

A Study on the Level of Organizational Trust at Tahri Mohamed University from an Academic Perspective: The Case of the Faculty of Economic, Commercial and Management Sciences

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the perceptions of organizational trust among faculty members in the Faculty of Economics, Commercial Sciences, And Management Sciences at Tahri Mohamed University of Bechar across three dimensions: lateral trust (trust among professors), vertical trust (in the dean, heads of departments, and their deputies), and institutional trust (in the university policies and procedures). A descriptive approach was used, and data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to all 106 full-time faculty members, with 54 responses received (50.9%). The data was analyzed using SPSS V29.0.

The results show that lateral trust is the highest, followed by a moderately positive level of vertical trust, while institutional trust is weakly positive. Statistically significant differences were found between the three trust dimensions, revealing a clear hierarchy: lateral trust is the strongest, vertical trust comes second, and institutional

Keywords: Organizational trust; interpersonal trust; lateral trust; vertical trust; impersonal trust; trustworthiness.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, research on organizational trust has grown considerably, reflecting the importance of trust in organizations. Trust enhances organizational performance and interpersonal relationships (Mayer & Davis, 1999). It is strongly associated with positive organizational outcomes, such as increased collaboration,

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organizational commitment and employee loyalty (Zhang et al., 2008). Additionally, it contributes to improved performance, and reduced risks in relationships among individuals and organizations, leading to greater safety motivation, higher job satisfaction, and reduced turnover intentions (Kath et al., 2010). Trust fosters individuals' willingness to initiate actions, share sensitive information, and assume responsibilities, thereby contributing to overall organizational performance (Paliszkievicz et al., 2014). High levels of trust create a more effective work environment, reduce conflicts, and increase commitment and performance. Yan and Jin found that an employee's trust in an immediate superior, co-workers, and the top manager positively influences work performance (Li et al., 2007). Trust in management increases knowledge sharing by reducing the fear of losing one's unique value and improving the willingness to document knowledge (Renzl, 2008).

Although there has been increasing attention to the concept of trust in organizational theory - particularly within educational research- Tierney (2006) notes that it has rarely been applied in the higher education sector (Vidovich & Currie, 2011). In this context, Zhang et al. (2008) argue that cultivating organizational trust is a universal objective for employers (Zhang et al., 2008). Its significance is especially heightened within knowledge-intensive environments such as higher education institutions. Understanding the nature and dimensions of organizational trust among academic staff provides valuable insight into how universities can foster collaboration, commitment, and institutional stability.

In the Algerian context, examining organizational trust in higher education holds particular importance. Algerian universities are undergoing major transformations, including the reinforcement of digitalization, the expansion of distance learning, the promotion of start-ups, the development of university incubators, and the transition toward of fourth-generation universities. Undoubtedly, these transformations require a climate characterized by trust, cooperation, and positive expectations - both among faculty members and between them and their academic leadership, and policies and institutional procedures- in order to ensure the successful implementation of these reforms.

1.1 Research questions and Hypotheses

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

What is the overall level of organization trust among faculty members at the University of Bechar?

Are there significant differences between lateral, vertical, and institutional trust?

How are these dimensions of trust interrelated?

Based on the questions, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

First main hypothesis (H1): The mean scores of the organizational trust dimensions (lateral, vertical, and institutional) are significantly greater than the neutral value (3.0).

H1a: The mean score for lateral trust is great than the neutral value of 3.0.

H1b: The mean score for vertical trust is great than the neutral value of 3.0.

H1c: The mean score for institutional trust is great than the neutral value of 3.0.

Second main hypothesis (H2): There are statistically significant differences between the mean levels of the organizational trust dimension (lateral, vertical, and institutional) among faculty members.

H2a: The level of lateral trust (among colleagues) is significantly higher than the level of vertical trust (with supervisors).

H2b: The level of lateral trust (among colleagues) is significantly higher than the level of institutional trust.

H2c: The level of vertical trust (with supervisors) is significantly higher than the level of institutional trust.

Third main hypothesis (H3): There are statistically significant positive relationship between the dimensions of organizational trust (lateral, vertical, and institutional).

H3a: There is a significant positive relationship between lateral and vertical trust.

H3b: There is a significant positive relationship between lateral and institutional trust.

H3c: There is a significant positive relationship between vertical and institutional trust.

1.2 Purpose and significance of study

The paper aims to assess the level of organizational trust prevailing in the the Faculty of Economics sciences, Commercial sciences, and Management sciences, at the university of Bechar, across its interpersonal and institutional dimensions from the perspective of faculty members. Therefore, the primary objectives of this study are:

To assess the current levels of lateral, vertical and institutional trust among faculty members.

To compare the mean levels of the three trust dimensions to establish a clear hierarchy.

