

# An Empirical Investigation Of The Administrative Transparency Practices And Its Relationship To Organizational Justice In Universities In Saudi Arabia

Maha B. Bin Bakr<sup>1</sup>, Modhi T. Alqahtani<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

*The purpose of the present study is to examine the administrative transparency (AT) practices of departmental chairs and its relationship with the organizational justice (OJ) at Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University (IAU) in Saudi Arabia. The present study used a structured survey questionnaire approach developed by the researchers that contained 32 items investigating three areas of AT (administrative communication, rules and regulations, faculty evaluation), and three areas of OJ (distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice). The survey was electronically distributed to a sample of (376) faculty members at IAU. The findings reported a “high” level of AT and OJ with means of (3.96 and 3.91) and with standard deviations of (1.02 and 1.12) respectively. Overall, the results show that AT is highly correlated with the OJ ( $r = 0.908$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The findings also revealed a statistically significant difference in the levels of AT and OJ based on the gender of the departmental chairs, in favor of the females ( $p < 0.01$ ). While no statistically significant differences were reported based on other study variables (gender of participants, years of experience, academic rank), ( $p > 0.05$ ). The study called upon the upper leadership of IAU to support the culture of transparency and OJ for all academic and administrative personnel by providing a set of recommendation, such as getting all academic programs accredited by various national and international accreditation agencies, and increasing women empowerment and active participation in leading the university into an era of transparency and OJ.*

**Keywords:** Administrative transparency, organizational justice, university faculty, higher education, Saudi Arabia, academic leadership.

## Introduction

Under the conditions of rapid organizational changes and increased awareness of individuals, organizations are facing greater challenges to gain the loyalty and trust of its beneficiaries. One

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<sup>1</sup>Educational Leadership & Policy Studies, College of Education, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, P.O. Box 1982, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

<sup>2</sup>College of Education, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, P.O. Box 1982, Dammam, Saudi Arabia

of these challenges is related to the need of openness and high transparency in all its practices and outputs. This openness has become the right for every individual, especially those who deal directly with these organizations (Al-Qarni, 2020, Erkkila, 2012). The need for transparency has become a global matter, and it is not limited to a certain country or a certain sector (Al-Subaie, 2010; Plotrowski, 2007).

Transparency International is a global organization established with the support of many leading countries in the world, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany and others, to combat corruption and achieve the highest levels of transparency, integrity and justice (Transparency International, 2021). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Control and Anti-Corruption Authority was established by Royal Decree No. A/65 on 13/4/1432 AH to create a work environment characterized by integrity, transparency, honesty, justice, equality and combating corruption. The Kingdom's Vision 2030 also emphasized the significance of consolidating the values of transparency and accountability in the public sector and called upon restructuring its institutions (Vision 2030, 2016). This was followed by a set of reforms at the level of the ministries and other leading institutions, a matter that made the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia move to rank (52) in the Transparency International's 2021 report, after being ranked (62) in 2016 (Transparency International, 2022).

At the level of the educational institutions, Piaux (2013) sees that transparency is no longer just a means, but rather has become an end in itself and a criterion for judging ethical practices. Meanwhile, Al-Azizi (2016) asserts that the adoption of AT is a practice of democracy that leads to growth, trust and harmony among workers; because it represents the extent to which the leader shows a pattern of openness and clarity in his/her behavior, by sharing the information needed for decision making, and revealing personal values, motives and feelings in a way that enables followers to evaluate the leader's competence and actions more accurately (Norman et al., 2010).

While Gupta & Mason (2014) states that transparency is the solution for complex and diverse set of economic, political, and ethical challenges such as empowerment, corruption reduction, and security enhancement. In addition, they point out that transparency is a major component of democratic practices, and it adds value to the institutions that adopt it. Holzner, B. & Holzner, L. (2006) report that institutions that do not pursue transparency and tend to conceal their information may face the danger of swimming against the interest and needs of its beneficiaries. This is confirmed by Poppo & Schepker (2010) who argue that whenever the trust of the beneficiaries is broken for any reason, it is too difficult to be restored. Accordingly, transparency is the base for the success of universities, as it reflects on the performance of both faculty members and other employees (Al-Harbi, 2011; Saad, 2018).

There are many areas of transparency which may increase and expand to cover all practices depending on the nature of the institution and its activities. Many researchers agree that institutional transparency include transparency of administrative communication, transparency of rules and regulations, and transparency of employee performance appraisal (Al-Shammari and Al-Mansour, 2015; Al-Shehri, 2020; Al-Mousa, 2017; Al-Hindi et al., 2019). Bani-Melhem (2014) mentions that transparency of communication at the internal and external level

of the institution is one of the components of success. Baroun-Dioumency (2012) contends that transparency is a prerequisite for achieving consultation and dialogue within the institutions. In the meantime, Al-Toub (2019) states that the clarity, simplicity, accuracy and the well- understanding of the laws and regulations protect the organization from manipulation and exploitation of loopholes that lead to administrative corruption. On his part, Mahmoud (2014) stresses the importance of regarding transparency in employee performance appraisal programs results in an objective and fair evaluation, and keeps away any kind of bias and nepotism.

In the same context, faculty members' awareness of the existence of organizational justice (OJ) is considered one of the most important motivators for building a positive mental image about their institutions, and for creating an environment characterized by integrity and stability (Al-Uqla, 2011; Muhammad and Qahiri, 2017). Within the framework of organizational relations, the existence of OJ indicates that the organizational outcomes are evenly distributed; and this generates a sense of fairness and equality among the individuals (Al- Qasir and Alimat, 2017; İnce & Gül, 2011; Lord & Douglas, 2003).

