

The relationship between organizational (in)justice, retaliation and faculty task performance

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Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to analyze the relationship between organizational (in)justice, retaliation, and task performance among faculty at Brazilian public higher education institutions.

Method: This is a descriptive, survey-based study with a quantitative approach. Data were collected through a survey conducted with 125 faculty members from undergraduate business programs at Brazilian public higher education institutions. To analyze the relationships, the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique was used.

Results: The results indicate a positive association between procedural (in)justice and the perception of retaliation, suggesting that faculty members perceive retaliatory actions in the face of unfair institutional procedures and policies. Moreover, interactional (in)justice was found to influence retaliatory judgments and attitudes, suggesting that unfair interpersonal treatment may lead to retaliatory judgments and behaviors. Although retaliatory behaviors may arise in response to perceived injustices, no influence of such behaviors on task performance was found.

Contributions: The study provides insights that support management practices such as performance evaluation, mechanisms for controlling actions, communication, and relationships with faculty members. These practices may help reduce conflicts and foster a fairer and more productive environment in Brazilian public higher education, ultimately aiming to improve faculty task performance. Considering the scarcity of studies on this relationship, the research highlights the importance of understanding how retaliation manifests in the academic environment and how organizational (in)justice may contribute to its emergence.

Keywords: Organizational (in)justice. Organizational retaliation. Task performance. Faculty. Brazil.

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Introduction

Organizational justice significantly influences individual behavior in the workplace (Gomes et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential to consider the impact of justice perceptions on the relationship between employees and the organization, as well as on organizational effectiveness (Guimarães et al., 2022). These perceptions may have a positive influence when fair actions are identified or a negative impact when injustice is perceived (Tufan et al., 2023).

When individuals perceive fair treatment, they tend to be more committed, dedicated, and engaged in their tasks (Rego, 2001; Assmar et al., 2005; Bernd & Beuren, 2021; Pereira, 2021; Mohr et al., 2023). Unfair procedures, on the other hand, may lead to negative attitudes that harm performance and damage the organization (Grassi et al., 2019; Costa, 2022). Therefore, organizations must be attentive to perceptions of (in)justice in the workplace (Bernd & Beuren, 2021).

In research, organizational justice is understood and assessed from the perspective of individuals' perceptions regarding outcomes, the procedures adopted by the organization, and the treatment received during task execution factors that directly affect task performance (Fogaça et al., 2021). Organizational justice encompasses three dimensions: distributive, procedural, and interactional (Sotomayor, 2007) each influencing specific organizational aspects and driving certain behaviors.

Justice is an intrinsic element of human life, influencing individual and organizational performance, as well as perceptions and emotions (Fein et al., 2021). When individuals feel unfairly treated, they often retaliate as a form of revenge, seeking to compensate for the harm suffered (Mendonça & Tamayo, 2008; Santos, 2017).

Retaliation can be defined as acts of revenge or attempts to restore balance in response to perceived harm (Mendonça & Tamayo, 2008; Ferreira et al., 2018; Costa, 2022). Retaliation may be directed toward managers in cases of interactional injustice or toward the organization in cases of distributive and procedural injustice. It may occur intentionally or spontaneously, resulting in both physical and psychological harm (Mendonça & Tamayo, 2004). Likewise, it may manifest at three levels: perception, judgment, and attitude (Mendonça & Tamayo, 2003; Mendonça et al., 2004).

Retaliatory responses often arise from perceived violations of psychological contracts following unfair treatment (Zhang & Wilson, 2025). The perception of injustice may intensify counterproductive work behaviors (Alam, 2025). Although socially disapproved, such behaviors are symbolic respon-

ses to experiences of injustice and may manifest explicitly or subtly, including lateness, negligence, rumor spreading, or task sabotage (Ferreira et al., 2018; Tufan et al., 2023).

In the context of higher education, the literature indicates that faculty members perceive organizational justice variably, associating it with the quality of relationships with administrators and the equitable distribution of tasks (Kvitko et al., 2020). Jesus and Rowe (2014) found that teachers recognize the impact of these perceptions on the work environment and task performance. Similarly, Baldissarelli et al. (2020), when validating an instrument with faculty members from public and private institutions, observed that justice perceptions influence task performance. Comparable results were reported in higher education institutions in Ghana and South Africa, where faculty members perceived distributive and procedural injustices linked to managerial transparency and decision-making processes (Nethavhani & Maluka, 2020; Kuuyelleh et al., 2025).

Regarding perceptions of injustice and retaliatory behavior, Paiva and Leite (2011) investigated the administrative staff of a public higher education institution in Minas Gerais. Their findings revealed strong indignation toward organizational injustices but, interestingly, also a strong tendency not to retaliate. Likewise, Ceresa et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative study with eight employees of a higher education institution and concluded that most felt unfairly treated in the workplace, but only a minority engaged in retaliatory behavior. Notably, no studies were found involving faculty members in public higher education institutions.

Considering that faculty often play multiple roles and face workload overload, communication failures, and reduced autonomy (Fernández et al., 2024; Miranda et al., 2025), it is reasonable to assume that these conditions may intensify perceptions of injustice and foster retaliatory behaviors that affect task performance. Task performance refers to the quality, efficiency, and consistency with which an individual fulfills the daily duties of their position or function (Kaveski & Beuren, 2020); in other words, it represents the observable manifestation of the competencies and outcomes expected by educational institutions (Almeida, 2017), constituting a critical indicator of teaching quality.

Given that faculty are responsible for transferring knowledge and training professionals for the labor market, it is crucial to identify their perceptions of organizational (in)justice, their potential for retaliation, and the consequences for their task performance. However, there is a shortage of research on how retaliatory behaviors resulting from perceptions of injustice may impair faculty performance in

higher education institutions (HEIs). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relationship between organizational (in)justice and retaliation in the task performance of faculty in Brazilian public higher education institutions.