To analyse the correlation and degree of association between the different dimensions of organizational trust.

To provide data-driven insights and recommendations to university administration for strengthening oarganizational trust.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding how trust operates within Algerian higher education institutions, a topic that remains underexplored. Therefore, the importance of this study reveals in three different elements. First, organizational trust is studied by focusing on both interpersonal (trust in workers and in managers), and imperonal trust (trust in systems), hence, this research, theoretically, provides a detailed, multi-demensional analysis of trust within an academic context, reinforcing that trust is not a uniform construct. Second, different dimensions of interpersonal and imperonal trust are

studied. Third, the findings hold significant value for university administration and academic leaders. Practically, by identifying which dimensions of trust are strongest and which are most fragile, this study can inform targeted interventions in areas such as internal communication, leadership development, and human resource policies to foster a more trusting and effective academic environment, and provides useful insights for university leaders and policymakers seeking to build a more transparent, cooperative, and high-performing academic culture.

1.3 Study Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive and correlation survey design. The target population consisted of full-time faculty members from the Faculty of Economics, Commercial, and Management Sciences at the University of Bechar. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire adapted from validated scales (Mayer & Davis, 1999; Mcknight et al., 2002; Vanhala, 2020), designed to measure lateral, vertical, and institutional trust on a likert scale. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 29, applying descriptive statistics, One-Sample T-Test with Cohen's *d* for effect size, repeated measures ANOVA with post-hoc comparisons, and Spearman's rank-order correlation (ρ) to test the formulated hypotheses.

2. Theoretical framework (Literature Review)

2.1 Previous studies

-Vidovich & Currie's (2011) study, entitled "Governance and Trust in Higher Education" (Vidovich & Currie, 2011).

This study investigates the relationship between governance and trust in the Australian higher education system, focusing on how national governance policies – particularly the Australian protocols introduced in the 2000s – have shaped trust among key stakeholders, including government bodies, university governance structures, academic staff, and students. Using Tierney's (2006) "grammar of trust" as a conceptual framework, the research adopts a qualitative policy analysis approach. It examines communication patterns, policy-making processes, and stakeholder interactions over a five-year period (2003-2008), drawing on evidence from policy documents, stakeholder submissions, and media reports to capture the complex nature of trust within the sector.

The findings indicate that the implementation of these protocols generated a culture of mistrust, largely due to heightened government control and financial sanctions. Nonetheless, temporary moments of trust emerged when the government reversed certain measures, stabilizing relations among stakeholders for a time. The study concludes that trust is a dynamic and fragile process, evolving through continuous interaction and easily undermined when policies are perceived as limiting university autonomy or strengthening external control. It emphasizes that

effective governance in higher education depends on maintaining a balance between accountability and institutional independence, with impersonal trust playing a crucial role in this equilibrium.

- Dzimińska et al.'s (2018) study, entitled "Trust-based quality culture conceptual model for higher education institutions" (Dzimińska et al., 2018).

This research aims to develop a conceptual model that elucidates the role of trust in fostering a quality culture within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Its main objective is to demonstrate how trust serves as a foundational element that enhances loyalty, reputation, and sustainable development in universities. The methodology involves a systematic literature review following four established stages, synthesizing existing scientific findings, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence. This inductive process facilitated the construction of the trust-based quality culture conceptual model, which visualizes the interconnections between trust and quality elements in HEIs.

The main results highlight the importance of trust as a catalyst for developing a sustainable quality culture, fostering loyalty among students, faculty, and management, and reinforcing the institution's reputation. The model is intended to serve as a diagnostic and strategic tool for HEIs to assess and improve their trust-related quality practices.

- Aybar & Marşap's (2018) study, entitled "The moderating role of organizational trust on the relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational commitment: research in Istanbul University" (Aybar & Marşap, n.d.).

The study aimed to examine the role of organizational trust in the relationship between employee's perceptions of organizational politics and their organizational commitment, focusing on whether trust serves as a mediating or moderating variable. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected from 267 academic staff at Istanbul University's Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences in both state and private universities, selected through convenience sampling.

The findings revealed a negative relationship between perceived organizational politics and organizational commitment, indicating that higher perceptions of politics decrease commitment. Similarly, perceived politics had a negative effect on organizational trust, while trust was positively related to commitment.

- Jung's (2022) study, entitled the effect of authentic leadership of deans and directors on sustainable organizational commitment at universities: mediated by organizational culture and trust (Jung, 2022).

This study aimed to examine how the leadership of deans and directors in Korean universities affects professors' organizational commitment, emphasizing the mediating roles of organizational culture and organizational trust. A survey was administered to full-time professors from 20 universities, yielding 387 valid responses. Structural equation modelling with a two-step approach was employed

to test the research hypotheses, and mediating effects were analysed using phantom variables.