There are many studies that affirm the importance of OJ and consider it one of the foundations for developing loyalty and a sense of belonging among the employees, and this ultimately will lead to exerting more efforts to reach the highest levels of performance (Suleiman, 2020; Al-Tabouli et al., 2015; Adwan and Al-Ayasra, 2020; Dude, 2012; Kanwal, 2020; Tyagi. et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2016). Other empirical studies investigated the role of OJ in reducing the level of administrative and moral corruption and in achieving the academic excellence in higher education (Al-Khudairi, 2019; Shaaban, 2010).

Therefore, many researchers are investigating OJ in universities through studying its three dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactive justice; some other researchers call OJ the transactional justice (Abu-Shweita, 2019; Shatnawy and Al-Oqla, 2013; Kaya, 2016; Yaghoubi et al., 2011), while others exclude interactional justice and include personal and information justice instead (Kanwal, 2020; Moliner et al., 2017; Nabatchi et al., 2007). In general, according to the theory of equity seen by John Adams, employees are in constant comparison of their efforts and benefits with other peers, which results in a feeling of distributive justice and satisfaction or otherwise, a feeling of the need for equality and equity (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). Some other studies show that the extent of employees' feelings of procedural fairness is linked to the extent they view fairness of benefits' procedures and packages (Bobocel & Gosse, 2015). As for the interactional justice, it is achieved when workers realize that decision makers respect them, and regard equality upon reporting and implementing work related decisions (Tyagi et al., 2017).

Therefore, many empirical studies found that AT and OJ go hand in hand in order to achieve integrity and raise the degree of justice in the educational institutions (Al-Amiri and Al-Thubaiti, 2016; Al-Ghamdi, 2018; and Al-Toub, 2019). Others have pointed out that the neglect of AT and OJ may lead to the emergence of some unethical practices that contradicts with the academic status of these organizations. These unethical practices could emerge in different forms, such as unfair distribution of work load, the monopoly of teaching certain

courses, forcing students to purchase books authored by faculty, and withholding information from faculty, especially when it comes to performance appraisal (Miller et al., as cited in Osipian, 2008). Al-Khamshi and Shalhoub (2016) mention other practices that may lead to the exploitation of positions and administrative corruption, such as weak financial auditing, lack of financial disclosure, the abuse of community service programs in achievement of personal interests, and lack of quality assurance procedures.

The empirical evidence suggests that the success of any educational institution depends on the ability of its leaders to connect with its faculty at all levels; thus, more investigative studies that explore the practices and initiatives that may increase faculty members' sense of safety and justice in the work environment are needed (Al-Hamizi, 2018; Al-Shalfan, 2021; Alwan, 2018; Al-Ghamdi, 2018). In the meanwhile, few studies have tackled the topic of AT in the university settings and have recommended identifying its relationship with other variable that would enhance the values of integrity and reduce the elements of administrative abuse, in order to further support its leadership effectiveness (Al-Qarni, 2020); Al-Mufiz, 2015; Abdel-Fattah, 2016; Al-Anzi, 2019; Al-Ghamdi, 2018; Al-Mutairi, 2018; Al-Toub, 2019). Because no previous research was found to investigate the relationship between AT and OJ in the Saudi educational settings, this study fills the gap in the literature by examining the relationship between both variables among the departmental chairs at IAU, in hope it will provide recommendations that may contribute to increase their effectiveness, and could help other researchers and all those interested in achieving related goals. This study answers the following questions:

**RQ1: What is the level of AT practices by department chairs at IAU?**

**RQ2: What is the level of OJ practices by department chairs at IAU?**

**RQ3: Are there statistically significant differences of AT practices due to respondents' gender, department chairs' gender, academic rank, and years of service?**

**RQ4: Are there statistically significant differences of OJ practices due to respondents' gender, department chairs' gender, academic rank, and years of service?**

**RQ5: Is there a statistically significant correlation between AT and OJ at IAU?**

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Administrative transparency**

Since the emergence of AT as a basic law in management in Sweden in 1766 (Morales et al., 2020), advocates of open administrative thought and its pioneers have sought to disseminate this concept in all sectors, due to its clear role in achieving administrative development and in helping organizations, especially universities and other educational institutions, achieve their goals together with the goals of society (Al-Khelaiwi et al., 2017). In their definition of AT, some researchers focused on the extent of clarity and openness in dealing with the stakeholders and the ease of accessing information.

AT means the clarity, objectivity, consistency, and ease of understanding legislations; it also means the flexibility and evolution of legislations in response to the contemporary economic, social and administrative changes (Bani-Melhem, 2013). This is in addition to the accessibility of information and the active participation in setting procedures, resource allocation, and

decision-making processes (Fredotovic, 2018). In order to enhance transparency in universities, its leadership work on increasing employees' knowledge on their rights and responsibilities and minimizing confidentiality by using advanced information systems and technologies that facilitate openness and internal communication, within the framework that monitors and directs the organizational efficiency (AlShobaki et al., 2017).