This discussion aligns with Zhang and Wilson (2025), who emphasize the theoretical and practical importance of understanding how perceptions of injustice trigger retaliatory behaviors and affect performance. According to Grassi et al. (2019), public higher education institutions require greater research attention regarding negative behaviors such as retaliation, as understanding their causes and consequences is essential for developing management practices that promote a fairer and healthier environment. Identifying situations of injustice such as workload overload, communication failures, and lack of recognition is fundamental, as these conditions may foster retaliatory behaviors such as lateness, missed deadlines, and demotivation, which undermine faculty performance and, consequently, teaching quality.

These negative effects are not limited to faculty but reverberate throughout the entire educational process, affecting student engagement and institutional reputation (Jesus & Rowe, 2015; Kremer et al., 2020). Faculty who perceive a fair organizational environment tend to show greater well-being, satisfaction, and willingness to motivate students (Froment et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding how perceptions of (in)justice influence retaliatory behaviors and impact faculty performance is relevant both theoretically by advancing the understanding of the relationship between justice and retaliation in a still underexplored context and practically by providing insights for institutional policies that value and support faculty work.

The main findings revealed a positive association between procedural (in)justice and perceptions of retaliation. This indicates that faculty members perceive retaliatory behaviors arising from procedures and decisions considered unfair. Moreover, interactional (in)justice is also present in the higher education context, influencing favorable judgments toward retaliatory actions and fostering the development of such behaviors as responses to injustices related to interpersonal treatment.

Thus, this study contributes to the discussion on promoting organizational justice in higher education by providing evidence that can guide management practices such as performance evaluation, control mechanisms, communication, and interpersonal relationships, aiming to build a more equitable, harmonious, and productive environment. As Rahman and Karim (2022) argue, fostering justice and engagement enhances productivity and organizational harmony essential elements for the effectiveness of higher education institutions.

2 (In)justice, organizational retaliation, and the relationship with task performance

Organizational justice, according to Ambrose et al. (2002), is crucial for understanding behavioral deviations and dysfunctional consequences in the workplace. It is closely linked to organizational commitment (Qu et al., 2020), employee attitudes (Mehmood et al., 2021; Guimarães et al., 2022), and employees' cognitions about the organization or its members (Bernd & Beuren, 2021). Therefore, it is an essential element of organizational culture, as it directly influences individual performance based on the treatment received (Gomes et al., 2020).

As a science, organizational justice originates in the social realm and presents itself as a dynamic phenomenon related to individual and group relations. By understanding behaviors, it helps develop actions that support organizational goals. It is addressed in three distinct dimensions: (i) distributive, focusing on the perception of justice in outcomes; (ii) procedural, which emphasizes the processes and policies used in the allocation of outcomes/tasks; and (iii) interactional, which focuses on the quality of interpersonal relationships (Sotomayor, 2007; Nethavhani & Maluka, 2020; Mehmood et al., 2021).

Each dimension of organizational justice influences specific aspects within the organization and can act proactively or dysfunctionally (Bernd & Beuren, 2021). For example, the perception of distributive injustice can trigger disruptive reactions among employees, affecting organizational procedures. On the other hand, when employees feel valued or rewarded, they tend to improve the quality of their work, show increased commitment to the organization (Assmar et al., 2005; Jang et al., 2021), and experience greater satisfaction in the workplace (Santos et al., 2015).

Perception of procedural justice is associated with acceptance of decisions, creation and maintenance of internal values, voluntary cooperative behavior, willingness to follow social rules, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and trust (Colquitt, 2001). However, procedural injustice in the workplace is negatively correlated with job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being (Schmitt & Dörfel, 1999).

Interactional justice is defined by the interpersonal behavior of management representatives and is related to cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions toward those organizational representatives (Bies, 1986). Thus,

when an employee perceives interactional injustice, it is expected that they will react negatively toward their supervisor, rather than against the organization as a whole, as would be the case in procedural justice, or toward a specific outcome, as predicted by distributive justice.

In this sense, when evaluating counterproductive behaviors such as organizational retaliation, each dimension of organizational justice should be considered individually. These behaviors are extremely harmful to both individual and collective performance, leading to a significant drop in engagement (Oliveira et al., 2020; Waheed et al., 2023) and affecting organizational goals. Similar dynamics were observed by Alam (2025), who found that perceived injustice and abusive supervision significantly increase counterproductive work behaviors, emphasizing the role of fairness and leadership. In this context, organizational retaliation can be understood as negative behaviors aimed at punishing the organization or its representatives due to perceived injustices, seeking to restore balance (Ferreira et al., 2018).

In the organizational field, the first studies on retaliation were conducted by Skarlicki and Folger in 1997. These studies show that the perception of organizational justice influences individual behavior within the organization (Santos, 2017). According to Mendonça and Tamayo (2008), retaliation is a kind of *lex talionis*, reflecting the saying “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” where the idea is to return a harmful act received. This can occur explicitly, subtly, or indirectly in the workplace, resulting in physical and mental harm. Examples include stealing work materials, spreading negative gossip, refusing to help colleagues, aggression, violence, boycotts, and other negative behaviors (Mendonça & Tamayo, 2004; Assmar et al., 2005).

Organizational retaliation can manifest at the levels of perception, judgment, and retaliatory action. Following Mendonça and Tamayo (2004), it can be understood in terms of different intensity levels. Perception and judgment represent cognitive responses to perceived injustice, whereas a retaliatory attitude reflects a more intense, affective-conative reaction. Although these levels are related, they do not constitute chronological stages; rather, they represent dimensions that indicate varying degrees of emotional and intentional engagement in response to perceived injustice. This perspective reinforces that, in the present study, retaliation is treated as an attitudinal phenomenon whose intensity may vary depending on the cognitive and affective components involved.

According to Mendonça et al. (2004), individuals are often reluctant to evaluate their own retaliatory behaviors

but can recognize such behaviors in the workplace and assess their frequency. Ferreira et al. (2018) note that these behaviors can be analyzed both in terms of how frequently employees engage in them and their evaluation of colleagues’ retaliatory actions. Retaliation may occur in interpersonal relationships or against the organization, highlighting the importance of identifying strategies to mitigate these attitudes (Mendonça et al., 2008; Tufan et al., 2023). These behaviors often stem from perceptions of distributive, procedural, or interactional injustice, either individually or combined. Furthermore, Zhang and Wilson (2025) suggest that such perceptions may trigger retaliation through mechanisms such as blame attribution and violations of the psychological contract.