The results showed that the authentic leadership of deans and directors had a significant and positive influence on organizational trust, culture and commitment. Moreover, organizational trust was founded to be a stronger mediator than organizational culture in this relationship.

2.2 Trust within the organization

The conceptualization of trust has undergone significant development and variation among scholars across multiple disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, economics, management, and ethics (Mcknight et al., 2002; Colquitt et al., 2007; Qin & Men, 2023). In this context, trust has been conceptualized as a behavioral intention, an internal action, synonymous with trustworthiness, or even synonym for cooperation or risk-taking (Colquitt et al., 2007).

Among the most influential contributions in the organizational literature is the definition proposed by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), who define trust as ‘the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party’ (Mayer et al., 1995). This definition highlights vulnerability and risk-taking as central elements of trust. Complementing this view, Rousseau et al.'s definition (1998) is considered cross-disciplinary (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), describing trust as ‘a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another’ (Rousseau et al., 1998). According to Colquitt et al. (2007), both definitions converge on two core elements: the intention to accept vulnerability and the presence of positive expectations, which are rooted in earlier conceptualizations of trust. Cummings and Bromiley conceptualize organizational trust as the belief that others will keep commitments, act honestly, and refrain from exploitation (Qin & Men, 2023).

Building on this perspective, trust is an implicit (intention, attitude), unconditional (not based on agreements or written conditions), and rational construct (rather than purely emotional), reflecting optimistic expectations of other's behavior, arising in situations of vulnerability (taking risk), relying on the actions of others (relational), and typically associated with voluntary cooperation (not forced), while often better understood through its absence than its presence (Paliszkievicz et al., 2014).

Organizational trust can be distinguished into trust in individuals and trust in the organization. Trust in individuals is known as interpersonal trust, which includes relationships between co-workers (lateral trust) and interactions between employees and their immediate superiors and managers (vertical trust) (Vanhala et al., 2011; Vanhala et al., 2016).

Within interpersonal trust, Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) proposed an influential model that examines the construct from the perspective of both parties involved: the trustor and the trustee. The trustor is characterized by a general propensity to trust, which reflects an individual's willingness to rely on others across situations. The trustee, in turn, is evaluated through the perception of trustworthiness, which is determined by three dimensions: ability, referring to the skills and competencies that enable the trustee to have influence in a specific domain ; benevolence, denoting the extent to which the trustee is perceived to genuinely care about the trustor's interests beyond self-gain, and integrity, which reflects adherence to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable (Mayer et al., 1995). Together, these dimensions explain why some parties are judged as more trustworthy than others and highlight the relational and multidimensional nature of trust within organizations. Therefore, the interpersonal organizational trust reflects the individual employees' expectations regarding the competence, benevolence and integrity of others (co-workers, supervisors and managers).

Interpersonal trust has dominated organizational trust studies, while trust at the organization level has often been neglected, emerging later as the concept of impersonal trust, also referred to as institutional or systems trust (Vanhala et al., 2011; Vanhala et al., 2016). Impersonal trust was initially characterized in previous studies as trust in top management, but later evolved to encompass confidence in broader organizational elements such as vision and strategy, leadership goals and capabilities, technological and commercial competence, justice, fair processes and structures roles, technologies, reputation, decision-making processes, and human resource management policies (Vanhala et al., 2011). In summary, it consists of two dimensions: capability and fairness (Vanhala, 2020). The capability dimension comprises five components : organizing of activities, referring to the organization's ability to coordinate operations and manage resources effectively ; sustainability, which reflects its capacity to adapt to environmental changes ; top management, representing the competence and decision-making practices of senior leaders, technology reliability, indicating the dependability of tools, equipment, and technical support, and competitiveness, showing the organization's standing and performance compared to its competitors. The fairness dimension includes three components: HRM practices, which cover salary, rewards, education, and career development; fair play, which refers to ethical management behavior, equitable treatment, and fulfilment of organizational promises, and communication, which concerns the reliability, relevance, and sufficiency of internal information. In summary, the impersonal element of organizational trust reflects the individual employee's expectations regarding organizational trustworthiness.

3.Method

3.1 Population and Sample

The data for this study were collected from the Faculty of Economics Sciences, Commercial Sciences, and Management Sciences, at the University of

Bechar. The study including only the teaching staff on the faculty, excluding administrative personnel. The population consisted of all permanent faculty members, totaling 106 professors. An online questionnaire with a covering letter was sent to all members of the teaching staff through their professional email addresses, however, only 54 responses were received, representing a response rate of 50.9%.