Accordingly, many studies have focused on highlighting the importance of AT in the university environment as follows:

- **Increase rational action:** Transparency enhances the democratic leadership style and wise governance approach. Transparency leads to accountability due to the clarity of the rules and regulations, whereby decision-makers are provided with transparent and clear information on performance, a matter that facilitates investigating low levels of performance and encouraging the high ones. The clarity and early emergence of problems would increase the speed of their resolution (Al-Shalfan, 2021; Jashari and Pepaj, 2018; Fredotovic, 2018; Falaq and haddou, 2015).
- **Reduce administrative corruption:** The empirical evidence suggests that AT has a role in limiting ways of spreading corruption in universities due to the clear and transparent work rules and regulations, the availability of data bases and systems that facilitate transfer of information, and the appointment of leaders who support integrity and fight against administrative corruption (Abu-Ajmeh, 2020; Bani-Melhem, 2013; Al-Khelaiwi et al., 2017; Al-Shalfan, 2021; Al-Shehri, 2020; Al-Toub, 2019; Al-Qarni, 2020; Al-Hindi et al., 2019; Al-Khamshi and Shalhoub, 2016).
- **Raise the level of organizational trust:** Transparency is essential for raising credibility between the management and the employees. Trust guarantees positive and supportive practices that are free from nepotism and mediation. Therefore, AT is an important pillar for consolidating virtuous and honest values in universities and reducing opacity and ambiguity that may result in corruption (Al-Harbi, 2011; Al-Haddad, 2018; Alawneh, 2016; Al-Qarni, 2020; Fredotovic, 2018; Honcharenko, 2019; Al- Jumaia, 2016).
- **Increase the loyalty of subordinates:** Familiarizing employees with the progress of administrative processes, regulations, and laws provides them with correct and accurate information about the university, thus increasing their interest in achieving the university goals and success, which increase their loyalty to such an environment. Al-Khelaiwi et al., 2017; Al-Shammari, 2021; Al-Hindi et al., 2019; Gross, 2015).
- **Reduce bureaucratic procedures:** Understanding work procedures and the mechanisms for carrying out tasks gives each person in the university a clear picture of his/her responsibilities and rights. Transparency may remove obstacles and procrastination in implementing work procedures and fulfilling rights. The existence of AT in universities increases the existence of democratic systems and equality, which leads to achieving the common interests and increasing productivity (Bani-Melhem, 2013; Al-Khelaiwi et al., 2017; Al-Toub, 2019; Mahmoud, 2014; Erkkila, 2012; Jashari & Pepaj, 2018).
- **Establish community trust in universities:** Transparency is part of the social responsibility of universities towards its communities. Due to the increase of community awareness, the pressure on universities to show their activities and programs to the public increased, and the need for transparency of information and procedures also increased (Al-Haddad, 2018; Alawneh, 2016; Nigam, 2016; Crisan, 2016). Today, increased financial

funding from non-governmental resources requires a transparent accounting system that informs the internal and external stakeholders about the value of these funds, the aspects of their expenditure, the extent of their return to the university and society, and the extent of their contribution to achieving quality (Al-Haddad, 2018; Al-Rashed and Al-Qahtani, 2020; Abozeid, 2018).

### **Areas of administrative transparency**

Three important areas of transparency (administrative communication, rules and regulations, performance evaluation), according to the categorization of many researchers, will be discussed hereunder (Al-Qarni, 2020; Al-Shehri, 2020).

- **Transparency of administrative communication:** Administrative communication is the process of transferring ideas, opinions, information, and emotions in the form of facts between different parts in the same institution in various directions, through multiple work centers extending from the highest to the lowest levels of the organizational structure. In order for this process to be transparent, it shall result in the provision of clear, correct and appropriate information at the appropriate time. The forms and channels of communication in the university shall be diversified to include direct and indirect contact using different means of communication such as e-mail, telephone calls, periodic meetings, etc. (Abu-Ahmed, 2021; Abd-alMajid and Rakha, 2018; Abu-Ahmed, 2021; Al-Qarni, 2020; Mahmoud, 2014; Al-Toub, 2019).
- **Transparency of laws and regulations:** vague and ambiguous laws are laws that are subject to frequent interpretation and multiple ways of understanding, which may be contrary to the true meaning of the law. Therefore, laws and regulations should be simple and clear and should not carry more than one meaning, because overlapping and contraction of laws negatively affect university employees and make them feel insecure. The enforced laws should be public and accessible to all and promote and support decentralization and participation in decision-making (Abu-Shaqra et al., 2018; Bani-Melhem, 2014; Al-Harbi, 2011; Al-Suhaibani and Al-Mufiz, 2020; Al-Qarni, 2020; Mahmoud, 2014).
- **Transparency of job performance appraisal:** Transparency of job performance appraisal creates a climate of participation and cooperation in the university setting, and increases the chances of agreement on the results of the evaluation, which also relieves anxiety and increases motivation to work objective. Fair evaluation is one of the areas of AT, and the evaluation process must depend at all its stages on clarity and disclosure of standards and results. It should be characterized by direct feedback that show the strengths need to be enhanced and the weaknesses need to be strengthened. Job performance appraisal should be based on clear and objective criteria and mechanisms. (Al-Shammari, 2021; Al-Suhaibani and Al-Mufiz, 2020; Al-Toub, 2019; Abd-Almajid and Rakha, 2018; Al-Qarni, 2020). Accordingly, Bani-Melhem, 2013).

### **Organizational Justice**

OJ has become one of the most prominent topics in behavioral and administrative studies recently (İnce & Gül, 2011). Mustafa (2017) defines OJ as justice in the distribution of organizational outputs by following fair and objective procedures, in addition to the fairness of

treatment of individuals working within the same organization. ÜNLÜ (2013) agrees with Mustafa in defining OJ as the rules and norms governing the organizations, and how they are applied when managing and distributing rewards and inflicting penalties. Thus, OJ refers to the rules and standards that relate to personal transactions and practices that explain how rewards are distributed and punishments are inflicted, and how these decisions are made. Al-Ajlouni (2020) defines OJ as the extent to which employees are aware of the methods and policies followed in their institutions with regard to wages, rewards and promotions, and how to deal with these policies in a manner that achieves the goals of both the employees and the organization.