Retaliatory behaviors can emerge in various contexts, including the educational setting, where teachers tend to feel more motivated in a harmonious, respectful environment with good communication (Ghran et al., 2019; Alazmi & Alenezi, 2023). This is consistent with Rahman and Karim (2022), who found that organizational fairness and engagement promote positive, cooperative behaviors among university faculty. However, perceived injustice can lead to retaliatory attitudes, resulting in negligence at work, delays, and lack of effort (Jesus & Rowe, 2015; Ghran et al., 2019; Alazmi & Alenezi, 2023; Kremer et al., 2020).

The relationship between justice perceptions and organizational retaliation has been explored in educational contexts through studies with administrative staff. Paiva and Leite (2011) examined justice-related variables and retaliatory attitudes among administrative staff at a federal public institution in Minas Gerais. They identified different perceptions regarding the distribution of rewards and procedural injustice stemming from organizational policies. Although they disliked the perceived injustices, the respondents did not tend to retaliate against the institution. Similarly, Grassi et al. (2019) conducted a study on retaliation among administrative staff at a public higher education institution, highlighting that when individuals felt wronged by outcomes, they changed their behavior to express indignation.

Ceresa et al. (2014) analyzed staff at a HEI and found that most had experienced feelings of injustice at work, whether in the distribution of rewards, tasks, and working conditions, or due to a lack of fairness in procedures, policies, and interpersonal relationships. However, most interviewees did not report retaliatory acts in response to perceived injustice. According to Ambrose et al. (2002), the relationship between organizational injustice and workplace sabotage depends on the source of perceived injustice, which influences the level of sabotage behavior. Interactional injustice generally leads to sabotage as a

form of retaliation, while distributive injustice may prompt individuals to seek equity in the environment.

In public educational institutions, distributive justice involves perceptions of fairness in the distribution of tasks and rewards (Rego, 2001). Unlike private organizations, where performance and compensation are usually directly linked, public universities operate under legal and bureaucratic constraints that separate the allocation of teaching workload from salary policies. As a result, perceptions of distributive injustice may arise when workloads are unequal or when effort and outcomes are not proportionally recognized, leading to feelings of inequity and possible retaliatory behaviors. Procedural justice, in turn, reflects, within the academic context, the degree of transparency, consistency, and participation in institutional processes such as promotion, evaluation, and decision-making. Since many of these procedures in public universities are imposed by external regulations, faculty members may perceive limitations regarding their voice and influence, which can generate frustration, resistance, and retaliatory behaviors.

Interactional justice refers to the quality of interpersonal treatment within academic relationships, expressed through respect, communication, and consideration among faculty, administrators, and staff. When this form of justice is violated, through disrespect, lack of feedback, or poor communication, negative emotions may emerge, encouraging retaliatory behaviors directed at supervisors or colleagues. Thus, in educational institutions, each dimension of justice assumes a specific configuration that influences organizational attitudes and behaviors. Distributive injustices may lead to disengagement and task neglect; procedural injustices may foster cynicism toward institutional norms; and interactional injustices tend to trigger interpersonal conflicts or retaliatory responses aimed at restoring balance. The intensity of retaliation varies according to the degree of emotional and intentional involvement in response to the perceived injustice, and may manifest only as a perception, a judgment, or as an actual retaliatory attitude. Therefore, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The perception of distributive (in)justice is positively associated with (a) the perception, (b) the judgment, and (c) the attitude of organizational retaliation.

H2: The perception of procedural (in)justice is positively associated with (a) the perception, (b) the judgment, and (c) the attitude of organizational retaliation.

H3: The perception of interactional (in)justice is positively associated with (a) the perception, (b) the judgment, and (c) the attitude of organizational retaliation.

The perception of organizational justice generally results in strong commitment, positively influencing task performance (Rego & Souto, 2004; Mohr et al., 2023). On the other hand, perceived organizational injustice leads to lower performance, absenteeism, dissatisfaction, demotivation, and productivity loss (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Oliveira et al., 2022). According to Fernández et al. (2024), a more political than pedagogical perspective on quality and equity in education persists, one that is market-oriented. Teaching has become increasingly bureaucratic, investments in education have declined, and teachers autonomy has been curtailed. This context tends to intensify perceptions of injustice, foster retaliatory attitudes, and, consequently, influence task performance.

A perception of injustice often results in counterproductive behaviors and retaliatory attitudes, leading to decreased task performance (Paiva & Leite, 2011). Fogaça et al. (2021) investigated the relationships between job performance, well-being, and organizational variables, including organizational justice, using a multilevel approach. They found that justice perception in the workplace is positively related to individual performance, especially in the interactional justice dimension.

In the educational context, justice perception enhances effective performance and engagement with teaching quality. Teachers seek a fair environment, characterized by proper treatment, trust, and communication (Thompson & Unachukwu, 2022; Herrera et al., 2022); otherwise, negative and dissatisfactory feelings may arise, impacting their activities. Rego (2001) found that faculty member who perceive justice tend to show greater affective commitment, satisfaction, and performance. Jameel et al. (2020) also observed this relationship between organizational justice and commitment among teachers in Iraq. Kamran and Thomas (2021), in a study with teachers in Karachi, Pakistan, highlighted that justice perception plays a significant role in stress levels.

In Brazil, Jesus and Rowe (2015), in a study with faculty members from a federal institution, found that perceived organizational justice strongly influences commitment. In a study with higher education teachers in the state of Santa Catarina, Baldissarelli et al. (2020) found evidence of organizational justice through fair treatment, access to information about decisions, and how tasks were distributed, generating satisfaction. This shows that justice perception can positively impact performance. However, perceived injustice can lead to retaliatory behaviors (Ferreira et al., 2018).

Consequently, the presence of organizational retaliation may lead to negative impacts on the performance of tasks carried out by faculty members. When they perceive

retaliatory behaviors exhibited by colleagues in the workplace, the judgments formed regarding such retaliations, occurring when someone experiences some form of injustice, as well as attitudes toward organizational retaliation (Mendonça & Tamayo, 2003; Mendonça et al., 2004), constitute conditioning factors that manifest themselves in a detrimental manner. These factors tend to negatively affect the performance of the faculty members' own tasks, often as a form of response to organizational (in)justice.