3.2 Measurement tool

All constructs were measured using existing and validated scales. All items were adapted to fit the university context by applying summarization and integration techniques. Regarding interpersonal trust, this study employed measurement tools developed by Mayer and Davis (1999) and McKnight et al. (2002). The revised tool comprised 12 items - 6 measuring trust among professors and 6 measuring trust in the dean, the head of department, and their deputies - categorized under three dimensions: ability (2 items), benevolence (2 items) and integrity (2 items).

For impersonal trust, the scale was based on Vanhala's (2019) validated instrument. Fourteen items were adapted and used to measure trust in the University Administration, covering two dimensions: capability (10 items) and fairness (4 items). The items addressed aspects such as organizing activities, the sustainability of the organization, top management characteristics, technological reliability, fairness in HRM and communication.

All of the measures were based on a 5-point Likert scale anchored with "Strongly Disagree" (1) and "Strongly Agree" (5).

Hence, the questionnaire consisted of three main axes, as follows:

The first axis: Interpersonal trust, which includes two variables: trust among professors, and trust in the dean, the head of department, and their deputies. Both lateral and vertical trust include three dimensions: competence (2 items), benevolence (2 items) and reliability (2 items), totaling 6 items for each variable.

The second axis: Impersonal trust, which measures the level of trust in the University administration through two dimensions: capability (10 items) and fairness (4 items).

The third axis: personal information, which includes variables related to the personal and professional characteristics of the respondents, such as gender, age, and academic rank.

The following table presents the questionnaire axes and the number of items for each axis.

Questionnaire axes and number of items

Table 1

Axes	Organizational Trust	Dimemnsions	Ferry Number
Axis 1	Interpersonal Trust	Trust among professors	Competence (1-2)
			Benevolence (3-4)
			Reliability (5-6)
	trust in the dean, the head of department, and their deputies	Competence (7-8)	
		Benevolence (9-10)	
		Reliability (11-12)	
Axis 2	Impersonal Trust	Trust in University Administration	Capability (13-22)
			Fairness (23-26)
Axis 3	personal information	personal and professional characteristics	/

Source: Prepared by researchers

3.3 Analysis

In order to analysis the collected data, the SPSS V29.0 program was used to assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaire and to conduct the statistical analyses. The study relied on descriptives statistics, One-Sample T-Test with cohen s for effect size, repeated measures ANOVA with post-hoc comparisons, and Spearman s rank-order correlation (rho) to test the formulated hypotheses.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability Statistics

To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, a reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha. The results are presented in the following table:

Reliability statistics

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,964	26

Source: Prepared by researchers using a program SPSS V29.0

The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0,964 for the 26 items indicates excellent internal consistency, confirming the high reliability of the questionnaire in measuring organizational trust.

4.2 Questionnaire analysis

4.2.1 *The personal and professional characteristics*

The following table presents the personal and professional characteristics of the respondents:

Personal and Professional characteristics of the Respondents

Table 3

Variables		Iteration	Ratio
Gender	Male	18	33,3
	Female	36	66,7
Age	From 25 to 35 years	9	16,7
	From 36 to 50 years	37	68,5
	Older than 50 year	8	14,8
Academic rank	Assistant Professor	1	1,9
	Lecture « B »	10	18,5
	Lecture « A »	8	14,8
	Professor	35	64,8

Source: Prepared by researchers using a program SPSS V29.0

From the table above, it is evident that the female respondents constitute the majority of the sample, representing 66.7% (36 individuals), compared to males, who account for only 33.3%. This indicates the strong presence of women in this field. The largest proportion of respondents falls within the 36-50 age group (68.5%), indicating that most participants belong to the middle-age category, followed by the 25-35 age group (16.7%) and those above 50 years (14.8%). Regarding academic rank, the results show a clear dominance of Professors, representing 64.8% of the sample, followed by Lecture B (18.5%), Lecture A (14.8%), while Assistant Professors were the least represented, accounting for only 1.9%.

4.2.2 *Interpersonal and Impersonal trust axes analysis*

A. The mean values and standard deviations of respondents answers for the variable of interpersonal trust department, and their deputies ($M = 3.81$) is slightly higher than trust among professors ($M = 3.63$), indicating that faculty members have more confidence in their academic leaders than in their colleagues. For lateral trust, some items showed a relative shift toward neutrality, particularly regarding fairness in treatment ($M = 3.185$), suggesting a variation in the perception of fairness among colleagues. Regarding vertical trust, the item related to the

absence of harmful intent received the highest score (M = 4.093), reflecting a strong perception that supervisors respect professional relationships.