The OJ is one of the important positive practices that active leaders are keen to spread and achieve in the academic environment and university setting (Al-Bulahid and Al-Shahrani, 2020; Al-Khudairi, 2019; Daoud, 2015; Al-Rawashdah, 2020; Al-Otaibi, 2021; Al-Ajlouni, 2020; Owaida, 2021; Al-Mahawesh, 2021; Mourssi-Alfash, 2014; Najafi et al., 2011; Rahman et al., 2016 2012; Tsai,) summarize the benefits of OJ as follows:

- OJ increases the prevalence of good human relations, protects the university from employees' disputes, and reduces the phenomena of organizational conflict. It creates a work environment that raises the level of positive attitudes and perceptions resulting from the appreciation of efforts and contributions, which enhances the employee's loyalty and belonging to the organization.
- OJ brings the goals of the university closer to the goals of the faculty, increasing the interaction and understanding of the common goals, which will reflect positively on the level of productivity.
- OJ shows the basis and criteria of the distribution system at the university including salaries and wages - for all employees, which creates an understanding and clear perception about the degree and amount of returns that they share in exchange for the inputs and performance they contribute.
- OJ raises the quality of the follow-up and control system, which increases the employees' confidence and satisfaction, and acceptance of decisions - even if they are not favorable to the employees – because it creates an awareness of the regulations and laws and the nature of organizational decision-making strategies.
- OJ creates an organizational climate characterized by good ethics and citizenship with high awareness of the moral and fair values, thus, combating negative behaviors, including discrimination, nepotism, and favoritism for any personal considerations.
- OJ raises the university chances of achieving academic and professional accreditation, which in return supports improving its global rankings. It helps maintains a strong reputation inner and outer communities through the effective application of its policies and high ethical values.

### **Dimensions of organizational justice**

Many researchers such as Goksen et al., 2016, Hamdi (2015), Abu-Shweita (2019), Al-Amiri and Al-Thubaiti (2016), and Addai et al., (2018) tend to divide the dimensions of OJ into three main areas, namely, distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice, as follows:

- **Distributive justice:** It is related to the extent to which the individual feels the fairness of the returns he/she receives for his/her contribution to the work. It depends on the existence of pre-determined objective criteria that govern the distribution of organizational resources for employees. The organizations must follow fair criteria to achieve proportionality between wages and incentives and between productivity and effort (Ince & Gül, 2011). Al-Khudairi (2019) underlines the importance of making each person know his/her specific tasks, Distributive justice, which includes inflicting penalties against employees with poor performance, is achieved when the actions taken against or in favor of the employee are based on clear criteria, (Rahman et al., 2016).
- **Procedural justice:** Procedural justice refers to the fairness of rules, methods, processes, policies, and procedures followed in making decisions regarding the individuals working in the same organization, including salaries, promotions, material facilities, working conditions, and performance evaluation (Mustafa, 2017). Procedural justice is concerned with the workers' feeling of fairness in treatment upon the application of official procedures, or the extent of his/her knowledge of the reasons behind the application of those procedures. Al-Khudairi (2019) reports six principles to ensure the fairness of procedures: unity of purpose among employees and the same organization; equality: applying laws and regulations upon all employees; Authority and responsibility: person in charge must be fully aware of the extent of his/her results of his/her decisions and are held accountable; Hierarchy of authority; Maintaining administrative competencies especially those that add value to the organization, shall be maintained; and Centralization: the decision shall be made by a specific authority
- **Interactional justice:** It is related to the extent to which the employee feels the fairness of the method and treatment of those responsible for distributing these returns. Shatnawy and Al-Oqla (2013) explain that interactional justice is an extension to the procedural justice dimension and is mainly related to the method of employees' treatment by the leader. Al-Habashi et al (2021), argue that procedural justice occurs when the employee realizes that his/her treatment within the organization is characterized by respect. Procedural justice is built on five principles: unity of command, discipline, initiative, common interest, and the team spirit; Unity of Command: Orders come from only one authority per employee; Discipline: Penalties and punishments must be applied to everyone without discrimination, and shall be inflicted with sound procedures that guarantee the rights of workers.; Initiative: the spirit of creativity are among the important qualities that leaders spread and encourage employees to adopt; Common Interest: unification of the employee's efforts to achieve a common interest; Team spirit: raise the level team work team to unify its members' efforts and stimulate their enthusiasm towards achieving the desired goals (Al-Khudairi, 2019). The overlap and integration of the three dimensions of OJ has become crystal clear. There is a close link between these dimensions on the one hand, and between them and high performance and job satisfaction in universities on the other hand, especially when the staff and faculty members feel the fairness of the returns they receive, the fairness of the procedures applied, and the fairness of treatment demonstrated by their bosses (Addai et al., 2018). However, the absence of these three dimensions results in the low level of performance the emergence of negative organizational manifestations such as the weak participation of faculty members in decision-making, weak job descriptions, lack of



attention to employee complaints and grievances, nomination of unqualified academic leaders, and lack of trust between the faculty members and the leaders of universities (Al-Khudairi, 2019).

## Methodology

### Population and sample

The population of this study was all full-time faculty members employed at IAU during the academic year 2021/ 2022. Using a list provided by the Deanship of faculty and Personnel Affairs at the university, the researchers the study population totaled (N=3195). Relying on the table of Kirjesi and Morgan, the sample size was determined to be 376 members, selected according to the simple random method (Al-Khalili, 2012). Both the completion and the response rate were 100%. Table (1) below shows the demographics of the study sample.

**Table (1): Demographic data of the study sample**

Variable	Categories	No.	Percentage
Gender of participant	Male	153	41 %
	Female	223	59%
Gender of departmental chair	Male	160	43%
	Female	216	57%
Academic rank	Professor	34	9%
	Associate professor	48	13%
	Assistant professor	165	44%
	Lecturer	129	34%
Years of service	Less than five years	55	15%
	five to less than ten	126	33%
	less than fifteen	91	24%
	Fifteen years and above	104	28%
Total		376	100%

Table (1) shows that the majority of respondents are females representing (59%) of the sample compared to (41%) are males. Most of the respondents report to a female departmental chair representing (57%) of the sample compared to (43%) who report to a male department chairs. The table also shows that most of the respondents occupy the rank of assistant professor (44%), and most are with 5 to less than 10 years of service (33%).

