely to depend on the broader cultural context. Moroccan organisations have been characterised by relatively high power distance and a more normative cultural orientation, whereby managerial decisions may be perceived by employees as imposed from above rather than co-constructed, a pattern that contrasts with findings from Dutch organisational settings, characterised by lower power distance and a more individualistic cultural orientation (Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay, 2015). These characteristics make employee voice and participation particularly relevant for understanding how social dialogue is experienced in the Moroccan context. Moreover, the contribution of social dialogue is also likely to depend on how organisational information and managerial decisions are communicated throughout the organisation. In this regard, proactive communication represents an important human resource management (HRM) practice through which organisations anticipate employees' informational needs, clarify managerial decisions and reduce workplace ambiguity. By promoting transparent and timely communication, proactive communication may improve employees' understanding of organisational actions and strengthen perceptions of organisational fairness.

Alongside these participatory and communicative processes, legal compliance in HRM practices provides an essential institutional foundation for ensuring consistency, predictability and legitimacy in managerial decision-making (Lopez-Cabrales & Valle-Cabrera, 2020). Nevertheless, compliance with organisational and legal requirements alone does not necessarily generate

positive fairness perceptions among employees (Haines et al., 2024). Recent evidence on procedural evaluations further suggests that procedural consistency, although an important component of fair decision-making, may not by itself be sufficient to promote favourable evaluations of managerial practices. This highlights the complementary importance of transparency and understandable explanations (Wu et al., 2026). In organisational settings, employees therefore evaluate not only whether organisational rules are applied consistently, but also whether managerial decisions are implemented fairly and communicated in a transparent and meaningful manner during their day-to-day interactions. These perceptions are therefore likely to emerge from the combined influence of participatory, communicative and regulatory processes rather than from any single organisational practice considered independently.

Despite the recognised importance of these organisational processes, an important question remains unresolved. Previous research has generated substantial knowledge regarding organisational justice, communication and HRM practices. However, these dimensions have largely been examined independently, resulting in valuable but fragmented explanations of how employees develop organisational justice perceptions. This fragmentation is compounded by the fact that organisational justice research remains comparatively scarce in the Middle East and North Africa region, with most empirical evidence historically drawn from Western samples (Gadelrab et al., 2020). Although a growing body of research has begun to document legal compliance, social dialogue, and labour relations within Moroccan and broader Maghreb organisational settings, these dimensions have rarely been examined jointly. Studies that explicitly link them to organisational justice perceptions appear to remain limited in this specific regional context. Consequently, current knowledge provides only a partial understanding of how participatory, communicative and regulatory processes interact to shape employees' evaluations of organisational fairness. Accordingly, an important research question remains: how do social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance jointly contribute to the development of organisational justice perceptions? Addressing this question may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the organisational processes through which these perceptions are formed.

This research gap is particularly relevant in Morocco, where employment relations continue to be shaped by evolving legal frameworks and social dialogue mechanisms, set against a backdrop of sectoral disparities and increasing contractual flexibility (Bensouda, El Aissaoui, & Ourdi, 2025). Organisations in this context are increasingly strengthening social dialogue, modernising HRM practices and reinforcing compliance with labour legislation while adapting to evolving employment relationships. Yet this evolution remains uneven: trade union density in Morocco is comparatively low, estimated at around 6 to 10 per cent of the active population, and collective bargaining practices remain largely concentrated in large enterprises, leaving small and medium-sized firms—as well as the large informal sector—largely outside the scope of formalised labour relations (Filali Meknassi & Rioux, 2010). These institutional characteristics are further accompanied by challenges related to legal compliance in HRM practices, with recent evidence indicating that legal non-compliance is implicated in a substantial proportion of recorded labour conflicts in Moroccan companies (Bensouda, El Aissaoui, & Ourdi, 2026). These organisational developments provide a theoretically informative context for examining how participatory, communicative and regulatory processes jointly shape organisational justice perceptions.

Against this background, this study investigates the complementary associations of social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance

with organisational justice perceptions. Specifically, it examines the associations of social dialogue and legal compliance with organisational justice perceptions, analyses the relationship between social dialogue and proactive communication, and evaluates the mediating role of proactive communication among employees in Moroccan organisations. By examining these complementary processes within a unified framework, the study seeks to advance current understanding beyond individual antecedents of organisational justice, integrating participatory, communicative and institutional mechanisms as complementary components of employees' fairness evaluations.

2. Literature review

The present study draws on an integrated theoretical framework to explain how organisational and communication mechanisms shape organisational justice perceptions within contemporary workplaces. More specifically, the study mobilises Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), Voice Theory (Hirschman, 1970) and Legitimacy Theory (Suchman, 1995) to understand how employees interpret workplace practices, participation processes and managerial actions in developing fairness perceptions.

Equity Theory provides the central theoretical foundation for understanding organisational justice perceptions. According to Adams (1965), individuals assess fairness by comparing their contributions and outcomes while also engaging in social comparisons within the organisational environment. Subsequent developments in organisational justice research extended this perspective beyond distributive outcomes to include procedural, interactional and informational dimensions. Employees therefore evaluate not only organisational outcomes, but also the consistency of procedures, the neutrality of decision-making processes and the quality of workplace interactions. Equity Theory thus explains how employees cognitively develop fairness perceptions within organisations.

The relational dimension of organisational justice perceptions is further illuminated by Voice Theory. Hirschman (1970) argues that individuals facing unsatisfactory organisational situations may either withdraw or express their concerns in an attempt to influence their environment. Within organisations, social dialogue represents an important mechanism for participation, consultation and employee expression. By facilitating dialogue between management and employees, social dialogue may strengthen perceptions of inclusion, transparency and fairness. Empirical evidence indicates that where such mechanisms are perceived as insufficient, employees are more likely to seek external forms of representation to safeguard their interests (Cates et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of social dialogue depends not only on its formal existence, but also on the quality of communication and employees' perceptions of organisational responsiveness.

In this regard, proactive communication emerges as an important explanatory mechanism linking participatory processes to organisational justice perceptions. As an anticipatory and explanatory process, proactive communication enables organisations to clarify decisions, reduce ambiguity and improve information sharing, thereby contributing to how employees interpret the fairness of organisational practices.

Alongside these relational and communication mechanisms, Legitimacy Theory provides additional insight into the role of legal compliance in shaping fairness perceptions. According to Suchman (1995), organisational practices are evaluated against socially recognised norms and expectations. Legal compliance in HRM practices may accordingly reinforce perceptions of consistency, predictability and procedural legitimacy within organisations. Nevertheless, formal compliance with rules does not automatically generate positive

organisational justice perceptions. Employees also assess how organisational rules and managerial decisions are implemented and communicated in practice.

Taken together, Equity Theory, Voice Theory and Legitimacy Theory provide complementary perspectives for understanding employees' organisational justice perceptions. While Equity Theory explains how employees evaluate fairness, Voice Theory highlights the role of participation and employee expression, and Legitimacy Theory accounts for the institutional and normative basis against which organisational practices are evaluated. Integrating these perspectives extends the analysis beyond individual antecedents of organisational justice. It links participatory, communicative and institutional mechanisms within a unified framework of employees' fairness evaluations.

2.1. The impact of social dialogue on perceived organisational justice

Social dialogue occupies a central role in contemporary human resource management approaches as an institutionalised mechanism for regulating employment relations and strengthening the organisational climate. It refers to a structured process of exchange and dialogue between representatives of employers, employees and, in certain contexts, public authorities, aimed at facilitating negotiation and the conclusion of agreements on matters of common interest (International Labour Office, 2008). This perspective highlights the cooperative dimension of social dialogue, grounded in the pursuit of mutual understanding and the participation of organisational actors in decisions affecting work.

Within the framework of human resource management practices, social dialogue fulfils several fundamental functions. It constitutes an institutionalised channel for employee participation, enabling employees to express their concerns, to be informed and consulted, and to exert influence over decisions relating to their working conditions. Through collective bargaining and employee representation mechanisms, social dialogue plays a pivotal role in shaping employment conditions, determining remuneration and improving workplace well-being (Horecký & Smejkal, 2021; Keller & Bansbach, 2000). Moreover, it contributes to the development of organisational practices that promote fairness, diversity and inclusion by providing a framework for negotiating equality policies, particularly in relation to pay equity, working time arrangements and anti-discrimination measures (Stringfellow, 2020).