Moreover, the presence of organizational (in)justices related to the outcomes received (distributive), the processes used to achieve such outcomes (procedural), and the interactions and treatment adopted within the organization (interactional) tends to negatively affect teachers' task performance. However, this negative relationship may be intensified by the presence of organizational retaliation, expressed through its dimensions of attitude, judgment, and perception. There is still a lack of research on how perceptions of organizational (in)justice trigger retaliatory behaviors and how these affect faculty member performance,

leading to the following research hypotheses:

H4: Organizational retaliation, in its dimensions of (a) perception, (b) judgment, and (c) attitude, is negatively related to task performance.

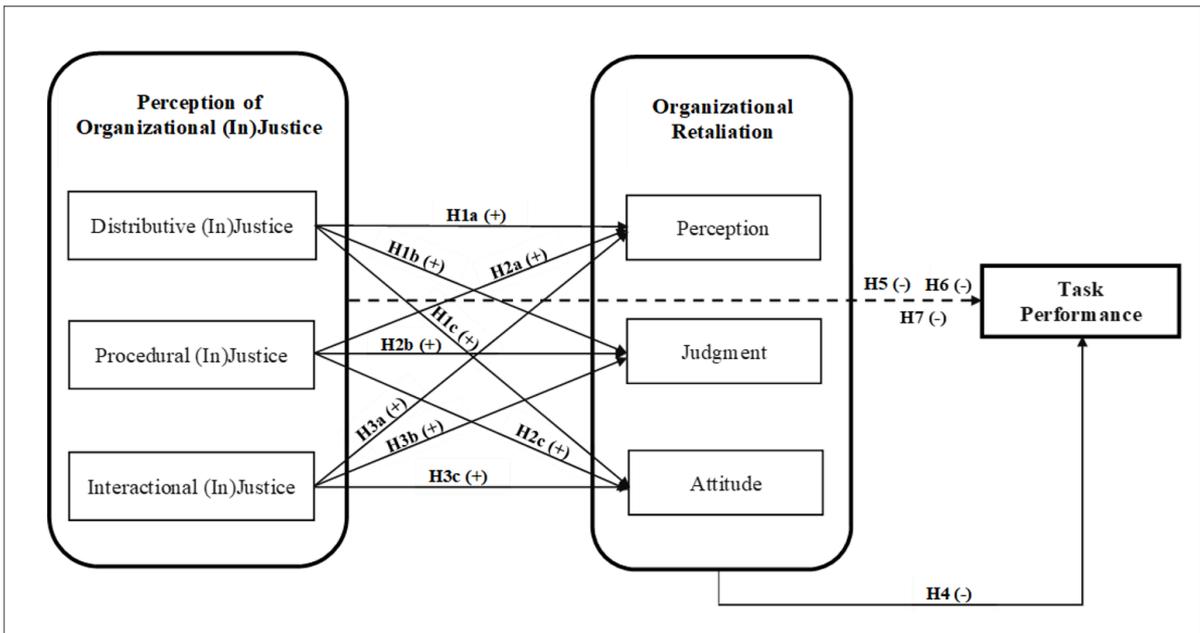
H5: Retaliatory perception negatively mediates the relationship between the perception of (a) distributive (in)justice, (b) procedural (in)justice, and (c) interactional (in)justice and task performance.

H6: Retaliation judgment negatively mediates the relationship between the perception of (a) distributive (in)justice, (b) procedural (in)justice, and (c) interactional (in)justice and task performance.

H7: Retaliation attitude negatively mediates the relationship between the perception of (a) distributive (in)justice, (b) procedural (in)justice, and (c) interactional (in)justice and task performance.

Figure 1 presents the theoretical model of the research.

Figure 1
Theoretical Research Model



3 Methodology

This descriptive and quantitative study addresses three main constructs: organizational (in)justice, comprising distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions (Rego, 2001; Sotomayor, 2007); organizational retaliation involving perception, judgment, and retaliatory attitude (Mendonça & Tamayo, 2003; Mendonça et al., 2004); and task performance (Almeida, 2017)

In order to investigate faculty members' perceptions of Organizational (In)Justice, 15 items from the Justice Perception Scale for Faculty (Rego, 2001) were adapted. Faculty retaliatory behavior was assessed using 29 items, of which 20 were adapted from the Perception and Judgment of Retaliation Scale – EPJR (Mendonça

et al., 2004), aimed at identifying faculty perception and judgment regarding retaliation, and 9 items were adapted from the Organizational Retaliation Attitude Measurement Scale – MARO (Mendonça & Tamayo, 2003), designed to observe attitudes toward retaliation. To evaluate task performance among faculty members, 7 items from the Faculty Self-Assessment Scale – EADOC (Almeida, 2017) were used.

Considering the theoretical distinction between the cognitive and attitudinal levels of retaliation, the dimensions were analyzed in an integrated manner, preserving their interrelationship but recognizing the differences in intensity suggested by the literature. This decision reflects a theoretical choice based on Mendonça and Tamayo (2003, 2004), to capture the phenomenon in a comprehensive and comparative manner.

Figure 2
Composition of the Research Instrument

Second-Order Constructs	First-Order Constructs	Operational Definition	Number of Items	Authors
Organizational (In)Justice	Distributive (In)Justice	Analyzes the content, distributive rule, and perceived equity of outcomes received by the individual, such as salaries, tasks, performance evaluations, promotions, disciplinary sanctions, among others.	6 items	Adapted from Rego (2001)
	Procedural (In)Justice	Analyzes the process, i.e., the fairness of the means used to achieve outcomes. It concerns the perception of justice in the procedures and policies used in the decision-making process.	4 items	
	Interactional (In)Justice	Investigates the quality of interaction with decision-makers, as well as interpersonal treatment in relation to implemented procedures or following their implementation, that is, the interaction between hierarchical superiors and their subordinates.	5 items	
Organizational Retaliation	Retaliation Perception	Identifies the individual's perception regarding retaliatory behaviors exhibited by peers within the work environment.	10 items	Adapted from Mendonça et al. (2004)
	Retaliation Judgment	Assesses the individual's judgment regarding organizational retaliation behaviors when others in the workplace experience some form of injustice.	10 items	
	Retaliation Attitude	Analyzes the individual's attitude toward organizational retaliation, composed of two components: affective and conative.	9 items	Adapted from Mendonça and Tamayo (2003)
Task Performance	Task Performance	Aims to assess whether the individual performs their tasks in accordance with their responsibilities and obligations without compromising quality.	7 items	Adapted from Almeida (2017)

Source: Developed by the authors.