### Study instrument:

The descriptive correlative approach with a survey research design was used to address the objectives of this study. A fully structured questionnaire has been developed and used as a tool for collecting the primary data of this study. After an extensive review of related literature, in particular, the work of Abd-ALMajid and Rakha (2018), Saad and Abu Karim (2019), and Al-Qarni (2020), statements for the section on AT were developed; while studies of Al-Sharif

(2017), Al-Khudairi (2019), Al-Anzi (2019), and Al-Madawi and Muhammad (2020) were used to develop statements for the section on OJ. The questionnaire included:

**Section I. Respondents were asked about demographic characteristics** such as (gender, gender of their departmental chair, academic rank, and years of service).

**Section II. Administrative Transparency (AT):** It consists of (18) statements describing departmental chairs' practices on AT, divided into three areas (Administrative communication with (6) statements, rules & regulations with (6) statements, faculty evaluation & appraisal with (6) statements).

Sample statements related to "administrative communication" included: "encourage faculty members' provide suggestions and express opinions", "conveys the opinions and needs of faculty members to the upper leaderships", "provides multiple and open channels of communication", "facilitates access to the information and data upon request". While sample statements related to "rules and regulations" included: "Defines the tasks and duties accurately as stated in the job description", "encourage faculty participation in reviewing the policies and regulations governing the work", "provide procedural guidelines regulating the workflow". And sample statements related to "faculty performance evaluation" included: "explains the standards, procedures regarding the performance evaluation program", "gives constructive feedback on the evaluation process", "accepts appeals against the evaluation results"...

**Section III. Organizational Justice:** It consists of 14 statements describing departmental chair practices supporting OJ, divided into 3 areas (distributive justice included 5 statements, procedural justice with 5 statements, interactional justice with 4 statements). Statements related to "distributive justice" included: 'Allows equal opportunities for professional development programs', 'adopts a fair appraisal/ reward system', 'equal distribution of work load among faculty members', 'facilitates faculty academic promotion within the governing regulations', 'nominates faculty to opportunities for leadership positions based on qualifications'. And statements related to "procedural justice" included: 'Encourage faculty to make all decisions about their work', 'applies work policies and regulations without favoritism or discrimination', 'clarifies all inquiries on work issues'. While sample statements related to "interactional justice" included: 'Express high standard and expectations from all faculty members', 'takes all opinions and suggestions seriously', 'act as a mentor and guide when needed', 'tolerate mistakes and considers them learning opportunities', 'provides individual considerations to work problems and special circumstances'....

The participants' responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale, with the upper level (5) allocated for strongly agree and the lowest (1) for strongly disagree. In order to determine the scores for each category, the range was measured through the largest and lowest value  $5-1 = 4$ , then the length of the category was calculated for all categories of the scale, which are five categories, i.e.  $4/5 = 0.80$ . The grades of the categories are as follows:

**Table (2): measures of the study scale**

Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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>4.20 – 5	>3.40 -4.20	>2.60 – 3.40	>1.80 – 2.60	1 – 1.80
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### **Validity and reliability**

The instrument was authorized by a group of 8 experienced reviewers, specialized in educational management/ leadership at IAU, King Saud university, and King Faisal University. After expressing their opinions on the suitability of the statements and to its relevance and clarity, the necessary changes and modifications were introduced to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then piloted on a convenience sample of (30) faculty members (other than the sampled participants); they were asked to report any problems during completion of the survey; their responses were analyzed. The Pearson correlation was calculated to examine the validity of the questionnaire; it ranged for AT between (0.893-0.948) and for OJ between (0.906-0.967), which gives a high indication of reliability. The significance level was set at (0.01). The Cronbach's alpha was calculated to examine the reliability of the instrument, its coefficient was (0.990) for OJ, and (0.983) for AT, and for overall instrument it reached (0.992). All these results prove that the research instrument is valid for the present study.

### **Study Procedures:**

After ensuring the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, an ethical approval certificate was obtained from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at IAU. Following that, the sample were sent an e-mail by the Vice President of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research at IAU to facilitate the researchers' mission; afterwards the research questionnaire was circulated via IAU intra-net while assuring their private and voluntary participation. The responses were gathered in 6 weeks, with two reminders two weeks apart.

### **Statistical methods:**

All data of this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) as per the following methods and steps:

- Descriptive tests: means, standard deviations, percentages were calculated.
- Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to calculate the internal consistency of the questionnaire.
- Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to calculate the stability coefficient of the questionnaire.
- The non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was conducted as an alternative to the t-test to discover the results of the third and fourth questions. This was done after verifying the normal data distribution using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.
- The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to find out the trends of the differences lie in favor of which variable.
- The data was statistically processed using the Spearman correlation coefficient to figure out the strength of the correlation between the two variables, and the answer the fifth question.

## Findings

### RQ1: What is the level of AT practices by department chairs at IAU?

Table (3): The mean, standard deviations of AT practices of chairs of IAU (n=376)

Area	Mean	SD	Level
Administrative communication	4.06	1.02	High
Laws and regulations	4.00	1.05	High
Faculty performance appraisal	3.82	1.14	High
Overall mean	3.96	1.02	High

Table (3) shows that the level of AT practiced by the chairs of IAU academic departments as perceived by the respondents ranged between (4.19-3.74) for all three areas (administrative communication, rules and regulations, and faculty performance appraisal). The overall results show a high level of AT with a mean of (3.96) and a SD of (1.02). Table (3) shows that “administrative communication” achieved the highest level of transparency with an average of (4.06), while “faculty performance appraisal” scored lowest with an average of (3.82).