Values of arithmetic mean and standard deviations of interpersonal trust

Table 4

Phrases		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Stongly disagree	Weighted arithmetic mean	standard deviation	General direction
Trust among professors		Iteration	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration			
		%	%	%	%	%			
Ability	My fellow professors have much knowledge on the work that needs to be done	14	25	14	1	0	3.963	0.776	Agree
		25.9	46.3	25.9	1.9	0			
Ability	I feel very confident about the skills and abilities of my fellow professors	10	32	10	2	0	3.926	0.723	Agree
		18.5	59.3	18.5	3.7	0			
Benevolence	My fellow professors are concerned with my welfare	9	25	19	1	0	3.778	0.744	Agree
		16.7	46.3	35.2	1.9	0			
Benevolence	Most of time, my fellow professors try to be helpful rather than just look out for themselves	6	23	15	9	1	3.444	0.965	Agree
		11.1	42.6	27.8	16.7	1.9			
Reliability	My fellow professors try hard to be fair in dealing with others	5	14	24	8	3	3.185	0.992	Neutral
		9.3	25.9	44.4	14.8	5.6			
Reliability	In general, most of my fellow professors keep their promises	7	23	16	6	2	3.500	0.986	Agree
		13.0	42.6	29.6	11.1	3.7			
Weighted arithmetic mean of trust among professors							3.632		Agree
Trust in the dean, the head of department, and their deputies									
Ability	The managers have much knowledge on the work that needs to be done	12	30	9	2	1	3.926	0.843	Agree
		22.2	55.6	16.7	3.27	1.9			
Ability	The competence and skills of the managers enable them to perform their duties effectively	12	26	13	3.7	1	3.852	0.876	Agree
		22.2	48.1	24.1	2	1			
Benevole	The managers would not knowingly do anything to hurt me	15	31	6	3.7	1.9	4.093	0.734	Agree
		27.8	57.4	11.1	7	0			
Benevole	Most of time, the managers try	14	22	11	13.0	0	3.796	0.979	Agree

Phrases	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Stongly disagree	Weighted arithmetic mean	standard deviation	General direction
	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration			
Trust among professors to be helpful and support the professors rather than just look out for themselves	%	%	%	%	%	3.556	0.984	Neutral
	25.9	40.7	20.4	6	0			
Reliability The managers keep all their promises to all faculty members	10	18	19	11.1	1	3.556	0.984	Neutral
	18.5	33.3	35.2	8	1.9			
The managers try hard to be fair in dealing with others	12	21	12	14.8	1	3.648	1.049	Agree
	22.2	38.9	22.2		1.9			
Weighted arithmetic mean of trust in the dean, the head of department, and their deputies						3.811		Agree

Both vertical and lateral trust fall within the 'agree' level, reflecting an overall positive perception of interpersonal trust within the faculty. In both cases, the ability and benevolence dimensions recorded the highest means, reflecting confidence in colleagues' competence and goodwill, and the supervisors are considered competent knowledgeable, and supportive. Conversely, reliability showed low scores, indicating some uncertainty and hesitation regarding the consistency and fairness of both professors and academic leaders.

The analysis reveals that professors tend to express a higher level of trust in their supervisors compared to their colleagues. This can be explained by the association of trust in supervisors with objective factors such as competence, commitment, and impartiality in treatment, whereas trust among colleagues relies more heavily on daily interactions that can be influenced by personal differences. Consequently, the findings reflect a solid foundation for vertical trust, offset by a need to strengthen lateral trust among professors through fairer and more cooperative practices.

B. The mean values and standard deviations of respondents answers for the variable of impersonal trust

Values of arithmetic mean and standard deviations of impersonal trust

Table 5

Phrases		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Stongly disagree	Weighted arithmetic mean	standard deviation	General direction
		Iteration	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration			
		%	%	%	%	%			
Organization of operational activities	My university adapts well to changing circumstances	6	26	13	9	0	3.537	0.905	Agree
		11.1	48.1	24.1	16.7	0			
	My university efficiently utilizes the experience of its staff, and there are work practices that help us overcome exceptional situations	7	19	16	11	1	3.370	1.015	Neutral
		13.0	35.2	29.6	20.4	1.9			
	Work is well organized at my university, making it easy for me to get things done	6	22	13	13	0	3.389	0.979	Neutral
		11.1	40.7	24.1	24.1	0			
Weighted arithmetic mean of Organization of operational activities							3.432		Agree
Organizational sustainability	My university operates on a solid foundation that protects it from the effects of changes in the work environment	4	15	23	11	1	3.185	0.913	Neutral
		7.4	27.8	42.6	20.4	1.9			
	Professors at my university enjoy a promising future	6	18	18	11	1	3.315	0.987	Neutral
		11.1	33.3	33.3	20.4	1.9			
Weighted arithmetic mean of Organizational sustainability							3.250		Neutral
Management of operations and personnel	I agree with university's guidelines and have confidence in its expertise	5	26	15	8	0	3.519	0,863	Agree
		9.3	48.1	27.8	14.8	0			
	In my opinion, the top management has a clear vision and is	5	18	17	12	2	3.222	1.022	Neutral
		9.3	33.3	31.5	22.2	3.7			