The literature highlights a strong relationship between social dialogue and perceived organisational justice. Employee involvement in decision-making processes through formal social dialogue mechanisms emerges as a central regulatory mechanism in employment relations. By fostering participation, recognising employees' interests and improving working conditions, these mechanisms contribute to establishing a fairer organisational environment (Horecký & Smejkal, 2021). Social dialogue therefore reinforces employees' sense of control, autonomy and recognition, all of which constitute essential elements in the construction of perceived organisational justice. Within the Moroccan context, social dialogue operates within a relatively recent institutional framework established by the 2004 Labour Code, while formal collective bargaining remains episodic and trade union density relatively low (Filali Meknassi & Rioux, 2010). These institutional characteristics suggest that employees' experiences of social dialogue may depend not only on the existence of formal mechanisms but also on how effectively opportunities for participation and collective voice are implemented within organisations.

More specifically, social dialogue contributes to strengthening the different dimensions of perceived organisational justice. By establishing transparent and participatory decision-making processes, it supports procedural justice perceptions by allowing employees to feel heard and involved in decisions affecting them.

When social dialogue facilitates open and negotiated discussions regarding the allocation of resources, rewards or forms of recognition, it may also reinforce perceptions of distributive justice. These dimensions of justice play a decisive role in shaping employee engagement, as highlighted by Biswas et al. (2013). Furthermore, by fostering interactions grounded in listening, respect and mutual recognition, social dialogue contributes to interactional justice, a dimension closely associated with the quality of interpersonal relationships and perceived social support (Otto & Mamatoglu, 2015).

Empirical studies support these theoretical contributions: participatory practices are associated with higher levels of organisational trust, a key mechanism in the formation of justice perceptions (Lim, 2021), and decision-making processes are more likely to be perceived as legitimate and fair when employees perceive their organisation as genuinely committed to constructive social dialogue (Pulignano & Doerflinger, 2015).

Collectively, this evidence positions social dialogue as a central relational mechanism in the construction of perceived organisational justice, embedding fairness judgements within a dynamic of participation and mutual recognition.

2.2. Social dialogue and proactive communication

In contemporary organisations, proactive communication is embedded within broader organisational and relational processes that shape workplace communication and employee interactions. In this respect, social dialogue emerges as an important determinant of proactive communication, as it creates the structural and relational conditions that facilitate problem anticipation, the expression of concerns and the upward flow of information.

Several studies highlight the structuring role of social dialogue in institutionalising anticipatory employee voice within organisations. Doellgast, Bellego and Pannini (2020) show that strengthening social dialogue constitutes a transformative lever in employment relations by fostering collective expression and enhancing employees' capacity to raise concerns before tensions escalate. Through the concept of communicative power, they emphasise that social dialogue mechanisms legitimise employees' voice. Organisational communication is thereby oriented towards problem anticipation and conflict prevention. This perspective highlights that social dialogue extends beyond a formal negotiation framework and actively contributes to the emergence of proactive communication practices within organisations.

Similarly, Bastian, Bocquet and Poussing (2025) show that social dialogue relies on continuous processes of information-sharing, consultation and employee participation that extend beyond formal collective bargaining mechanisms, facilitating the early circulation of information and the upward communication of concerns. This relational dimension is further emphasised by Pender et al. (2018), who show that when social dialogue is grounded in trust-based relationships and regular formal and informal exchanges, organisational actors are better able to anticipate problems and seek solutions prior to formal negotiations.

This conception of dialogue as a communicative process preceding decision-making is further developed by Johnston and Lane (2017), who define dialogue as a form of bidirectional communication grounded in listening, reciprocity and the voluntary expression of viewpoints. By enabling organisational actors to exchange information, express concerns and co-construct solutions before decisions are made, social dialogue constitutes an important mechanism fostering anticipatory and proactive communication practices within organisations.

A supportive social climate has similarly been shown to reduce the perceived risks associated with speaking up and to encourage the early expression of

concerns (Ta' Amnha et al., 2025).

Collectively, this evidence positions social dialogue as a key organisational condition for the emergence of proactive communication within workplaces.

2.3. The role of proactive communication in perceptions of organisational justice

In organisational environments characterised by continuous transformations and increasing complexity in decision-making processes, proactive communication plays an important role within proactive human resource management practices. Proactive communication refers to an anticipatory and explanatory communication approach aimed at informing employees in advance, clarifying organisational decisions and fostering transparent and bidirectional exchanges within organisations. In this respect, proactive communication constitutes an important explanatory mechanism in the formation of perceived organisational justice, as it shapes the way employees assess procedural fairness, decision consistency and the quality of organisational interactions.

Several studies highlight that proactive communication contributes to strengthening perceived organisational justice by improving the clarity and consistency of organisational exchanges. Gök, Karatuna and Özkılıçcı (2013) show that when employees have access to clear and consistent information and are involved in organisational processes, they develop more favourable judgements towards managerial practices, thereby reinforcing their perceptions of fairness within the organisation.

Informational transparency and the justification of organisational decisions also emerge as important determinants of perceived fairness. Pasquier (2019) highlights that the explicit communication of organisational decisions, including sensitive decisions, plays a crucial role in shaping perceived organisational justice, particularly at the procedural and informational levels. Similarly, Nambudiri (2007) argues that the effectiveness of organisational and managerial communication—particularly when it is anticipatory, explanatory and participatory—promotes positive perceptions of procedural and interactional justice. Employee consultation and the fair justification of decisions therefore contribute to strengthening the perceived legitimacy of organisational decision-making processes.

These effects are further supported by research on leadership and communication satisfaction. Authentic leadership fosters transparent and participatory communication practices that improve the accessibility and consistency of information (Hadziahmetovic & Salihovic, 2022), and satisfaction with organisational communication relationships is positively associated with perceived organisational justice, particularly when communication originates from top management and supervisors (Aggarwal-Gupta & Kumar, 2010).

In sum, this body of research suggests that proactive communication—by clarifying rules, justifying managerial choices and reducing informational ambiguity—is closely associated with employees' fairness perceptions within the workplace.

Building on the preceding arguments, the literature suggests that social dialogue may be associated with employees' perceived organisational justice not only directly, but also indirectly through proactive communication. By facilitating employee participation, information sharing and anticipatory communication processes, social dialogue may create favourable conditions for the development of fairness perceptions. Proactive communication may therefore constitute an important explanatory mechanism through which social dialogue contributes to perceived organisational justice.

2.4. Legal compliance of HRM practices and perceptions of organisational

justice

Within organisations, perceived justice is shaped by how rules and managerial procedures are applied and experienced in the workplace. Employees evaluate not only the outcomes they receive, but also the processes through which organisational decisions are formulated, implemented and justified. In this respect, legal compliance provides employees with objective and institutionally recognised reference points for assessing the fairness and legitimacy of managerial practices.

Several studies emphasise that the alignment of managerial practices with clearly established legal and ethical standards contributes to reducing perceptions of arbitrariness and strengthening organisational trust. Weaver and Treviño (2001) notably argue that when organisational decisions are perceived as grounded in impartial rules and consistent with recognised legal standards, employees develop more favourable evaluations of their organisation. Accordingly, legal compliance serves as a normative signal that managerial decisions are based on objective principles rather than discretionary preferences.

This relationship is closely associated with procedural justice. The consistent, observable and systematic application of organisational rules grounded in legal and ethical standards constitutes an important determinant of procedural justice (Newman, 1993), and employees who perceive organisational procedures as legally required or institutionally regulated are more likely to evaluate them as procedurally fair and organisationally legitimate (Feldman & Tyler, 2012). Legal compliance therefore contributes not only to regulatory conformity but also to employees' cognitive evaluations of fairness.

Recent empirical evidence further supports this relationship. Red and Teng-Calleja (2021) show that employees' perceptions of legal compliance constitute a significant determinant of perceived organisational justice. When organisations are perceived as complying with labour legislation and regulatory obligations, employees evaluate the fairness of their work environment more positively, which fosters favourable attitudes towards the employer. Evidence from Moroccan companies further highlights the institutional salience of legal compliance in employment relations: legal non-compliance with HRM practices accounted for nearly half of the recorded claims and was identified in the large majority of the labour conflicts examined (Bensouda, El Aissaoui, & Ourdi, 2026). This evidence highlights the particular relevance of legal compliance within Moroccan employment relations. Building on this context, the present study examines its association with employees' organisational justice perceptions.