To measure the constructs, a 5-point Likert scale was used. For the dimensions of organizational (in)justice and retaliation attitude, the scale ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5); for retaliation perception and task performance, it ranged from never (1) to always (5); and for retaliation judgment, the scale ranged from very unfair (1) to very fair (5). It is noteworthy that, in addition to the 51 items (Figure 2) designed to measure the research constructs, the instrument also included questions aimed at characterizing the sample.

The population of this study comprises faculty from undergraduate business programs at Brazilian public higher education institutions. The sample size was estimated using the G*PowerWin software (Faul et al., 2009), following the recommendations of Cohen (1988) and Hair Jr. et al. (2014). With a test power of 0.80 and a medium effect size of $f^2 = 0.15$, the minimum sample size defined for the study was 109 cases, based on the construct with the greatest number of links (Figure 1). A total of 130 responses were obtained, but 5 questionnaires completed by faculty from other fields were excluded. Thus, the non-probabilistic sample consisted of 125 responses. Data were collected online via Google® Forms. Additionally, ethical procedures were assured by maintaining respondent anonymity, ensuring the confidentiality of the data collected, and analyzing the data in aggregate form.

To investigate the presence of common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was applied through factor analysis. The values obtained were above 50%, thus within acceptable limits (Harman, 1976). The hypothesized relationships were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), via the SmartPLS statistical software. PLS-SEM involves two stages of analysis: the first consists of validating and assessing the reliability of the measurement model through the relationship between indicators and latent variables or constructs; the second involves evaluating the structural model, i.e., identifying whether an exogenous latent variable has a relationship with an endogenous one (Hair Jr. et al., 2021).

4 Data Analysis

4.1 Sample Characterization

As shown in Table 1, among the 125 respondents, 50.4% identified as female, 48% as male, and 1.6% as other. Regarding age, 36.8% were between 46 and 55 years old, indicating a predominantly mid-to-late career group. Most respondents reported holding a Ph.D. (68%), and 12.8% of them also had a postdoctoral qualification, reflecting

a highly educated sample. In terms of professional experience, 41.6% had between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience, suggesting that the participants are well established in higher education.

Table 1
Respondent Characteristics

Gender	F.	%	Age	F.	%
Female	63	50,40	25–35 years	21	16,80
Male	60	48,00	36–45 years	26	20,80
Other	2	1,60	46–55 years	46	36,80
Total	125	100	56–65 years	27	21,60
Educational Level	F.	%	Over 66 years	5	4,00
Specialization	1	0,80	Total	125	100
Master's Degree	23	18,40	Years of Experience	F.	%
PhD	85	68,00	Up to 10 years	28	22,40
Postdoctoral	16	12,80	11–20 years	52	41,60
Total	125	100	21–30 years	33	26,40
Leadership Position	F.	%	31–40 years	9	7,20
Yes	104	83,20	Over 41 years	3	2,40
No	21	16,80	Total	125	100
Total	125	100			

Source: Developed by the authors.

Furthermore, 83.2% of the respondents reported currently holding or having held leadership positions such as Coordinator, Department Head, or Sector Director. This indicates that, in addition to substantial teaching experience, most respondents also possess managerial or administrative experience. Overall, the sample is characterized by highly qualified and experienced faculty members, predominantly women, aged between 46 and 55 years, who combine academic expertise with leadership responsibilities in public higher education institutions.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The first step in analyzing the structural equation model is to assess the criteria that determine the quality of the measurement model. Therefore, the reliability of the indicators that make up the research instrument is initially evaluated. According to Hair Jr. et al. (2021), indicators should have factor loadings above 0.708 to demonstrate that the construct explains more than 50% of the indicator's variance. In social research, it is common to find lower loadings, and the authors recommend removing indicators only when such action increases composite reliability or convergent validity.

Accordingly, as shown in Table 2, nine items were excluded: one item from the distributive justice construct, five indicators related to retaliation attitude, and three associated with task performance.

Table 2
Loadings, Composite Reliability, and Convergent Validity of the Constructs

	Indicator Loadings	Composite Reliability	Convergent Validity (AVE)	Indicator Loadings	Composite Reliability	Convergent Validity (AVE)
		Before	Before		After	After
IJ	q1 – 0,897	0,946		q1–0, 890	0.946	0.778
	q2 – 0,892			q2 – 0,890		
	q3 – 0,872			q3 – 0,876		
	q4 – 0,897			q4 – 0,898		
	q5 – 0,853			q5 – 0,856		
PJ	q6 – 0,864	0,924	0,752	q6 – 0,869	0.923	0.751
	q7 – 0,873			q7 – 0,878		
	q8 – 0,824			q8 – 0,815		
	q9 – 0,904			q9 – 0,902		
DJ	q10 – 0,827	0,932	0,700	q10 – 0,831	0.910	0.674
	q11 – 0,906			q11 – 0,903		
	q12 – 0,931					
	q13 – 0,927			q13 – 0,909		
	q14 – 0,635			q14 – 0,656		
RP	q15 – 0,754	0,940	0,609	q15 – 0,778	0.940	0.610
	q16 – 0,768			q16 – 0,767		
	q17 – 0,787			q17 – 0,783		
	q18 – 0,830			q18 – 0,826		
	q19 – 0,788			q19 – 0,786		
	q20 – 0,765			q20 – 0,764		
	q21 – 0,705			q21 – 0,705		
	q22 – 0,734			q22 – 0,739		
	q23 – 0,837			q23 – 0,841		
	q24 – 0,774			q24 – 0,777		
	q25 – 0,808			q25 – 0,808		
RJ	q26 – 0,806	0,948	0,647	q26 – 0,790	0.947	0.644
	q27 – 0,855			q27 – 0,852		
	q28 – 0,839			q28 – 0,829		
	q29 – 0,889			q29 – 0,890		
	q30 – 0,824			q30 – 0,833		
	q31 – 0,759			q31 – 0,751		
	q32 – 0,769			q32 – 0,778		
	q33 – 0,832			q33 – 0,825		
	q34 – 0,716			q34 – 0,724		
	q35 – 0,738			q35 – 0,741		
	RA			q36 – 0,244		
q38 – ,0801		q38 – 0,925				
q39 – 0,485						
q40 – 0,406						
q41 – 0,728		q41 – 0,845				
q42 – 0,299						
q43 – 0,790		q43 – 0,863				
q44 – 0,525						
TP	q45 – 0,690	0,838	0,428	q45 – 0,755	0.829	0.554
	q46 – 0,626			q46 – 0,806		
	q47 – 0,758			q47 – 0,822		
	q48 – 0,479					
	q49 – 0,671			q49 – 0,565		
	q50 – 0,693					