Phrases	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Weighted arithmetic mean	standard deviation	General direction
	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration	Iteration			
	%	%	%	%	%			
leading the university in the right direction								
The top management does not make decisions that could endanger the university's operations in the future	5	20	16	11	2	3.278	1.017	Neutral
	9.3	37.0	29.6	20.4	3.7			
Weighted arithmetic mean of Management of operations and personnel						3.340		Neutral

The results presented in the table indicate that the overall mean of impersonal trust ($M = 3.34$) falls within the neutral range, suggesting that faculty members have a moderate level of trust in the university's institutional systems and practices.

Within the Capability dimension ($M = 3.34$), the highest scores were found in the Organization of Operational Activities ($M = 3.43$), showing that respondents perceive their university as reasonably organized and adaptive to changing circumstances. However, the relatively high standard deviation levels indicate a clear variation among the professors' answers. These findings suggest that the university is making acceptable efforts in managing its operational activities, yet the responses reveal a disparity in the respondents' satisfaction with the effectiveness of these efforts. However, Technological reliability scored lower ($M = 3.29$), with some variation in responses ($SD = 1.20$), indicating uncertainty about the efficiency and consistency of technological tools and support services. These results reflect that the technological aspect still requires improvements to ensure greater stability and reliability. The Organizational Sustainability dimension ($M = 3.25$) also reflected a neutral stance, implying moderate confidence in the institution's long-term stability and resilience, and indicating that professors' confidence in the institution's future stability is not yet firm. This may reflect concerns about continuity or the clarity of strategic policies. For Business and Personal Management, its weighted average of (3.34) leans towards "Neutral". The statement "I agree with university's guidelines and have confidence in its expertise" scored ($M = 3.519$), falling into the "the Agree" category. Meanwhile,

statements related to the senior management's clear vision and the avoidance of decisions that threaten the university's future were in the "Neutral" category (3.22). This contrast reflects relative confidence in the general directions, countered by reservations about the effectiveness of the strategic vision and the ability to protect the institution from future risks.

Regarding the Fairness dimension ($M = 3.18$), results show a generally neutral perception of HRM Practices ($M = 3.19$) and Communication ($M = 3.16$). These results suggest that faculty members neither strongly agree nor disagree about the fairness of administrative policies or the transparency of internal communication processes, the relatively high standard deviations (around 1.0) across these items indicate variation in respondent's opinions, suggesting that institutional fairness and communication may not be experienced uniformly among staff.

4.2.3 Differences between the dimensions of organizational trust among faculty members

4.2.3.1 Means and Standard Deviations

Means and standard deviations of organizational trust dimensions

Table 6

Dimension	Mean (M)	standard deviations (SD)	Number of individuals (N)	Ranking
Lateral trust (among professors)	3.72	0.70	54	1
Vertical trust (supervisors)	3.43	0.86	54	2
Institutional trust	3.26	0.77	54	3

Source: Prepared by researchers

The results (Table 6) showed that lateral trust ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.70$) was the highest among the dimensions trust, followed by vertical trust ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.86$), while institutional trust ranked last ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.77$). This indicates that faculty members show greater trust in their colleagues compared to managers or administration of university.

4.5 Testing the research hypotheses

This section outlines the statistical procedures employed to formally test the research hypotheses. To provide a comprehensive and robust analysis, a multi-faceted approach was adapted. First, to address the hypotheses regarding the absolute level of trust for each dimension, a One-Sample T-Test was used to compare each mean score against the neutral scale midpoint. These results were supplemented with Cohen's d to evaluate the practical significance, or effect size, of findings. Second, to test the hypotheses concerning the significance differences

among the mean levels of trust dimensions, a Repeated Measures ANOVA was conducted, followed by post-hoc pairwise comparisons to identify the specific nature of these differences. Finally, to investigate hypotheses about the inter-relationships between the dimensions, Spearman's rank-order correlation (ρ) was utilised to assess the strength and direction of their association. This combination of analyses ensures a thorough examination of the study's central questions.

4.5.1 First mean hypothesis (H1)

The results of the one-sample T-Test (Test value = 3.0) and the corresponding Cohen's d effect sizes are displayed in Table 7. This analysis serves to test the hypotheses regarding the absolute levels of trust for each dimension.