Beyond formal adherence to legal requirements, several authors emphasise that the effectiveness of legal compliance depends on how legal principles are translated into everyday organisational practices. Klius et al. (2020) argue that embedding legal norms within organisational values, managerial behaviours and operational routines promotes responsible and cooperative workplace relationships. Likewise, Grobler and Grobler (2024) emphasise that human resource management practices characterised by transparency, ethical conduct and procedural integrity strengthen employees' perceptions of fairness by enhancing the consistency and predictability of managerial decisions. Consistent with this perspective, recent research further suggests that formal compliance alone may not be sufficient to ensure that managerial decisions are perceived as fair. Employees also expect organisational decision-making processes to be transparent, accountable and understandable, thereby reinforcing perceptions of legitimacy and fairness (Ebdao et al., 2026).

Altogether, this evidence positions legal compliance as an important institutional reference point through which employees interpret the consistency, impartiality and legitimacy of managerial decisions.

While the preceding theoretical arguments suggest that social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance are positively associated with organisational justice perceptions, the strength of these associations may plausibly vary across organisational contexts. The relatively high power distance and normative cultural orientation observed in Moroccan organisational settings (Hennekam & Tahssain-Gay, 2015) may condition how employees interpret participatory and communicative practices. Institutional factors such as union presence and firm size may further shape the strength of these associations. Empirical evidence from a comparable Maghreb setting reinforces the plausibility of such boundary conditions: in the Tunisian telecommunications sector, employment type has been shown to moderate the relationship between organisational justice and affective commitment (Dhaouadi & Sliti, 2022). While a full theoretical examination of these boundary conditions falls outside the scope of the present hypotheses, two relevant organisational characteristics—union presence and organisational size—are considered further through exploratory subgroup analyses reported in the Results section.

3. Hypothesis development

The objective of this study is to examine the relationships between social dialogue, proactive communication, legal compliance and employees' organisational justice perceptions. Although organisational justice encompasses distributive, procedural, interactional and informational dimensions, the present study conceptualises organisational justice perceptions as an overall fairness evaluation rather than examining these dimensions separately. Accordingly, the hypotheses are formulated at the overall construct level, while dimension-specific relationships remain an important avenue for future research. Based on the theoretical framework developed in the preceding sections, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Social dialogue is positively associated with employees' organisational justice perceptions.

H2: Social dialogue is positively associated with proactive communication.

H3: Proactive communication is positively associated with employees' organisational justice perceptions.

H4: Legal compliance in human resource management practices is positively associated with employees' organisational justice perceptions.

The mediating role of proactive communication may nevertheless vary in strength across organisational contexts. It may be more pronounced where social dialogue is accompanied by effective information sharing and accessible opportunities for employee voice, and comparatively weaker where participatory mechanisms remain largely formal or communication is constrained by prevailing organisational conditions. The boundary conditions outlined above, particularly union presence and organisational size, may therefore also be associated with the strength of this indirect communication-based relationship, although they are not formally modelled as moderators of mediation in the present study.

H5: Proactive communication statistically mediates the association between social dialogue and employees' organisational justice perceptions.

The full set of hypothesised relationships is synthesised in the conceptual model presented in **Figure 1**.

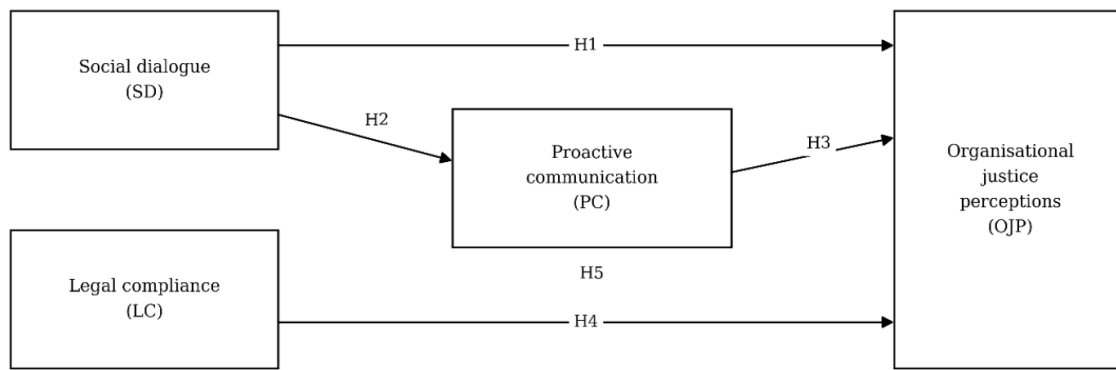


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual research model. Arrows H1 to H4 represent the direct associations tested in the corresponding hypotheses. H5 designates the indirect path from social dialogue to organisational justice perceptions through proactive communication, in which proactive communication is modelled as a partial mediator. Source: Developed by the authors.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research approach

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research approach to examine the organisational and communication processes associated with employees' organisational justice perceptions. More specifically, the study examines the relationships between social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance in explaining organisational justice perceptions.

To analyse these relationships, the study employs a hierarchical regression-based analytical strategy. This approach is appropriate for examining both direct and indirect relationships, particularly in models involving mediation effects. Successive linear regression analyses are therefore conducted to assess the direct associations of social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance with organisational justice perceptions, together with the association between social dialogue and proactive communication and the mediating role of proactive communication in the relationship between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions.

4.2. Research participants

The empirical data were collected from 300 employees working in Moroccan organisations across four major economic sectors: industry, services, trade and agriculture. These sectors were included to capture a broad range of organisational environments and employment contexts within the Moroccan economy.

Participants occupied a variety of organisational positions, including operational, supervisory and managerial roles. This diversity enabled the collection of multiple perspectives on workplace practices and employment relationships, which is particularly relevant in research on organisational justice perceptions, as employees' evaluations of fairness may vary according to their organisational roles and exposure to managerial decisions.

To ensure informed evaluations of workplace practices and organisational relationships, participants were required to have completed at least one year of service within their current organisation. This eligibility criterion ensured that respondents had sufficient organisational experience to provide meaningful assessments of HRM practices and workplace interactions.

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed because access to employees depended on organisational accessibility and voluntary participation. This sampling approach is widely used in organisational and human resource management research, where researchers' access to employees

is frequently constrained by organisational approval procedures, confidentiality requirements and employees' voluntary cooperation. Although convenience sampling does not permit statistical generalisation to the broader employee population, it is considered appropriate for explanatory studies that examine relationships among organisational variables (Saunders et al., 2019; Bell et al., 2022).

Participants were recruited through multiple professional and institutional channels, including the researchers' professional networks, HR departments, trade union organisations, professional associations, professional discussion groups and networks of partner organisations. This multi-channel recruitment strategy was intended to broaden access to employees from different professional and organisational settings while remaining non-probabilistic in nature.

Data were collected from 15 January to 20 April 2025 using a self-administered online questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and responses were collected anonymously.

A total of 347 responses were initially recorded. Following data screening, 47 responses were excluded because they were incomplete, internally inconsistent or showed apparently random response patterns, resulting in a final analytical sample of 300 complete observations.

Because the questionnaire included potentially sensitive employee evaluations of organisational practices, including legal compliance and perceived organisational justice, no organisation names or identifying organisational codes were collected. This design choice was intended to preserve organisational anonymity and minimise respondents' concerns about potential identification when reporting their workplace perceptions. Consequently, although organisational characteristics such as sector and firm size were collected, the exact number of organisations represented and the distribution of respondents across individual organisations cannot be reconstructed from the dataset. In addition, because the survey was disseminated through multiple professional and institutional channels and the total number of employees who received or had access to the survey invitation was not systematically recorded, a conventional response rate could not be calculated.

4.3. Measuring instruments

A structured questionnaire was used to measure the constructs included in this study. The measurement scales were adapted to the Moroccan organisational context through a process focused on linguistic clarity, conceptual equivalence and contextual relevance. The original meaning of each item was preserved, while the wording was adjusted to reflect terminology commonly used in Moroccan workplaces, particularly in relation to employee representation, communication practices, legal compliance and managerial decision-making. The translated items were reviewed to identify ambiguous, culturally inappropriate or legally unclear expressions. Minor wording adjustments were subsequently introduced to improve respondents' understanding without altering the theoretical content of the constructs. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). All constructs were operationalised as reflective variables.

Organisational justice perceptions were assessed using four items adapted from established organisational justice scales (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1990). The items captured employees' perceptions regarding the fairness of managerial decisions, consistency in rule application, respect in workplace interactions and the transparency of organisational decisions.

Social dialogue was assessed through four items capturing employee consultation, collective bargaining practices, communication balance and

opportunities for employee voice in organisational decision-making.