### RQ2: What is the level of OJ practices by department chairs at IAU?

Table (4): The mean and the standard deviation of practicing OJ by the chairs of IAU (n=376)

Area	Mean	SD	Level
Interactional justice	4.03	1.16	High
Procedural justice	3.95	1.14	High
Distribution justice	3.75	1.17	High
Overall mean	3.91	1.12	High

Table (4) shows that the level of practices related to OJ were high with an overall mean (3.91) and a SD of (1.12). The highest ranked area of OJ was due to practices related to “interactional justice”, followed by practices related to “procedural justice”, and last were practices related to the “distributive justice” area. However, the mean values for all three areas of OJ were at a high level and means ranging between (4.03 - 3.75).

### RQ3: Are there statistically significant differences of AT practices due to (respondents' gender, department chairs' gender, academic rank, and years of service)?

To begin the process of checking the differences, the normal distribution of the data was verified by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results obtained are as follows:

Table (5): The results of data normal distribution test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Z-value	Df	P-value
AT	0.155	376	.000

OJ	0.165	376	.000
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\*\* Statistically significant at the level of significance (0.01).

The results in Table (5) show that the values of Kolmogorov-Smirnov coefficient reached (0.155) for AT variable, and (0.165) for the OJ. The two values are statistically significant at the significance level of (0.01). This indicates that the data does not follow a normal distribution and due to this fact, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney test will be used as an alternative to the T-test.

1. AT according to gender

Table (6): The results of the Mann-Whitney test for the difference in AT practice according to gender of Faculty members and gender of department chair.

AT areas		Faculty members M=153, F=223				Departmental chair M=160, F=216			
		Mean	SD	U-value	P-value	Mean	SD	U-value	P-value
Administrative Communication	Male	4.01	0.988	15676.500	0.177	3.89	1.113	14388.500	0.005**
	Female	4.09	1.049			4.19	0.935		
Laws and regulations	Male	3.97	1.028	16111.000	0.355	3.79	1.157	13904.500	0.001**
	Female	4.02	1.076			4.15	0.947		
Performance appraisal	Male	3.71	1.138	15252.500	0.079	3.57	1.203	13612.000	0.000**
	Female	3.89	1.141			4.00	1.061		
Total	Male	3.90	1.010	15737.000	0.200	3.75	1.118	13874.500	0.001**
	Female	4.00	1.031			4.11	0.921		

\*\* Statistically significant at the level of significance (0.01).

The results in Table (6) show a couple of results; first, there are statistically significant differences in the level of AT practices due the department chairs' gender (U-value=13874.500; p-value<0.01). Table (6) also show that the overall approval on the AT practices was higher

for respondent reporting to female departmental chairs ( $m=4.11$ ) as compared to male chairs ( $m=3.75$ ). Findings also show differences in responses in all three AT areas due to the department chairs' gender; the overall mean of respondents with female chairs scored higher as compared to respondents with male chairs. It appears that the respondents reporting to female chairs have a higher level of approval to the AT practices as compared to respondents reporting to male chairs.

On the other hand, table (6) also reveal that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of AT practices due to faculty members' gender (U-value=15737, p-value>0.01). It appears as if all respondents have similar approval rates on the AT practices regardless of their own gender.

## 2. AT due to academic rank and years of service:

Table (7): The results of the Kruskal–Wallis test for differences in the degree of AT according to academic rank and years of service of the faculty member.

Variable	No.	Mean	SD	$\chi^2$ -value	P-value
Academic rank	Professor	34	3.70	3.996	0.262
	Associate professor	48	3.95		
	Assistant professor	165	4.05		
	Lecturer	129	3.96		
Years of service	Less than five years	55	4.03	5.205	0.157
	From five to less than 10years	126	3.99		
	From 10 to less than 15years	91	3.71		
	15 years and above	104	4.10		
	Total	376			

\*\* Statistically significant at the level of significance (0.01).

Table (7) results show no statistically significant differences in the level of AT practices among department chairs at IAU, which can be attributed to the respondents academic rank ( $\chi^2$ -value=3.996; p-value>0.01). Table (7) also show no statistically significant differences in the level of AT practices among department chairs at IAU, which can be attributed to respondents' number of years of service ( $\chi^2$ -Value=5.205; p-value>0.01). ). It appears as if all respondents have similar approval rates on the AT practices regardless of their academic rank or their number of years in working at IAU.

**RQ4: Are there statistically significant differences of OJ practices of department chairs due to respondents' gender, department chairs' gender, academic rank, and years of service?**

1. OJ according to gender

Table (8): The results of the Mann-Whitney test for the difference in OJ according to the gender (Faculty member, departmental chair).

OJ areas		Faculty members M=153; F=223				Departmental chair M=160; F=216			
		Mean	SD	U-value	P-value	Mean	SD	U-value	P-value
Distributive justice	Male	3.75	1.148	17009.000	0.961	3.59	1.249	15189.500	0.044**
	Female	3.74	1.182			3.86	1.092		
Procedural justice	Male	3.91	1.116	16048.500	0.323	3.75	1.248	14365.500	0.044**
	Female	3.97	1.159			4.10	1.033		
Interactional justice	Male	4.00	1.138	15898.500	0.250	3.86	1.291	15157.000	0.037**
	Female	4.05	1.181			4.16	1.042		
Total	Male	3.89	1.104	16416.500	0.533	3.73	1.234	14827.000	0.018**
	Female	3.92	1.129			4.04	1.005		

\*\* Statistically significant at the level of significance (0.01).