One-Sample T-Test (Test Value = 3) and Cohen's d Effect Size Results

Table 7

Dimensions of trust	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Cohen's D	Effect Size strength	Interpretation
Lateral Trust	7,56	53	,000	+,72	1.03	Very large	Very significant: High level of trust among colleagues
Vertical Trust	3,71	53	,000	+,43	0.50	Medium	Significant: Moderate level of trust in supervisors
Institutional Trust	2,46	53	,017	+,26	0.33	Small-to-Medium	Significant: Relatively low level of trust in the organization

Source: Prepared by researchers using a program SPSS V29.0

The results presented in table 7 show that all three dimensions of organizational trust are statistically higher than the neutral value of 3.0. However, the analysis of effect sizes reveals a clear gradient in their practical importance.

- Lateral trust: the mean score for lateral trust was significantly higher than 3.0, with a mean difference of + 0.72, $t(53) = 7.56$, $p < 0.001$, and the magnitude of this positive perception is practically very large ($d = 1.03$). This indicates a strong and statistically significant positive level of trust among colleagues. Therefore, H1a is supported (The mean score for lateral trust is great than the neutral value of 3.0).

- Vertical trust: the mean score for vertical trust was also significantly higher than 3.0, with a mean difference of + 0.43, $t(53) = 3.71$, $p < 0.001$, but its practical importance is moderate ($d = 0.50$). This suggests a moderate positive level of trust towards supervisors and academic leaders. Therefore, H1b is supported (The mean score for vertical trust is great than the neutral value of 3.0.)

- Institutional trust: the mean score for insitutional trust was found to be significantly higher than 3.0, with a mean difference of + 0.26, $t(53) = 2.46$, $p <$

0.017, and a small-to-medium effect size ($d = 0.33$). While statistically significant, the smaller mean difference and higher p-value suggest a weakly positive level of trust in the institution. Therefore, H1c is supported (The mean score for institutional trust is great than the neutral value of 3.0).

All three sub-hypotheses were supported. Consequently, the main first hypothesis- stating that the mean scores of the organizational trust dimensions (lateral, vertical, and institutional) are significantly greater than the neutral value (3.0) is also supported. This confirms that faculty members at the Faculty of Economics, Commercial, and Management Sciences generally hold a positive perception of trust within their institution. However, the effect size analysis reveals differences between the dimensions of trust.

Lateral trust (among colleagues) is the strongest, reflecting robust and healthy collegial relationships. The moderately positive result for vertical trust suggests an acceptable level of confidence in direct supervisors. Finally, the weakly positive result for institutional trust indicates that, while faculty members do not distrust the institution, their confidence in its system and broader administration remains fragile and only slightly above neutral. Institutional trust, therefore, appears relatively weak and could be strengthened through transparent communication and fair administrative practices.

4.5.2 Second mean hypothesis

To test the hypotheses regarding significant differences among the trust dimensions, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. Table 8 presents the overall test result, and table 9 presents the Post Hoc Pairwise Comparisons, which identify the specific differences.

Results of the Repeated Measures ANOVA for the Dimensions of Organizational Trust

Table 8

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.	Partial η^2
Between-dimensions	5.949	2	2.975	22.00	.000	0.293
Error	14.331	106	0.135			

Source: Prepared by researchers using a program SPSS V29.0

The results of the repeated measures ANOVA presented in Table 8 indicate statistically significant differences among the mean scores of the three dimensions of organizational trust, $f(2,106) = 22.00$, $p < .001$. The effect size, calculated using Partial Eta Squared (η^2), was .293, which is considered large according to Cohen's standards. This finding suggests that approximately 29.3% of the variance in trust scores can be attributed to the specific dimension of trust being evaluated. Therefore, the levels of trust that faculty members place in their colleagues (lateral), superiors (vertical), and the university (institutional) differ significantly from one another. Thus, the main hypothesis is accepted (H2: There are statistically significant differences between the mean levels of the

organizational trust dimensions (lateral, vertical, and institutional) among faculty members).

**Results of Post Hoc Pairwise Comparisons
between Dimensions of Organizational Trust**

Table 9

Comparison	Mean difference	Std Error	Sig.	Direction of difference
Lateral-Vertical	.290*	.077	.000	Lateral is higher
Lateral-Institutional	.465*	.074	.000	Lateral is higher
Vertical-Insitutional	.175*	.060	.005	Vertical is higher

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

Source: Prepared by researchers using a program SPSS V29.0

Following the significant result from the repeated measures ANOVA, post hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted to examine the specific differences among the three dimensions of organizational trust. The results presented in Table 9, reveal significant differences across all pairs. Specifically, lateral trust was found to be significantly higher than both vertical trust (Mean difference = .290, $p < .001$) and institutional trust (Mean difference = .465, $p < .001$). Therefore, H2a (The level of lateral trust (among colleagues) is significantly higher than the level of vertical trust (with supervisors)), and the H2b (The level of lateral trust (among colleagues) is significantly higher than the level of institutional trust) are supported.