Proactive communication was measured using five items capturing clarity of information, anticipation of organisational changes, responsiveness to employee concerns, timeliness of communication and accessibility of communication channels.

Legal compliance in human resource management practices was measured using four items assessing compliance with employment legislation, clarity of disciplinary procedures, protection of trade union rights and enforcement of health and safety standards.

A pilot test was conducted before the main data collection to assess the clarity, comprehensibility and contextual relevance of the questionnaire items. Participants were invited to identify wording that appeared ambiguous, difficult to understand or insufficiently adapted to Moroccan organisational practices. Their feedback led to minor linguistic and contextual adjustments before the final administration of the questionnaire. The complete set of measurement items, together with their within-construct component loadings, is provided in **Appendix A**.

4.4. Research procedure and ethical considerations

Data were collected using a self-administered online questionnaire distributed to employees working in Moroccan organisations across a range of economic sectors. The online survey format provided standardised data collection conditions, reduced potential interviewer bias and encouraged respondents to express their perceptions of organisational practices and workplace experiences more openly.

The questionnaire was disseminated through professional networks, institutional contacts and digital platforms commonly used for professional exchanges. Before participating, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and provided informed consent. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw from the survey at any stage without any adverse consequences.

The study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for social science research. Participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential, and no identifying information was collected. All data were used exclusively for research purposes, analysed in aggregate form and securely managed throughout the research process.

In addition, several procedural safeguards were implemented to reduce the potential risk of common method bias. The adapted questionnaire was carefully worded to ensure linguistic clarity, minimise ambiguity and facilitate accurate responses. Anonymous participation, confidentiality assurances and the absence of identifying information were intended to encourage honest and accurate responses. These procedural safeguards are consistent with established recommendations for reducing common method bias in self-reported survey research (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

4.5. Statistical analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26) following a structured analytical strategy designed to evaluate the psychometric properties of the adapted measurement scales, examine the relationships among the study variables and test the proposed hypotheses.

First, the psychometric properties of the adapted measurement scales were assessed. As the measurement instruments were adapted to the Moroccan organisational context, an exploratory examination of the internal structure of each scale was conducted prior to hypothesis testing. Separate principal component

analyses were performed for each construct. Sampling adequacy was assessed for each construct using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett’s test of sphericity. As each analysis yielded a single component, no rotation was applied. Component loadings of 0.50 or higher were considered acceptable for interpretation. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha, while composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated to provide additional evidence of measurement reliability and convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was subsequently examined using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, comparing the square root of each construct’s AVE with its correlations with the remaining constructs.

Given that all study variables were collected through the same self-reported questionnaire, potential common method variance was additionally assessed using Harman’s single-factor diagnostic. All 17 measurement items were entered simultaneously into an unrotated principal component analysis to examine the extent to which a dominant common component accounted for the variance across the measurement items.

To assess the robustness of the main multivariate results, the multiple regression model was additionally re-estimated using a hierarchical specification. Demographic and organisational covariates were entered in the first block, followed by social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance in the second block. Age, tenure and firm size were entered according to their ordered response categories, whereas sector and union membership were dummy-coded. In addition, exploratory subgroup regressions were estimated according to reported union presence and organisational size, and differences in coefficient structure between subgroups were formally assessed using interaction terms.

Second, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analyses were performed to examine the associations among organisational justice perceptions, social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance. Prior to hypothesis testing, the assumptions underlying multiple linear regression were examined. Multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factor (VIF) values, tolerance values and the condition index. These complementary diagnostics were considered jointly to assess the extent of collinearity among the explanatory variables.

For substantive interpretation, the regression models were estimated using composite scores expressed on the original five-point response scale. Both unstandardised (B) and standardised (β) regression coefficients are reported: B facilitates interpretation in the metric of the measurement scales, whereas β facilitates comparison of the relative magnitude of the associations across predictors.

Third, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to test the direct relationships proposed in the conceptual model. Separate regression models were estimated to examine the associations between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions, social dialogue and proactive communication, proactive communication and organisational justice perceptions, and legal compliance and organisational justice perceptions. A multiple regression model was subsequently estimated to assess the simultaneous associations of social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance with organisational justice perceptions.

Finally, the mediating role of proactive communication in the relationship between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions was examined using a non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples and a 95% percentile confidence interval. The indirect effect was considered statistically

supported when the bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero. The total and direct effects were also estimated to determine the nature of the mediation. Given the cross-sectional design of the study, the mediation results were interpreted as statistical evidence of an indirect association rather than as definitive evidence of a causal mechanism.

Overall, this analytical strategy provided a comprehensive assessment of the measurement properties of the adapted scales and enabled the empirical examination of the proposed relationships among legal compliance, social dialogue, proactive communication and organisational justice perceptions.

5. Results

Given the cross-sectional design, the analyses reported below are interpreted as statistical associations and do not establish causal or temporal ordering among the study constructs.

5.1. Sample characteristics

The sample consisted of 300 employees working in Moroccan organisations across different sectors. In terms of gender distribution, male respondents represented 54.7% of the sample, while female respondents accounted for 45.3%.

Regarding age distribution, the largest proportion of respondents was between 35 and 54 years old (48%). Participants also reflected diverse educational backgrounds, with 49.0% holding higher education qualifications, including bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees.

Respondents occupied a variety of organisational positions, including operational, supervisory and managerial roles. In terms of professional experience, more than 70% of participants reported over six years of organisational tenure, suggesting substantial workplace experience and familiarity with managerial practices.

With regard to sectoral distribution, respondents were primarily drawn from the services (33.3%), industry (32.0%) and agriculture (29.3%) sectors. Most participants were employed in medium-sized or large organisations. In addition, 66.7% of respondents reported the presence of trade union representation within their organisations, while 41.3% indicated that they were trade union members.

As presented in **Table 1**, the sample reflects diverse demographic and professional characteristics across organisational contexts.

Table 1. Demographic and professional characteristics of the sample (N = 300)

Variable	Category	%
Gender	Male	54.7
	Female	45.3
Age	< 25 years	12.0
	25–34 years	20.3
	35–44 years	26.3
	45–54 years	21.7
	55 years and above	19.7
	Primary/secondary	34.3
Education level	Baccalaureate	4.7
	Two-year post-secondary diploma	12.0
	Bachelor's degree	17.0
	Master's degree	16.7
	Doctorate	15.3
	< 5 years	22.4
Professional experience		

Continued table:		
Variable	Category	%
Sector	6–19 years	47.0
	≥ 20 years	30.7
	Agriculture	29.3
	Industry	32.0
	Services	33.3
	Trade	5.3
Firm size	< 50 employees	16.7
	50–499 employees	30.7
	≥ 500 employees	52.6
Union presence	Yes	66.7
	No	26.7
	Do not know	6.7

Source: Authors' own calculations based on survey data.

5.2. Reliability and validity of the measurement scales

The psychometric properties of the adapted measurement scales were assessed through complementary reliability and within-construct principal component analyses. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), while average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated to provide additional evidence of convergent validity. The suitability of the data for component analysis was examined separately for each construct using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity. Separate principal component analyses were conducted for each construct to examine the internal structure of the corresponding scale, in line with the contextual adaptation of the instruments to Moroccan organisations.

Table 2 summarises the psychometric properties of the four constructs included in the study. As presented in **Table 2**, all measurement scales demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.934 to 0.975, while CR values ranged from 0.953 to 0.981, consistently exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 and indicating high internal consistency. Likewise, AVE values ranged from 0.836 to 0.927, substantially exceeding the recommended minimum value of 0.50 and thereby supporting convergent validity across all constructs.

Table 2. Reliability and validity of the measurement scales

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	KMO	Explained variance (%)	Loading range
Organisational justice perceptions (OJP)	4	0.972	0.981	0.927	0.861	92.69	0.951–0.979
Social dialogue (SD)	4	0.971	0.979	0.921	0.817	92.08	0.933–0.972
Proactive communication (PC)	5	0.975	0.981	0.911	0.870	91.08	0.939–0.964
Legal compliance (LC)	4	0.934	0.953	0.836	0.800	83.56	0.891–0.927

Source: Authors' own calculations based on survey data.

The within-construct principal component analyses further supported the internal coherence of the adapted measurement scales. KMO values ranged from 0.800 to 0.870, indicating satisfactory sampling adequacy, whereas Bartlett's

tests of sphericity were statistically significant for all constructs ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the data were appropriate for component analysis. Furthermore, the extracted component explained between 83.56% and 92.69% of the variance within each scale, and all retained items exhibited substantial component loadings, ranging from 0.891 to 0.979, well above the recommended threshold of 0.50.