Table (8) shows a statistically significant difference in the level of OJ practices among the chairs of IAU academic departments attributed to the gender of the departmental chair ( $\chi^2$ -value=14827; p-value<0.01). Table (8) also shows that the overall approval on practices leading to OJ was higher for respondent reporting to female departmental chairs (m=4.16) as compared to male chairs (m=3.73). Findings also show significant statistical differences in responses in all three OJ areas due to the department chairs' gender; the overall mean of respondents with female chairs scored higher as compared to respondents with male chairs. It appears that respondents reporting to female chairs have a higher level of approval to the OJ practices as compared to respondents reporting to male chairs.

On the other hand, table (8) also reveal that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of OJ practices due to faculty members' gender (U-value=15737, p-value>0.01). It appears as if all respondents have similar approval rates on the OJ practices regardless of their own gender.

2. OJ according to academic rank and years of service:

Table (9): The results of the Kruskal–Wallis test for the difference in OJ according to academic rank of the faculty member and years of service N=376.

		No.	Mean	SD	$\chi^2$ -value	P-value
Academic rank	Professor	34	3.58	1.358	2.025	0.567
	Associate professor	48	3.97	1.158		
	Assistant professor	165	3.93	1.117		
	Lecturer	129	3.94	1.029		
Years of service	Less than five years	55	4.07	0.930	5.205	0.157
	From five to less than 10years	126	3.91	1.044		
	From 10 to less than 15years	91	3.69	1.309		
	15 years and above	104	4.00	1.098		

\*\* Statistically significant at the level of significance (0.01).

After making sure that the data does not follow a normal distribution, the Kruskal–Wallis test was utilized to test for statistical differences in the response. Table (9) results show no statistically significant differences in the level of OJ practices among department chairs at IAU, which can be attributed to the respondents academic rank ( $\chi^2$  -value=2.025; p-value>0.01). Table (9) also show no statistically significant differences in the level of OJ practices among department chairs at IAU, which can be attributed to respondents’ number of years of service ( $\chi^2$  -Value=5.205; p-value>0.01). It appears as if all respondents have similar approval rates on the OJ practices regardless of their academic rank or their number of years working at IAU.

**RQ5: Is there a statistically significant correlation between AT and OJ at IAU?**

Table (10): Spearman's correlation coefficient for the correlation of AT and OJ in IAU N=376.

Areas of AT		Areas of OJ			Total OJ
		Distributive justice	Procedural justice	Interactional justice	
Administrative communication	r-value	**0.833	**0.884	**0.852	**0.897
	p- value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Rules and regulations	r-value	**0.850	**0.858	**0.809	**0.897
	p- value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Evaluating the performance of faculty members	r-value	**0.785	**0.798	**0.772	**0.819
	p- value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total AT	R-value	**0.869	**0.906	**0.872	**0.908
	p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

\*\* level of significance is statistically significant at <0.01



The non-parametric Spearman coefficient test was used here because the data do not follow a normal distribution. The results in table (10) reveal a highly significant correlation between AT and OJ in all its areas. Findings reveal the overall AT is highly correlated with the overall OJ (r-value=0.908; p-value<0.01). Among the three areas of AT, the highest correlation was found in both “administrative communication” and “rules and regulation” with similar r-values=0.897; p-values<0.001), followed by “evaluating the performance of faculty members” (r-value=0.819; p-value<0.01). On the other hand, among all three areas of OJ, the highest correlation was found in “procedural justice“, followed by “interactional justice”, and last “distributive justice”, with r-values (0.906, 0.872, 0.869) respectively, and p<0.01 for all three areas.

### **Discussion of results**

Adopting AT practices by leaders and making this transparency a well-established culture through the clarity of all transactions, accessibility of all needed data and information, activation of direct and indirect communication channels have been suggested to have powerful influence on the overall performance of faculty and the educational institutions. This study provides an empirical investigation of the level of AT practices and OJ among academic departmental chairs, investigating the correlation between AT and OJ, as well as exploring whether the respondents gender, academic rank, years of experience, and their own chairs’ gender affects the strength of the TL and OJ practices at IAU from the viewpoint of the faculty members at IAU. The most prominent results of this study are:

- The level of AT practiced by the chairs of academic departments at IAU is high with a mean average of 3.96; specifically high levels of AT practices were reported in its three areas, “administrative communication”, “rules and regulations”, and “faculty performance appraisal”, with means of 4.06, 4.00, and 3.82 respectively. This result falls in line with findings of Crisan (2016), Al-Hindi et al (2019), Al-Mousa (2017) and Al-Qarni (2020). Many previous research in different educational settings have concurred the importance of the existence of clear, transparent, and high standards of policies and procedures in all work aspects with Al-Ghamdi (2018) and Al-Toub (2019) .These reported high levels of AT may reflect an overall positive relationship between the chairs and their faculty at IAU, which is a promising indicator of the university’s efforts in achieving the goals of the Kingdom’s Vision-2030 that highlights the importance of creating a work environment characterized by transparency and integrity.
- The level of OJ practiced by the chairs of academic departments at IAU is high with a mean average of 3.91; specifically high levels of OJ practices were reported in its three areas, “distributive justice”, “procedural justice”, and “interactional justice” with means of 4.03, 3.95 and 3.75 respectively. This finding is similar to the results of Al-Otaibi (2021), and Al-Anzi (2019). Other studies showed a medium level of OJ, which may be attributed to the difference in the samples and settings. For example, Al-Khudairi (2019) and Al-Mutairi (2018) dealt with OJ in the Saudi universities in general, while Al-Ghamdi (2018) tackled the issue at the College of Education at Al-Baha University, and Al-Amri and Al-Thubaiti (2016) tackled OJ in relation to the employees of Tabuk University, while Abdel-Fattah (2016) investigated OJ in the preparatory year of the same university; and Al-Sharif (2017)

addressed OJ from the viewpoint of the retired faculty members. These extensive investigations of OJ in different university settings reveal awareness towards the importance of enhancing the spread of trust and loyalty among faculties. The high level of OJ reported in this study may reflect encouraging practices that aims to protect the rights of faculty members, and to encourage them to be involved in the decision-making processes regarding different aspects of their work, which is according to Al-Khudairi (2019) a guarantee to raise their satisfaction and enhance the sense of justice and integrity in the university environment.