Furthermore, vertical trust was significantly higher than institutional trust (Mean difference = .175, $p = .005$). These findings establish a clear hierarchy in the levels of trust among faculty members, with lateral trust being the highest, followed by vertical trust, and finally institutional trust as the lowest. Therefore, the H2c (The level of vertical trust (with supervisors) is significantly higher than the level of institutional trust) is also supported.

The statistical analysis provides robust support for the main hypothesis and all three sub-hypotheses. The results conclusively demonstrate that a clear hierarchy of trust exists among faculty members. Lateral trust is the strongest, followed by vertical trust, with institutional trust being significantly lower than both.

4.5.3 Third mean hypothesis

The spearman's rho correlation results, indicating the associations between the trust dimensions, are display in Table 10.

Spearman's rho correlation Results

Table 10

Relationship	Correlation coefficient (r)	Sig, (p)	Interpretation
Lateral - vertical	0.732	0.000	Strong, positive, and significant correlation at the 0.01 level
Lateral - institutional	0.731	0.000	Strong, positive, and significant correlation at the 0.01 level
Vertical - institutional	0.814	0.000	Very strong, positive, and significant correlation at the 0.01 level

Source: Prepared by researchers using a program SPSS V29.0

The correlation analysis reveals strong, positive, and statistically significant relationships among all three dimensions of organizational trust. Therefore, Third Main Hypothesis (H3) is supported (There are statistically significant positive relationship between the dimensions of organizational trust (lateral, vertical, and institutional)).

Strong associations were found between lateral and vertical trust ($r = .732$, $p < .001$) and between lateral and institutional trust ($r = .731$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H3a (There is a significant positive relationship between lateral and vertical trust) and H3b (There is a significant positive relationship between lateral and institutional trust) are supported.

Notably, the strongest correlation was observed between vertical and institutional trust ($r = .841$, $p < .001$). This indicates a very powerful positive association between faculty members' trust in their direct supervisors and their trust in the university as a whole. Therefore, H3c (There is a significant positive relationship between vertical and institutional trust) is also supported.

Overall, the results suggest that the dimensions are highly interdependent; as trust in one dimension increases, trust in the others tends to increase as well. The analysis provides unequivocal support for the main hypothesis and all its sub-hypotheses, demonstrating that the three dimensions of organizational trust are not isolated constructs but are deeply intertwined.

The particularly strong link between vertical and institutional trust is a critical insight. It suggests that the relationship faculty members have with their direct supervisors is a powerful predictor of their overall trust in the university as an institution. This interdependence highlights that initiatives aimed at improving trust should be holistic, as strengthening one dimension is likely to have a positive spillover effect on the others.

5. Discussion

The results of this study show that lateral trust is the strongest, vertical trust is moderately positive, and institutional trust is the weakest among faculty members. These findings align with previous research.

The high level of lateral trust supports the conclusion of Dzimińska et al. (2018), who emphasize that strong interpersonal trust within academic communities promotes cooperation and a healthy organizational culture. This indicates that collegial relationships in the faculty are strong and supportive. The moderate level of vertical trust is consistent with Jung (2022), who found that trust in deans and directors depends largely on leadership behaviors. This suggests that while academic leaders are viewed positively, improvements in communication or consistency may be needed to enhance trust further. The weak institutional trust aligns with Vidovich & Currie (2011), who argue that university governance practices can weaken trust when policies are perceived as rigid, unclear, or imposed from above. In the Algerian context –marked by ongoing reforms – administrative uncertainty likely contributes to this low institutional trust.

Finally, the strong correlations between the three dimensions support the findings of Aybar & Marsa (2018), showing that trust in leaders strongly influences trust in the broader institution.

Overall, the findings confirm that interpersonal trust is solid, but institutional trust remains fragile and needs improvement through better communication, transparency, and fair administrative practices.

6. Conclusion

This study examined organizational trust among faculty members in the Faculty of Economics, Commercial Sciences, and Management Sciences at Tahri Mohamed University of Bechar across three dimensions: lateral, vertical and institutional trust. The findings revealed a clear hierarchy of trust, with lateral trust being the strongest, followed by moderate vertical trust, while institutional trust was the weakest. Statistical tests confirmed significant differences between the three dimensions, and strong positive correlations were found among them, particularly between vertical and institutional trust. Overall, the results indicate that while interpersonal relationships within the faculty are strong and supportive, trust in academic leaders is moderate, and trust in the broader university administration remains fragile. Strengthening institutional trust is therefore essential for fostering a more cohesive and supportive academic environment.

The study recommends improving transparency in administrative procedures, strengthening communication between leadership and faculty, and providing leadership training to academic managers. It also highlights the importance of promoting collaboration among faculty members and ensuring fair, and transparent HR practices to enhance overall organizational trust.

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