Overall, these findings indicate that the adapted measurement scales demonstrate high internal consistency, adequate convergent validity and satisfactory internal structure. Coefficients of this magnitude, however, also warrant further examination of the empirical distinctiveness of the constructs. The full set of measurement items and their loadings is reported in **Appendix A**, and discriminant validity is assessed in the following subsection.

5.2.1. Discriminant validity

Beyond convergent validity, discriminant validity was assessed to examine the empirical distinctiveness of the four constructs. The Fornell–Larcker criterion was applied by comparing the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct with its correlations with the remaining constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results are presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Fornell–Larcker assessment of discriminant validity

Construct	LC	SD	PC	OJP
LC	0.914			
SD	0.943	0.960		
PC	0.922	0.946	0.954	
OJP	0.910	0.936	0.933	0.963

Note. Diagonal values in bold represent the square root of AVE; off-diagonal values represent inter-construct correlations. LC = legal compliance; SD = social dialogue; PC = proactive communication; OJP = organisational justice perceptions. Source: Authors' own calculations based on survey data.

The criterion was satisfied for organisational justice perceptions ($\sqrt{\text{AVE}} = 0.963$), social dialogue (0.960) and proactive communication (0.954), as the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with the remaining constructs. For legal compliance, however, the square root of AVE (0.914) was lower than its correlations with social dialogue (0.943) and proactive communication (0.922), although it remained slightly above its correlation with organisational justice perceptions (0.910). The Fornell–Larcker assessment therefore indicates limited discriminant validity between legal compliance and social dialogue / proactive communication.

Overall, these results provide partial evidence of discriminant validity across the measurement model. The scales demonstrate adequate convergent validity and satisfactory internal structure. They also exhibit substantial empirical overlap among some closely related constructs. This overlap is taken into account in the interpretation of the subsequent multivariate analyses and is explicitly acknowledged in the study limitations.

5.2.2. Common method variance assessment

Given the single-source and self-reported nature of the data, Harman's single-factor diagnostic was conducted as an additional statistical assessment of potential common method variance. All 17 measurement items were entered simultaneously into an unrotated principal component analysis. The first component had an eigenvalue of 14.515 and accounted for 85.382% of the total variance, indicating substantial shared variance across the measurement items. This result does not support the conclusion that common method variance is negligible. However, Harman's single-factor diagnostic cannot distinguish

method-related variance from substantive covariance among closely related constructs. Accordingly, the observed shared variance cannot be attributed exclusively to common method bias and should be interpreted cautiously alongside the high inter-construct correlations and the partial discriminant validity reported in Section 5.2.1.

5.3. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to provide an initial overview of the relationships among the study variables before hypothesis testing. As presented in **Table 4**, all variables exhibited moderate to relatively high mean scores, reflecting respondents' evaluations of organisational practices and fairness perceptions.

The correlation analysis revealed that all variables were positively and statistically significantly associated. In particular, social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance each showed strong positive correlations with organisational justice perceptions, providing initial empirical support for the associations proposed in the conceptual framework. These findings are consistent with the theoretical expectation that participatory practices, communication processes and legally compliant human resource management practices are positively associated with employees' fairness perceptions.

Several inter-construct correlations were markedly high, ranging from 0.910 to 0.946. As reported in Section 5.2.1, the discriminant validity assessment indicates substantial empirical overlap among some of the constructs, particularly between legal compliance and social dialogue/proactive communication. Accordingly, the subsequent multivariate coefficients should be interpreted as conditional associations within a set of closely interrelated organisational rather than as fully independent relationships.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Legal compliance (LC)	3.12	1.34	1			
2. Social dialogue (SD)	2.86	1.51	0.943	1		
3. Proactive communication (PC)	2.79	1.38	0.922	0.946	1	
4. Organisational justice perceptions (OJP)	2.89	1.47	0.910	0.936	0.933	1

Note. All Pearson correlation coefficients are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ ($N = 300$). *Source:* Authors' own calculations based on survey data.

Overall, the descriptive and correlation analyses indicate that the observed associations are consistent with the proposed conceptual framework and provide an appropriate basis for the subsequent hypothesis testing through regression analyses.

5.4. Hypothesis testing

A series of regression analyses was conducted to examine the relationships proposed in the conceptual framework and to test the five research hypotheses.

The results of the simple regression analyses indicate that all hypothesised relationships were positive and statistically significant. As presented in **Table 5**, social dialogue was positively associated with organisational justice perceptions ($B = 0.913$, $\beta = 0.936$, $p < 0.001$), providing support for Hypothesis 1. Social dialogue was also positively associated with proactive communication ($B = 0.866$, $\beta = 0.946$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Proactive communication was positively associated with organisational justice perceptions

($B = 0.995$, $\beta = 0.933$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 3. Finally, legal compliance was positively associated with organisational justice perceptions ($B = 1.001$, $\beta = 0.910$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 4.

Collectively, these findings provide initial empirical support for the hypothesised relationships, all of which were positive and statistically significant in the separate regression models.

Table 5. Results of simple regression analyses

Relationship tested	B	SE	β	t	p	R ²
SD → OJP	0.913	0.020	0.936	45.76	< 0.001	0.875
SD → PC	0.866	0.017	0.946	50.21	< 0.001	0.894
PC → OJP	0.995	0.022	0.933	44.62	< 0.001	0.870
LC → OJP	1.001	0.026	0.910	37.90	< 0.001	0.828

Note. $N = 300$. B = unstandardised regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardised regression coefficient. B coefficients are expressed in the metric of the original five-point measurement scales. Source: Authors' own calculations based on survey data.

To determine whether these relationships remained significant when considered simultaneously, a multiple regression analysis was subsequently performed. As reported in **Table 6**, the model was statistically significant and accounted for 89.9% of the variance in organisational justice perceptions ($R^2 = 0.899$, $p < 0.001$). All three predictors retained statistically significant conditional associations with organisational justice perceptions. Social dialogue was positively associated with organisational justice perceptions ($B = 0.404$, $SE = 0.067$, $\beta = 0.414$, $p < 0.001$), as was proactive communication ($B = 0.440$, $SE = 0.063$, $\beta = 0.413$, $p < 0.001$). Legal compliance also remained positively associated with organisational justice perceptions, although its relative association was smaller ($B = 0.153$, $SE = 0.063$, $\beta = 0.139$, $p = 0.016$).

Table 6. Multiple regression predicting organisational justice perceptions

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
Social dialogue	0.404	0.067	0.414	6.01	< 0.001	14.012
Proactive communication	0.440	0.063	0.413	6.98	< 0.001	10.315
Legal compliance	0.153	0.063	0.139	2.42	0.016	9.788

Note. $N = 300$. $R^2 = 0.899$. B = unstandardised regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardised regression coefficient; VIF = variance inflation factor. B coefficients are expressed in the metric of the original five-point measurement scales. Source: Authors' own calculations based on survey data.

These findings indicate that social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance each retain a statistically significant conditional association with organisational justice perceptions when considered simultaneously. Given the substantial shared variance among the predictors, however, the magnitude of these coefficients should be interpreted cautiously.

Expressed in the original measurement metric, the unstandardised coefficients indicate that, holding the other predictors constant, a one-point difference in social dialogue was associated with a 0.404 point difference in organisational justice perceptions, while the corresponding conditional associations were 0.440 points for proactive communication and 0.153 points for legal compliance. Given the considerable variance shared among the predictors documented below, these estimates should be interpreted as conditional associations rather than as independent associations.

Several diagnostic statistics were examined to evaluate the adequacy of the regression model. The Durbin–Watson statistic (1.991) indicated no evidence of autocorrelation among the residuals.

The collinearity diagnostics indicated a high degree of variance shared among the explanatory variables. VIF values were 14.012 for social dialogue, 10.315 for proactive communication and 9.788 for legal compliance, with corresponding tolerance values of 0.071, 0.097 and 0.102, respectively. Although the maximum condition index was 7.765, this comparatively lower value does not offset the evidence of substantial collinearity indicated by the high VIF and low tolerance values. These diagnostics suggest reduced precision in the estimation of the individual regression coefficients and greater sensitivity of their magnitude to model specification. Accordingly, the coefficients should be interpreted cautiously as conditional associations within a highly interrelated set of predictors rather than as fully independent associations with organisational justice perceptions.