Note: (IJ) Interactional (In)Justice; (PJ) Procedural (In)Justice; (DJ) Distributive (In)Justice; (RP) Retaliation Perceived; (RJ) Retaliation Judgment; (RA) Retaliation Attitude; (TP) Task Performance. Source: Developed by the authors.

After the exclusions, the measurement model showed values above the recommended thresholds for both composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). According to Hair Jr. et al. (2021), the AVE should be greater than 0.50, and composite reliability is recommended to fall between 0.70 and 0.95.

Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Under the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of the AVE should exceed the correlation with other constructs, as shown in Table 3 (highlighted), indicating discriminant validity. Additionally, the HTMT values were evaluated based on the threshold of 0.90 for conceptually related constructs, as proposed by Henseler et al. (2015), confirming the empirical distinction among constructs.

Subsequently, discriminant validity was assessed using the

Table 3

Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
1	0.867*						*						
2	0.235	0.275**	0.744*										
3	0.303	0.323	0.227	0.243**	0.803*								
4	0.182	0.202	0.153	0.196	0.048	0.088**	0.867*						
5	0.049	0.098	0.018	0.122	0.030	0.086	0.570	0.651**	0.821*				
6	0.286	0.308	0.138	0.167	0.137	0.127	0.798	0.873	0.514	0.569**	0.882*		
7	-0.044	0.104	0.079	0.196	0.174	0.181	0.327	0.350	0.219	0.240	0.182	0.190**	0.781

Note: (1) Retaliation Attitude; (2) Task Performance; (3) Retaliation Judgment; (4) Procedural (In)Justice; (5) Distributive (In)Justice; (6) Interactional (In)Justice; (7) Retaliation Perceived. Fornell-Larcker criterion marked with *; Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) values marked with **. Source: Developed by the authors.

Therefore, after assessing the measurement model, it is evident that the constructs present satisfactory levels of reliability and validity, allowing for the estimation of the structural model and hypothesis testing (Hair Jr. et al., 2021).

4.3 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The next step is to assess the structural model. For this purpose, the Pearson determination coefficients (R^2), Predictive Relevance (Q^2), Effect Size (f^2), and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were evaluated. The results are shown in Table 4. R^2 values represent the percentage of variance in a latent variable explained by other variables. All constructs showed a small effect size for R^2 , except for the perceived retaliation construct, which showed a medium effect (Cohen, 1988; Hair Jr. et al., 2021).

Table 4
Structural Model Results

Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2	f^2	VIF
Interactional (In)Justice				0.066	2.789
Procedural (In)Justice				0.084	3.040
Distributive (In)Justice				0.010	1.502
Retaliation Perceived	0.127	0.106	0.071	0.004	1.042
Retaliation Judgment	0.030	0.005	0.010	0.024	1.145
Retaliation Attitude	0.097	0.075	0.062	0.035	1.013
Task Performance	0.085	0.063	0.026		

Source: Developed by the authors.

The Q^2 values indicate that the model has predictive relevance, as all values are greater than zero (Peng & Lai, 2012). To assess multicollinearity, the VIF was used. To avoid multicollinearity issues, VIF values should be below 5. As shown in Table 4, all values are within the range established in the literature (Hair Jr. et al., 2021).

Table 5

Structural Model Results with Hypothesis Testing

H	Constructs	β	t-Statistic	p-Value	f^2	Decision
H1a (+)	Distributive (In)Justice → Perceived Retaliation	0,0682	0.5700	0.5687	0,0036	Rejected
H1b (+)	Distributive (In)Justice → Retaliation Judgment	-0,0203	0.1354	0.8923	0,0003	Rejected
H1c (+)	Distributive (In)Justice → Retaliation Attitude	-0,1160	0.8581	0.3909	0,0099	Rejected
H2a (+)	Procedural (In)Justice → Perceived Retaliation	0,4709	3.5170	0.0004*	0,0835	Accepted
H2b (+)	Procedural (In)Justice → Retaliation Judgment	-0,1607	0.9681	0.3330	0,0087	Rejected
H2c (+)	Procedural (In)Justice → Retaliation Attitude	-0,0778	0.5579	0.5770	0,0022	Rejected
H3a (+)	Interactional (In)Justice → Perceived Retaliation	-0,2292	1.6582	0.0973	0,0216	Rejected
H3b (+)	Interactional (In)Justice → Retaliation Judgment	0,2760	1.9607	0.0497*	0,0281	Accepted
H3c (+)	Interactional (In)Justice → Retaliation Attitude	0,4081	3.3831	0.0007*	0,0661	Accepted
H4a (-)	Perceived Retaliation → Task Performance	0,0595	0.4458	0.6557	0,0037	Rejected
H4b (-)	Retaliation Judgment → Task Performance	0,1593	1.4974	0.1344	0,0242	Rejected
H4c (-)	Retaliation Attitude → Task Performance	0,1891	1.3491	0.1774	0,0351	Rejected
H5a (-)	Distributive (In)Justice → Perceived Retaliation → Task Perf.	0,0041	0.1760	0.8603	-	Rejected
H5b (-)	Procedural (In)Justice → Perceived Retaliation → Task Perf.	0,0280	0.4288	0.6681	-	Rejected
H5c (-)	Interactional (In)Justice → Perceived Retaliation → Task Perf.	-0,0136	0.3582	0.7202	-	Rejected
H6a (-)	Distributive (In)Justice → Retaliation Judgment → Task Perf.	-0,0032	0.1176	0.9064	-	Rejected
H6b (-)	Procedural (In)Justice → Retaliation Judgment → Task Perf.	-0,0256	0.7455	0.4560	-	Rejected
H6c (-)	Interactional (In)Justice → Retaliation Judgment → Task Perf.	0,0440	1.1312	0.2580	-	Rejected
H7a (-)	Distributive (In)Justice → Retaliation Attitude → Task Perf.	-0,0219	0.6554	0.5123	-	Rejected
H7b (-)	Procedural (In)Justice → Retaliation Attitude → Task Perf.	-0,0147	0.4542	0.6497	-	Rejected
H7c (-)	Interactional (In)Justice → Retaliation Attitude → Task Perf.	0,0772	1.1928	0.2330	-	Rejected