- There are statistically significant differences in the reported levels of AT and OJ practices due to department chairs' gender, (U-value=1387.500; p-value=<0.01), and ( $\chi^2$ -value=14827; p-value<0.01) respectively, in favor of the female chairpersons. It may appear as if the respondents reporting to female chairs have higher levels of approval to their AT as well as their OJ practices. These results show that female leaders in IAU acquire the needed professional skills and qualities to pursue their leadership duties and responsibilities in a fair and just matter equal to their male counterparts or even slightly better. This result is similar to previous empirical investigations that suggested that Saudi universities should have more women in leadership positions, specially, since academic women remain underrepresented in leadership roles at IAU, less than 13% (Bin Bakr and Alfayez, 2021, and Bin Bakr, 2021). This finding confirms what was previously mentioned that Saudi universities need to close the gap in gender representation in upper-leadership roles, in order to be effective and be on the way to fulfill the Kingdoms' Vision 2030 which emphasized the importance of making university leadership inclusive of qualified professionals of both genders.
- There are no statistically significant differences in the level of AT and OJ practices based on the faculty member's gender, academic rank and years of service at IAU (U-value=15737, p-value>0.01), and ( $\chi^2$  -value=2.025; p-value>0.01) respectively. This finding reveal that all respondents have similar high approval rates on the AT and OJ practices, which may reflect the existence of uniform laws and regulations, and practices that apply equally to all faculty members' affairs including their recruitment, appointment, promotion, and financial benefits.
- There is a high positive correlation (r-value= 0.908, p < 0.01) between the AT and OJ practices in all areas investigated in both variables. The importance of this correlation is assured by many previous empirical findings that highlighted the effect of having a transparent and just work environment and confirmed its positive affect on making the faculty feel valuable and realize that their ideas and efforts are appreciated by their superiors, thus, motivating them to accomplish more than what is expected, and having just leadership that is keen on aligning faculty members' personal goals with their institutions' goals is a crucial matter that cannot be achieved without working in a transparent environment (Al-Shammari and Al-Mansour, 2015; Al-Toub, 2019; Abdel-Fattah, 2016; Mahmoud and Al-Ali, 2018; Al-Mousa, 2017; Al-Hindi et al., 2019).

## Conclusion

AT and OJ practices have been suggested to have a powerful influence on the overall performance of faculty members, academic departments, and universities. Many empirical

studies have argued that transparency has become a basic principle of effective leadership and found a strong significant relationship between transparency and achieving integrity, reducing opacity, and realizing organizational justice, which in return help protect against any abuse or corrupt practices (Abd- Almajid and Rakha, 2018; Al-Qahtani, 2019; Mustafa, 2017; Almeida et al., 2018; Volkov, 2015). This study contributes to the literature by providing an empirical investigation on AT and OJ practices among academic departmental chairs, investigating the correlation between both variables, as well as exploring whether the respondents' personal characteristics affects the strength of these practices. This study has revealed an overall high level of AT and OJ at the academic departments in IAU, it further shows a high positive significance relationship between AT and OJ, and finally, it suggests that women leaders are as effective as their male counterparts in assuring a transparent and just culture. The following recommendations are provided to the upper decision maker at IAU to enhance the level of AT and OJ practices:

- Increase the empowerment of female faculty members in upper-leadership positions, thus, enhancing their contribution in reviewing and developing the rules and regulations in relation to AT and OJ practices.
- Encourage department chairpersons to become creative in expanding the scope and channels of communications among their faculty members to secure strong participation in all decisions making processes.
- Act as strong role models for transparent and justifiable practices, adopting high standards of ethical conduct, disclosure, and credibility to become Deeply admired, respected, trusted by followers who will want to emulate them.
- Adoption of a clear and strong accountability system need to be implemented at all levels of IAU leadership.
- Faculty members need to participate in the periodical reviews of the rules and regulations governing their affairs, thus insuring the clarity of all work-related policies and procedures at IAU.
- Partnerships with the institutions concerned with securing transparency and academic justice need to be enhanced at the local, national, and international levels, such as the National Center for Assessment and Academic Accreditation (NCAAA)...
- Annual faculty evaluation systems should include aspects of transparency conduct and link these evaluation processes to annual award systems concerned with fairness and just practices.

### **Limitations**

The following are some of the study limitations:

- The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022; further longitudinal studies to be conducted to learn how and why if changes took place regarding AT, as different leadership posts are being re-appointed every 2-4 years at IAU.
- This study was carried out at IAU in the Eastern Region of Saudi Arabia, further studies with a bigger sample including other universities from different regions in Saudi Arabia, so that the results could be more representative.

- The areas investigated for AT included the following: administrative communication, laws and regulations, and the faculty performance appraisal; and areas investigated for OJ included: distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice. Other areas may be considered for future investigations.
- A single quantitative approach was used, future studies may consider using mixed-method research that includes interviews and/or observation in order to overcome any possible common-method bias.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interests was reported by the authors. The study was guided by a set of ethical considerations set by IAU. The protection of the privacy and confidentiality of respondents has been ensured, and their voluntary participation was highly respected and prioritised by the researchers.

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