As an additional assessment of robustness, the hierarchical analysis reported in Section 5.4.1 showed that the direction and statistical significance of the three main associations were preserved after accounting for demographic and organisational covariates, although some changes in coefficient magnitude were observed, particularly for proactive communication.

Considered jointly, these diagnostic indicators indicate a high degree of variance shared among the predictors. Although the regression coefficients remained statistically significant, their magnitude should therefore be interpreted cautiously as conditional associations among closely interrelated organisational mechanisms.

These findings also provide the empirical basis for examining the indirect association between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions through proactive communication.

5.4.1. Robustness check with demographic and organisational controls

To assess the robustness of the main multivariate findings, the model was re-estimated using a hierarchical specification. Age, tenure, firm size, sector and union membership were entered in the first block, followed by social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance in the second block. The results are reported in **Table 7**.

Table 7. Hierarchical regression predicting organisational justice perceptions

Variable	Model 1 B	SE	p	Model 2 B	SE	p
Age	−0.133	0.141	0.344	0.076	0.064	0.232
Tenure	−0.032	0.117	0.786	−0.062	0.054	0.249
Firm size	0.320	0.039	< 0.001	−0.019	0.020	0.342
Sector: Commerce	0.820	0.295	0.006	0.114	0.130	0.381
Sector: Industry	−0.326	0.159	0.042	0.052	0.070	0.459
Sector: Services	−0.261	0.157	0.097	0.166	0.073	0.023
Union membership: Yes	−1.732	0.162	< 0.001	−0.237	0.095	0.013
Union membership: Prefer not to answer	−1.734	0.579	0.003	−0.066	0.262	0.800
Social dialogue (SD)	—	—	—	0.423	0.067	< 0.001
Proactive communication (PC)	—	—	—	0.355	0.077	< 0.001
Legal compliance (LC)	—	—	—	0.182	0.071	0.011
R ²	0.503			0.907		
Adjusted R ²	0.489			0.904		
F	36.80		< 0.001	256.26		< 0.001

Continued table:

Variable	Model 1 B	SE	p	Model 2 B	SE	p
ΔR^2	—			0.404		< 0.001

Note. $N = 300$. B = unstandardised regression coefficient based on composite scores expressed on the original five-point response scale. Model 1 includes demographic and organisational covariates; Model 2 additionally includes social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance. Age, tenure and firm size were entered according to their ordered response categories, whereas sector and union membership were dummy-coded. Reference categories were Agriculture for sector and No for union membership. The increase in explained variance from Model 1 to Model 2 was significant, $F\text{-change}(3, 288) = 418.80$, $p < 0.001$. Source: Authors' own calculations based on survey data.

The covariates accounted for 50.3% of the variance in organisational justice perceptions ($R^2 = 0.503$, $F(8, 291) = 36.80$, $p < 0.001$). The addition of social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance increased the explained variance to 90.7%, corresponding to an incremental contribution of $\Delta R^2 = 0.404$, $F\text{-change}(3, 288) = 418.80$, $p < 0.001$.

All three study predictors remained statistically significant after the demographic and organisational covariates were taken into account. Social dialogue remained positively associated with organisational justice perceptions ($B = 0.423$, $p < 0.001$), as did proactive communication ($B = 0.355$, $p < 0.001$) and legal compliance ($B = 0.182$, $p = 0.011$). Although some changes in coefficient magnitude were observed, particularly for proactive communication, the direction and statistical significance of the three associations were maintained after accounting for the demographic and organisational characteristics included in the analysis.

5.4.2. Exploratory subgroup analyses

To examine whether the observed associations varied across organisational contexts, the multiple regression model was re-estimated across subgroups defined by reported union presence and organisational size (< 500 versus ≥ 500 employees). Differences in coefficient structure were subsequently assessed using interaction terms in the full sample. These analyses were not part of the hypothesised model and are therefore reported as exploratory rather than confirmatory evidence. Because public/private organisational status was not collected in the survey, the corresponding subgroup comparison could not be performed. The results are presented in **Table 8**.

Table 8. Exploratory subgroup regression analyses

Predictor	Union presence				Organisational size			
	Yes ($n = 200$)		No ($n = 80$)		< 500 ($n = 142$)		≥ 500 ($n = 158$)	
	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
Social dialogue	0.283	0.001	1.179	< 0.001	0.521	< 0.001	0.302	0.003
Proactive communication	0.535	< 0.001	0.069	0.675	0.300	0.001	0.465	< 0.001
Legal compliance	0.125	0.080	-0.163	0.309	0.178	0.052	0.244	0.010
R^2	0.883	—	0.952	—	0.936	—	0.873	—

Note. $N = 300$. B = unstandardised regression coefficient based on composite scores expressed on the original five-point response scale. Twenty respondents who selected "Do not know" for union presence were excluded from the union-presence subgroup comparison. Differences in coefficient structure were formally assessed using interaction terms in the full analytical samples: union presence, $F(3, 272) = 12.30$, $p < 0.001$; organisational size, $F(3, 292) = 0.94$, $p = 0.420$. Source: Authors' own calculations based on survey data.

Social dialogue remained positively and statistically significantly associated with organisational justice perceptions across all four subgroups. The interaction analysis indicated that the coefficient structure differed significantly according to reported union presence, $F(3, 272) = 12.30$, $p < 0.001$. Among respondents

reporting union presence, proactive communication showed a positive association with organisational justice perceptions ($B = 0.535$, $p < 0.001$), whereas among those reporting no union presence, social dialogue showed a comparatively larger positive association ($B = 1.179$, $p < 0.001$). The individual interaction terms indicated significant differences for social dialogue ($B = -0.896$, $p < 0.001$) and proactive communication ($B = 0.466$, $p = 0.039$), but not for legal compliance ($B = 0.288$, $p = 0.182$).

By contrast, the interaction analysis provided no evidence of differences in coefficient structure between organisations employing fewer than 500 and those employing 500 or more employees, $F(3, 292) = 0.94$, $p = 0.420$, and none of the individual interaction terms reached statistical significance. Within the present sample, the pattern of associations was therefore comparatively stable across the two organisational-size categories.

Given the high collinearity documented in Section 5.4, subgroup coefficients should be interpreted cautiously, particularly in the smaller subsamples. Accordingly, these exploratory analyses are intended to assess potential heterogeneity in the observed associations rather than to establish precise differences across organisational subgroups.

5.5. Mediation analysis: the role of proactive communication

The mediating role of proactive communication in the relationship between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions was examined using a non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Social dialogue was positively associated with proactive communication ($a = 0.946$, $SE = 0.019$, $t = 50.44$, $p < 0.001$). When social dialogue and proactive communication were simultaneously included as predictors of organisational justice perceptions, proactive communication remained positively associated with organisational justice perceptions ($b = 0.451$, $SE = 0.058$, $t = 7.81$, $p < 0.001$). The direct association between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions also remained significant ($c' = 0.509$, $SE = 0.058$, $t = 8.82$, $p < 0.001$).

The estimated indirect association between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions through proactive communication was 0.426 ($BootSE = 0.060$), with a 95% percentile bootstrap confidence interval of [0.321, 0.558]. Because the confidence interval did not include zero, the indirect association was statistically supported. The total association between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions was statistically significant ($c = 0.935$, $SE = 0.021$, $t = 45.67$, $p < 0.001$). As the direct association remained significant after proactive communication was included in the model, the overall pattern is consistent with partial mediation and provides support for Hypothesis 5. Given the cross-sectional nature of the data, these findings should be interpreted as statistical evidence consistent with an indirect association rather than as definitive evidence of causal mediation. The results are reported in **Table 9**.

Table 9. Bootstrap mediation analysis of the association between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions through proactive communication.

Effect	B	SE	t	p	95% bootstrap CI
Path a: SD → PC	0.946	0.019	50.44	< 0.001	—
Path b: PC → OJP	0.451	0.058	7.81	< 0.001	—
Total effect (c)	0.935	0.021	45.67	< 0.001	—
Direct effect (c')	0.509	0.058	8.82	< 0.001	—
Indirect effect (a × b)	0.426	0.060^a	—	—	[0.321, 0.558]

Continued table:

Effect	B	SE	t	p	95% bootstrap CI
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Note. $N = 300$. B represents unstandardised coefficients based on standardised composite scores. The indirect effect was estimated using 5,000 bootstrap resamples and a 95% percentile confidence interval; the reported SE corresponds to the bootstrap standard error. Statistical support is indicated when the bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero. Source: Authors' own calculations based on survey data.