*Note: Significant at $p < 0.05$. H = Hypothesis. Task Perf. = Task Performance. Source: Developed by the authors.

The results show that procedural (in)justice influences perceived retaliation ($p < 0.001$), while interactional (in)justice has an effect on both retaliation judgment ($p < 0.05$) and retaliation attitude ($p < 0.001$). The remaining relationships were not confirmed for this sample.

4.4 Hypothesis Discussion

Hypothesis H1 investigated the association between the perception of distributive (in)justice and the dimensions of retaliation: perception, judgment, and attitude. As shown in Table 5, no statistically significant relationships were found, indicating no association between distributive (in)justice within the work environment of faculty members at public HEIs and organizational retaliation. Thus, hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c were rejected. This aligns with Kuuyelleh et al. (2025), who found distributive injustices related to favoritism and lack of transparency in technical universities but noted that such perceptions led more to dissatisfaction and turnover intentions than to direct retaliatory actions.

It is important to note that although most respondents reported having held leadership positions, typically associated with increased responsibilities and additional tasks without significant salary adjustments, this did not contribute to a perception of distributive (in)justice or to its association with retaliation dimensions.

This result is consistent with the literature. Paiva and Leite (2011) analyzed workplace justice variables and retaliatory attitudes, observing perceptions of injustice but no intention to retaliate. Similarly, Grassi et al. (2019), in a study on retaliation, showed that individuals who perceived unfair outcomes did not change their behavior in a retaliatory manner. Ambrose et al. (2002) found that when the perception of injustice was related to the distributive dimension, individuals tended to adopt behaviors aimed at restoring fairness, rather than engaging in retaliatory actions.

In the same vein, Ceresa et al. (2014) found that most respondents had at some point felt unfairly treated in the workplace, with their efforts, high performance, and dedication not being equitably recognized. Although this perception of injustice affected their well-being and psychological health, most did not respond with retaliatory behavior. As described by Rego (2001), understanding distributive justice in the context of public university faculty is complex, as rewards do not necessarily reflect individual effort. Promotions, for instance, are typically tied to mandatory criteria defined by institutional career plans.

Hypothesis H2 examined whether perceptions of procedural (in)justice were positively associated with retaliation-related perception, judgment, and attitude. Procedural (in)justice

was significantly positively associated with perceived retaliation (H2a), indicating that when faculty member perceives unfair procedures, particularly regarding decision-making, participation, and distribution, they observe retaliatory behaviors among peers in daily institutional routines. These may include behaviors such as absenteeism, delays, and reduced engagement in teaching duties, ultimately undermining instructional quality (Jesus & Rowe, 2015; Kremer et al., 2020).

However, hypotheses H2b and H2c were rejected, suggesting that although faculty perceive procedural (in)justices, these perceptions are not positively associated with judgments or personal retaliatory attitudes. In other words, respondents acknowledge retaliatory actions committed by peers (H2a), but do not pass judgment on these actions (H2b), nor do they engage in retaliatory behavior themselves (H2c). This finding is intriguing, as it highlights a disconnect between perception and personal action. According to Paiva and Leite (2011), such contradictions may indicate either a higher-than-expected propensity to engage in negative behaviors or reluctance to admit to such actions, pointing to tense and contradictory power dynamics.

Hypothesis H3a did not identify a significant positive association between interactional (in)justice and perceptions of retaliation. This suggests that, even when there is a predominance of unfair treatment in interpersonal interactions, faculty members do not perceive retaliatory behaviors committed by their peers. It is possible that this dimension of organizational (in)justice does not influence the retaliatory actions of fellow faculty members, or it may lead to implicit retaliatory behaviors that go unnoticed by others in the educational environment.

However, hypotheses H3b and H3c were accepted, indicating significant positive associations between interactional (in)justice and both retaliation judgment and retaliation attitude, respectively. This suggests that perceived (in)justice in interpersonal processes prompts faculty to judge and engage in retaliatory behaviors in the workplace. These findings corroborate Zhang and Wilson (2025), who demonstrated that interpersonal injustices frequently lead to retaliatory responses through the mechanism of psychological contract violation.

The confirmation of these two hypotheses indicates that the relationship between superiors and subordinates in this study, encompassing affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, is perceived as unjust, prompting faculty members to react negatively toward their superiors.

It is worth noting that most respondents have experience in leadership roles, which likely gives them a broader

perspective on organizational dynamics. Nevertheless, the findings underscore a prevailing perception of interactional (in)justice and its association with retaliation-related judgments and attitude. These results align with prior research, such as Ambrose et al. (2002), who found that this form of justice can lead individuals to engage in retaliatory behaviors, such as workplace sabotage.

Contrary to these findings, Ceresa et al. (2014) reported that while interactional injustice was present in their studied environment, most respondents did not engage in counterproductive behaviors against their leaders. Therefore, the present study is particularly relevant as it confirms two significant and positive relationships between interactional (in)justice and retaliation judgment and attitude, which are not commonly reported in the existing literature.