6. Discussion

The findings provide consistent empirical support for the proposed conceptual framework and offer further insight into the organisational factors associated with employees' organisational justice perceptions. Overall, the results suggest that employees' organisational justice perceptions are associated with the combined experience of participation opportunities, communication practices and the consistent implementation of organisational rules rather than with these organisational mechanisms considered independently.

The positive relationship between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions supports Hypothesis 1 and indicates that participatory organisational environments are associated with more favourable perceptions of fairness in contexts characterised by employee voice, consultation and involvement in organisational decision-making. Beyond its formal institutional function, social dialogue may therefore be understood as a relational mechanism through which employee voice becomes relevant to fairness evaluations. This finding extends the Voice Theory perspective by suggesting that the relevance of voice to organisational justice lies not merely in the formal availability of participatory mechanisms, but also in employees' experience of meaningful involvement in organisational processes. This interpretation is consistent with previous research linking participatory practices to procedural and interactional justice by promoting transparency, trust and employee involvement (Horecký & Smejkal, 2021; Pulignano & Doerflinger, 2015). In the Moroccan context, this finding is particularly relevant given that formal collective bargaining remains uneven and trade union density relatively low (Filali Meknassi & Rioux, 2010), highlighting the importance of how opportunities for employee voice are experienced within organisations.

The positive association between social dialogue and proactive communication supports Hypothesis 2 and extends the role of social dialogue beyond employee participation to its relationship with organisational communication processes. Consistent with previous research linking dialogue-based interactions to continuous information exchange and consultation (Doellgast et al., 2020; Bastian et al., 2025), the result suggests that participatory and communicative mechanisms are empirically interconnected rather than operating as separate organisational practices.

Consistent with Hypothesis 3, proactive communication was significantly and positively associated with organisational justice perceptions. This finding indicates that how organisational decisions are communicated is relevant to employees' overall fairness evaluations, with timely and explanatory communication being positively associated with organisational justice perceptions. These findings are consistent with previous research reporting a positive relationship between transparent communication and organisational justice (Gök et al., 2013; Nambudiri, 2007). Viewed through Colquitt's (2001) four-dimensional framework, which distinguishes distributive, procedural, interpersonal and informational justice, the observed association between proactive communication and organisational justice perceptions appears particularly consistent with the informational dimension. Timely and explanatory communication helps employees understand organisational decisions and the reasons underlying them. However, because the present study conceptualises and measures organisational justice perceptions as an overall construct, the findings do not establish a distinct association between proactive communication and

informational justice or any other justice dimension. Accordingly, proactive communication should be understood not merely as a communication practice but as an organisational process associated with how employees interpret managerial actions and organisational decisions.

The results also support Hypothesis 4 by showing a positive association between legal compliance and organisational justice perceptions. Compliance with labour legislation and established organisational procedures appears associated with greater employee confidence that organisational decisions are implemented consistently, objectively and transparently. This finding is consistent with previous research linking legally grounded human resource management practices to procedural justice (Weaver & Treviño, 2001; Feldman & Tyler, 2012). This result also complements Moroccan evidence showing that legal non-compliance with human resource management practices constitutes an important source of labour-related claims and conflicts (Bensouda, El Aissaoui, & Ourdi, 2026), extending its relevance here to employees' fairness evaluations. However, the findings suggest that the relevance of legal compliance to organisational justice perceptions may depend not merely on the existence of formal rules, but also on employees' perceptions of their consistent and credible implementation in everyday managerial practice.

Finally, the mediation analysis supports Hypothesis 5, with the bootstrapped indirect association providing additional statistical evidence consistent with partial mediation by proactive communication in the relationship between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions. This finding suggests that the association between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions includes an indirect communication-related component, indicating that participatory and communicative mechanisms may operate complementarily in employees' fairness evaluations.

Taken as a whole, the findings extend existing explanations of organisational justice by showing that participatory, communicative and institutional mechanisms are empirically interconnected in employees' fairness evaluations. This pattern supports the integration of Equity Theory, Voice Theory and Legitimacy Theory within the proposed framework: Equity Theory provides the basis for understanding employees' fairness evaluations, Voice Theory highlights the participatory relevance of employee expression, and Legitimacy Theory helps explain the institutional relevance of legal compliance. Proactive communication complements these perspectives by capturing the communication processes through which organisational decisions are interpreted.

The robustness analysis further showed that the principal multivariate associations remained statistically significant after accounting for the demographic and organisational characteristics included in the model. Exploratory subgroup analyses indicated that the pattern of associations varied according to reported union presence, particularly for social dialogue and proactive communication, whereas no significant heterogeneity was detected across the two organisational-size categories. Specifically, proactive communication showed the comparatively stronger association with organisational justice perceptions in organisations with reported union presence, whereas social dialogue displayed the stronger association in organisations without reported union presence. This pattern suggests that the relative salience of participatory and communicative mechanisms may vary across organisational contexts, although these subgroup differences remain exploratory and require confirmation in research specifically designed to examine such heterogeneity.

7. Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the literature on organisational justice and human resource management by developing an integrated framework linking social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance to employees' fairness perceptions. Its contribution lies less in each individual association than in their

articulation within an institutional setting where social dialogue is legally mandated but unevenly implemented. In such settings, employees' fairness perceptions are associated not only with formal institutional arrangements but also with the relational and communication processes through which managerial practices are interpreted.

The findings extend Legitimacy Theory to an emerging-market context. Suchman (1995) locates organisational legitimacy in conformity with socially recognised norms. The present results suggest that where the enforcement of labour legislation is uneven, legitimacy derives less from the existence of formal rules than from their perceived implementation. Legal compliance appears to carry informational value precisely because it cannot be taken for granted, a mechanism that is less salient in settings where regulatory enforcement is consistently high.

The findings also extend Voice Theory by specifying how formal and informal voice mechanisms relate to one another. Hirschman (1970) distinguishes voice from exit but does not differentiate between institutional and communicative channels of expression. The indirect association identified in the mediation analysis is consistent with an interpretation in which formal participation structures and everyday communication practices operate as complementary rather than alternative voice mechanisms: social dialogue is associated with proactive communication, which in turn is associated with fairness perceptions. Although this pattern is consistent with a sequential interpretation, temporal sequencing cannot be established from the present cross-sectional design. The exploratory subgroup findings further suggest that the relative salience of these two channels may vary with the institutional configuration of the workplace.

Together, these contributions support an extended model of organisational justice antecedents in which institutional compliance and anticipatory communication operate alongside participatory mechanisms. This model highlights the relevance of a perception-oriented perspective in human resource management research, by highlighting that what matters is not only the formal consistency of managerial practices but also how they are experienced and interpreted by employees.

8. Limitations and future research

While this study provides meaningful insights into the organisational and communication factors associated with organisational justice perceptions, several limitations should be acknowledged. They also suggest valuable directions for future research to extend and refine the proposed framework.

First, the non-probability convenience sampling strategy limits the statistical representativeness of the sample and warrants caution when generalising the findings to Moroccan employees more broadly. Voluntary participation and recruitment through professional and institutional networks may have introduced selection and self-selection biases, particularly given that employees from organisations with 500 or more employees accounted for 52.6% of the sample.

The exploratory subgroup analyses reported in Section 5.4.2 nevertheless provided no evidence of a significant difference in coefficient structure between organisations below and above this threshold, $F(3, 292) = 0.94$, $p = 0.420$, indicating that the main pattern of associations was not confined to the larger-organisation subgroup.

In addition, the hierarchical robustness analysis reported in Section 5.4.1 showed that the direction and statistical significance of the main associations were preserved after accounting for age, tenure, firm size, sector and union membership, although this analysis does not eliminate the limitations inherent in non-probability sampling. Future research could strengthen external validity through probability-based or stratified sampling across a broader range of organisations.

Second, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, capturing

employees' perceptions at a single point in time. Consequently, the observed relationships should be interpreted as statistical associations and should not be taken as establishing causal or temporal ordering among the study constructs. Future longitudinal research could provide a deeper understanding of how organisational justice perceptions evolve over time and how changes in organisational practices, communication processes and employment relations relate to employees' fairness evaluations.