Regarding Hypothesis H4, no negatively association was found between the retaliation dimensions (perception, judgment, and attitude) and task performance. This suggests that, for the observed sample, task performance is not influenced by retaliatory tendencies. This result contradicts expectations in the literature, which suggest that perceptions of workplace injustice can foster retaliatory behaviors, negatively impacting individual performance (Paiva & Leite, 2011). Ghnan et al. (2019) highlight that, in the educational context, adherence to public policies is seen as a source of satisfaction, and retaliatory behaviors are not only ineffective in promoting fairness but also detrimental to outcomes. Rahman and Karim (2022) similarly emphasize that fair organizational treatment enhances engagement and performance, mitigating retaliatory tendencies, whereas Alam (2025) demonstrates that unfair treatment increases counterproductive work behavior, emphasizing the need for just leadership practices.

When evaluating Hypothesis H5, H6 and, H7 it was found that perceptions of organizational (in)justice (distributive, procedural, and interactional) do not significantly influence task performance when mediated by the perception, judgment, and attitude dimensions of organizational retaliation. This is consistent with earlier hypotheses, where some (in)justice dimensions were significantly positively associated with retaliation, but retaliation itself did not correlate with performance. This suggests that, within Brazilian HEIs, when retaliation acts as a mediator between (in)justice and performance, its effect is insignificant. As pointed out by Oliveira et al. (2022), although academic tasks are essential and must be performed, it is critical to foster organizational justice within public institutions to mitigate retaliatory behaviors, thereby promoting integrity in professional conduct.

In contrast to these findings, Fogaça et al. (2021) identified a positive association between organizational

justice and individual performance, particularly in relation to interactional justice. Their research showed that when employees feel fairly treated and enjoy good relationships with supervisors, their task performance improves. Conversely, poor treatment can negatively influence such performance.

Thus, in public higher education institutions, it was found that perceptions of organizational (in)justice and retaliation do not tend to affect faculty members' task performance (H4, H5, H6 and H7). This occurs because they may be disadvantaged, as they are subject to evaluation processes and must fulfill multiple roles and activities to achieve the highest level of professional qualification. However, it was observed that the dimension of procedural (in)justice affects perceptions of retaliation, while interactional (in)justice influences judgments and retaliatory attitude. It is emphasized that injustices related to procedures and adopted policies, as well as to interpersonal treatment and communication methods among faculty members, are aspects that may contribute to the emergence of retaliation in organizations. This encompasses perceptions (more subjective level), judgments about their occurrence, and the execution of retaliatory attitude (more behavioral levels) by faculty members as a way to respond to perceived injustices and express their dissatisfaction and indignation.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand how faculty members perceive organizational justice (Baldissarelli et al., 2020) and the consequences of perceived injustices in the workplace, such as high workloads (Nascimento & Grohmann, 2016). Nonetheless, this analysis remains complex, given that remuneration, task distribution, interpersonal interactions, and institutional procedures are largely standardized and regulated within public higher education institutions.

5 Conclusions

The study aimed to analyze the relationship between organizational (in)justice, organizational retaliation, and task performance among faculty members from public higher education institutions in Brazil. Based on the results, it was concluded that, for faculty members working in public higher education, the perception of distributive (in)justice does not result in organizational retaliation. This can be explained by the fact that, in Brazilian public higher education institutions, reward and promotion systems usually do not follow the same patterns observed in private institutions, as they tend to be more standardized, formalized, and less linked to individual benefits. Thus, faculty members do not translate their perceptions of distributive (in)justice into retaliatory actions.

Regarding the dimension of procedural (in)justice, its presence was found to lead to perceptions of retaliation. This suggests that faculty members observe their colleagues engaging in retaliatory acts as a response to the perception of (in)justice related to the use of processes and procedures within academic environments, expressing dissatisfaction and seeking impartiality. In this sense, certain implications can be noted, highlighting that public higher education institutions should ensure equity in the procedures adopted, aiming to promote a sense of justice among all and, consequently, reduce cases of retaliation among faculty members.

The dimension of interactional (in)justice, in turn, showed a positive association with both retaliation judgment and retaliation attitude. This result indicates that relationships between faculty members and their peers or supervisors are not always perceived as fair. Consequently, such perceptions may lead to judgments that justify and support retaliatory actions in the academic work environment, as well as to the emergence of retaliatory behaviors in response to perceived interpersonal (in)justice. This finding raises important questions about the need to improve relationships among members of the academic community. It is essential to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity, fairness, equality, and respect in order to prevent perceptions of (in)justice that foster positive judgments and attitudes toward retaliation.

The hypotheses that sought to understand the impact of organizational (in)justice and retaliation on task performance were not confirmed in this study — neither regarding the mediating effect of retaliation in the relationship between organizational (in)justice and task performance nor in the direct relationship between retaliation and task performance. In this regard, certain dimensions of (in)justice perception may trigger retaliatory perceptions, judgments, and attitude. However, due to the nature of public institutions, retaliation does not seem to significantly affect task performance, since these activities are considered essential public services, and faculty members are evaluated based on their work. Any failure in fulfilling their duties could be classified as misconduct or even a legal violation.

As for the study's limitations, it should be noted that the findings cannot be generalized to all faculty members of public institutions in Brazil. Moreover, the participating faculty members belonged exclusively to Brazilian public higher education institutions, excluding those from private and community institutions, which could yield different results in the perceptions of the elements investigated in this study.

Therefore, it is suggested that future research include faculty members from private and community institutions,

enabling comparisons and the identification of significant differences between institutional contexts regarding the variables examined. Variables such as the type of institution, work regime, and teaching modality may affect the relationships analyzed and could be explored in future studies. Furthermore, this research could be expanded to explore the perceptions of faculty from different educational levels, such as secondary education, undergraduate, and graduate programs, nationwide, particularly concerning workload and task distribution. Future studies may also examine the relationship between organizational (in)justice and retaliation in relation to other relevant aspects of the academic environment, such as satisfaction, commitment, collaboration, and motivation. Finally, they could investigate the topic in greater depth and gather more detailed information using other methodological strategies, such as conducting interviews.

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