Third, the study relied exclusively on self-reported data collected through a single questionnaire, creating a potential risk of common method variance. Harman's single-factor diagnostic identified substantial shared variance across the measurement items, with the first component accounting for 85.382% of the total variance. However, this proportion should not be interpreted as common method bias, since the diagnostic cannot distinguish method-related variance from substantive covariance among closely related constructs. Common method variance therefore cannot be excluded and may have contributed to the strength of some observed associations. Future research could address this limitation through temporally separated measurements and alternative measurement designs. A mixed-method extension would be particularly valuable in this respect. Complementing employee survey data with interviews conducted with HR managers and union representatives would allow the perceptions reported here to be triangulated against the accounts of those involved in designing and negotiating the practices under study. Such designs would also provide deeper insight into how social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance are enacted in practice rather than only as perceived by employees.

Fourth, although the measurement scales demonstrated high internal consistency and adequate convergent validity, the exceptionally high reliability coefficients and within-construct component loadings may indicate a degree of item redundancy within some of the adapted scales. In addition, the high inter-construct correlations and the partial fulfilment of the Fornell–Larcker criterion indicate marked empirical overlap among some constructs, particularly LC, SD and PC. The multivariate coefficients should therefore be interpreted with appropriate caution. Consistent with this pattern, the high VIF and low tolerance values observed in the multivariate model indicate considerable variance shared among the predictors. This limits the precision with which their individual conditional contributions can be distinguished. The observed overlap may partly reflect the close conceptual and institutional relationships among these organisational mechanisms. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which it reflects measurement characteristics or substantive organisational interdependence. Future studies could further examine construct distinctiveness using refined measurement instruments with greater item differentiation and alternative measurement models. Such research could also adopt multidimensional organisational justice measures to examine whether social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance exhibit distinct associations with distributive, procedural, interactional and informational justice.

Fifth, the study focused exclusively on organisations operating in Morocco. Although this context offers valuable insights into an underexplored institutional setting, organisational practices and employees' fairness perceptions are likely to be influenced by cultural, institutional and regulatory conditions that differ across countries. Comparative studies involving different national contexts, organisational sectors or industrial relations systems would help assess the generalisability of the proposed framework.

Finally, the proposed framework focuses primarily on organisational, communication and institutional mechanisms associated with organisational justice perceptions. Future research could broaden this perspective by incorporating additional organisational and psychological factors, such as leadership styles,

organisational trust, organisational climate, psychological safety or perceived organisational support. Incorporating such variables would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how employees develop perceptions of organisational justice within contemporary workplaces. A further extension would be to examine the downstream consequences of these perceptions. Subsequent studies could test the full sequential chain running from social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance through organisational justice perceptions to employee outcomes such as turnover intention, organisational commitment and employee performance. Such designs would clarify whether the organisational mechanisms examined here are indirectly associated with broader employee attitudinal and behavioural outcomes.

Building on these limitations, three testable propositions can be formulated for future research. First, the temporal ordering implied by the mediation model could be examined directly through a longitudinal design with temporally separated measurements: Proposition 1 holds that social dialogue measured at T1 will be positively associated with proactive communication at T2, which will in turn be associated with organisational justice perceptions at T3. Second, the exploratory heterogeneity observed in the present study invites formal testing: Proposition 2 holds that formal employee representation will moderate the relative associations of participatory and communication mechanisms with organisational justice perceptions, with participatory mechanisms expected to be more salient where formal representation is absent and communication mechanisms where it is present. Third, extending the analysis beyond a single institutional setting would clarify the boundary conditions of the framework: Proposition 3 holds that, in cross-country comparative designs, the association between legal compliance and organisational justice perceptions is expected to vary according to institutional enforcement conditions, and may be stronger where the enforcement of labour legislation is comparatively uneven. Within each of these designs, leadership style, organisational culture and union density could additionally be examined as moderators of the relationships specified in the framework.

Overall, the present study provides a foundation for future research examining how participatory, communicative and regulatory organisational mechanisms are jointly associated with employees' fairness perceptions. Extending this line of research across different organisational and institutional contexts may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of organisational justice and its implications for contemporary human resource management.

9. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence on the mechanisms associated with employees' fairness perceptions within Moroccan organisations. By examining the roles of social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance, the findings suggest that organisational justice perceptions are associated not only with formal organisational practices but also with employees' interpretations of organisational signals, managerial practices and workplace interactions.

The findings indicate that employees' fairness perceptions are associated with both participatory and institutional organisational mechanisms. In particular, social dialogue emerges as an important relational mechanism relevant to employees' overall fairness perceptions. Opportunities for employee voice and participatory exchanges may therefore provide a relevant context for understanding the positive association observed between social dialogue and employees' fairness perceptions. Likewise, legal compliance was positively associated with organisational justice perceptions, consistent with the theoretical relevance of formal rules and their perceived consistent implementation in employees' fairness evaluations. Taken together, these findings highlight the complementary relevance of participatory and

institutional mechanisms to employees' fairness evaluations.

The analysis also highlights the important role of proactive communication in this pattern of associations. The bootstrapped indirect association suggests that the relationship between social dialogue and organisational justice perceptions includes a statistically significant indirect component involving proactive communication. This finding is consistent with the interpretation that participatory practices and transparent communication are complementary organisational mechanisms associated with employees' fairness perceptions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the organisational justice literature by integrating insights from Equity Theory, Voice Theory and Legitimacy Theory within a unified explanatory framework. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of employees' fairness perceptions by suggesting that evaluations of organisational justice are associated not only with formal procedures and organisational outcomes but also with communication dynamics and participatory organisational processes.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that organisations seeking to support employees' fairness perceptions should consider an integrated human resource management approach that combines social dialogue, proactive communication and legal compliance. Ensuring compliance with labour legislation remains essential, but organisations should also invest in participatory mechanisms and transparent communication practices designed to support employees' understanding of managerial decisions. At the operational level, these findings can be translated into concrete practices. Employee voice can be strengthened through regular consultation meetings, accessible feedback channels and systematic follow-up on concerns raised by employees. Proactive communication can be operationalised by informing employees in advance about organisational changes, explaining the rationale underlying decisions and ensuring timely access to relevant information. Consistency and transparency in human resource procedures can be promoted by clarifying decision criteria and applying established rules consistently across hierarchical levels. In this respect, proactive communication may represent a relevant managerial lever for supporting employees' understanding of organisational decisions and their overall fairness perceptions.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of adopting a perception-oriented perspective in human resource management. This perspective calls attention not only to the implementation of formal organisational practices but also to how these practices are interpreted and experienced by employees. Aligning institutional arrangements with participatory and communication practices may therefore provide a relevant basis for supporting employees' fairness perceptions within contemporary organisations.

Acknowledgement: The authors would like to thank all participants for their valuable contributions to this study.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions: A.B. led the study conception and design, developed the theoretical framework, conducted data collection and statistical analysis, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. A.G. contributed to the interpretation of the results, theoretical enrichment, and critical revision of the manuscript. A.O. contributed to the refinement of the research design, assisted in the interpretation of the findings, participated in revising the manuscript for important intellectual content, and contributed to the final version of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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

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Appendix A. Measurement items and within-construct component loadings

All items were administered in French and are reported below in English translation. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Construct	Item	Measurement statement	Within-construct component loading
Legal compliance (LC)	LC1	Employment contracts comply with the legislation in force.	0.915
	LC2	Disciplinary procedures are governed by clear rules.	0.927
	LC3	Trade union rights are recognised and protected.	0.923
	LC4	Health and safety standards are rigorously applied.	0.891
Social dialogue (SD)	SD1	Employee representatives are consulted on a regular basis.	0.969
	SD2	The organisation encourages collective bargaining.	0.964
	SD3	Dialogue between management and employees is active and balanced.	0.972
	SD4	I have the opportunity to express my views on decisions that concern me.	0.933
Proactive communication (PC)	PC1	Information circulates smoothly and clearly.	0.964
	PC2	Changes are communicated in advance.	0.961
	PC3	Managers listen to employees' concerns.	0.945
	PC4	Important information reaches me in good time.	0.939
	PC5	Communication channels are appropriate and accessible to all employees.	0.962
Organisational justice perceptions (OJP)	OJP1	Managerial decisions are taken fairly.	0.951
	OJP2	Rules are applied in the same way to everyone.	0.979
	OJP3	Employees are treated with respect.	0.954
	OJP4	Decisions are explained transparently.	0.966

Note. $N = 300$. Loadings were obtained from separate principal component analyses conducted for each construct, as summarised in **Table 2**. They describe the internal component structure of each scale considered individually and should not be interpreted as evidence of a joint four-factor solution across all 17 items. The exceptionally high loadings are considered alongside the reliability and discriminant validity results in Sections 5.2.1 and 8.