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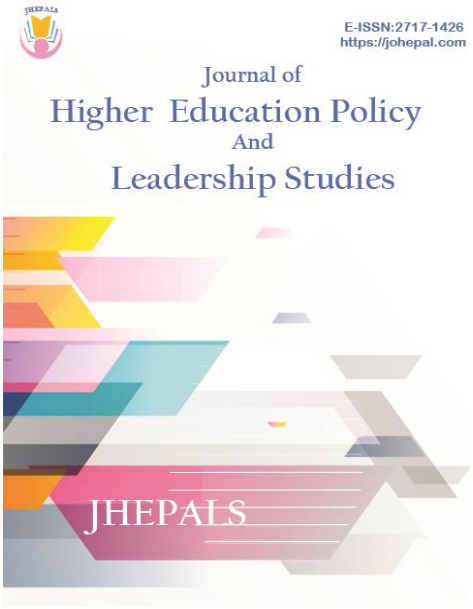

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand how students understand the different types of classroom justice and how these understandings impact overall satisfaction. This study looks at 350 students from different Moroccan universities. The results show that students understand justice in an inter-relational dimension. The participants expressed an understanding of how relational justice influenced their satisfaction and motivation. In terms of students' understandings of justice and related processes, rules viewed by students as excessively controlling and arbitrary had no bearing on students' overall satisfaction and envisioning of fairness in the situation. Concerning students' perceptions of justice in the classroom from a distributive justice perspective, the results demonstrated a weak or non-significant relationship with satisfaction levels, meaning the fairness or lack thereof in the distribution of outcomes seemed to have a smaller impact on students' perceptions of justice within the classroom context. This became more evident in the regression analysis, where interactional justice was found to be the best determinant of student satisfaction in the presence of the other dimensions of justice. The study illustrates how positive teacher-student relationships with transparency, respect, and fairness in instructional strategies impact student satisfaction. The study also advocates for improvements in the organizational practices to close the equity gaps and increase respect and openness.

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Keywords: Classroom Justice; Distributive Justice; Interactional Justice; Moroccan Higher Education; Procedural Justice; Student Satisfaction

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Introduction

Justice has been considered a cornerstone of the value system of social and institutional relations. Justice helps people understand the principles of dignity, fairness and equal treatment. Psychological and organizational research has shown that justice impacts people's motivation, well-being, and sense of belonging (Adams, 1965; Bies & Moag, 1986; Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). The issue of fairness in educational contexts has attracted scholarly attention since students certainly interpret, assess, and respond to the treatment they receive in classroom interactions. More recent studies show the significance of fairness as a fundamental precondition for the establishment of a positive and supportive educational atmosphere. As an example, Molinari and Mameli (2018) rightly state that justice is more than a moral value that is needed in the study atmosphere. It is a fundamental psychological prerequisite for motivation and engagement. Hence, classroom justice has become a vital concept in educational studies, which aim to examine students' perceptions of justice within the educational milieu.

Many studies have looked into how education (i.e. social justice, antiracism, etc.) affects students' perception of social justice in the classroom (Estaji et al., 2023; Zhaleh & Estaji, 2025). Students' academic performance, participation, and motivation are correlated with perceptions, experiences, and social justice integration in the classroom (Estaji et al., 2023; Zhaleh & Estaji, 2025). The perception of fairness in justice systems leads to satisfaction, whereas injustice perceptions result in discontent with the institutional frameworks and the decisions made, withdrawal, and dropout (Grazia, 2023; Wood, 2017). Along with problems students might have, classroom systems of justice correlate with problems students have with their emotions. Classroom interactions characterized by respect, open-door communication, and consistency can increase students' feelings of trust and safety and strengthen their sense of belonging (Chory, 2023; Horan et al., 2010). However, consistent application of inequitable practices, insubstantial control, and changes in rules and procedures can cause students anxiety, frustration, and unwillingness to engage and sustain effort. Classroom justice benefits students and teachers as well. Teachers, classed as fair by students, obtain, according to Chory and Offstein (2017), greater fairness, credibility, teaching efficacy, and relational trust with students, which reduces conflict and disruptive behaviour and enhances the classroom climate.

Despite the waves of reforms that Moroccan higher education has undergone, it still struggles with profound structural difficulties that raise persistent concerns about quality and equity (World Bank, 2023). Houssami (2024) argues that, among other factors, the role of universities is affected by outdated curriculum, rigidity, and the enduring mismatch between university education and the needs of the labour market. There is a governance issue as well, as public universities operate under strict administrative and financial constraints. In this case, central authorities are said to limit the autonomy of the institutions, causing a stall in strategic planning (Mkharbcha & Taouab, 2023). Pedagogically, the massification and the under-resourcing, including in open-access universities, reinforce the inequities and block substantive learning (Jaida & Haoucha, 2025). The reliance on summative evaluation and the opacity around evaluation processes are also prominent features of the Moroccan higher education context (El Hadari & Khartite, 2024). All this reinforces inequities and is detrimental to formative learning.

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Classroom Justice in Moroccan HE

As with other issues, the higher education system in Morocco has focused on structural and pedagogical issues, while assuming that there are no significant gaps in what students themselves perceive with regard to their classroom experiences, particularly from the pedagogical perspective. That focus on the structural, administrative, or curricular issues does not, on its own, assist understanding of the systemic issues that are at play and how they shape students' perceptions of fairness in their learning environments. In particular, no empirical work has investigated students' perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice in Moroccan university classrooms, despite the relevance of these dimensions to student engagement, motivation, and satisfaction demonstrated in international research. Educational inequalities exist alongside inequitable circumstances, haphazard assessment practices, insufficient feedback, and deficient teaching and learning conditions. It is for these reasons that the current study aims to fill the gap by studying how students at Moroccan universities perceive justice in the classroom, and how such perceptions affect the students' satisfaction level with the educational experience. In the context of Moroccan higher education, these perceptions are critical to the ongoing efforts for reform and the implementation of equitable, transparent, and student-centred approaches to teaching.

Literature Review

In the United States, industrial-organizational psychology, organisational behaviour, and management theory and research served as the first foundation for classroom justice theory and research (Chory-Assad, 2002; Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004). Fairness has grown in importance as a research issue (Chory & Horan, 2018, 2022; Chory et al., 2017; Chory & Offstein, 2017; Chory et al., 2022). Classroom justice is the study of equity in the educational setting (Chory-Assad, 2002). According to Peter and Dalbert (2010), teacher justice refers to the subjective belief held by students that they receive fair and courteous treatment from their teachers throughout regular interactions. Along with the demands for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000), teacher justice has recently been conceived as a fundamental psychological need for students (Molinari & Mameli, 2018).

Numerous studies have focused on how students perceive justice in the classroom and how that perception relates to their academic performance and behavioral/affective responses (Rasooli et al., 2018). According to Chory (2023), classroom justice principles are the guidelines, standards, norms, or criteria used to assess how fair an educational activity or outcome is. Classroom justice describes how students feel about the fairness of the procedures, outcomes, and interactions with instructors (Chory, 2007; Chory-Assad, 2002; Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004b).

According to Chory (2023), those who see fairness among their instructors experience and report greater levels of learning and engagement. This was also the case in previous studies, which have connected justice perceptions to favourable academic behaviors and attitudes (Berti et al., 2010; Chory et al., 2017; Chory-Assad, 2002; Di Battista et al., 2014; Holmgren & Bolkan, 2014; Horan et al., 2010; Horan et al., 2012; Vallade et al., 2014). Fairness has also been highlighted, and rightfully so, in the standards and practices of classroom assessments as being an essential and critical element of an assessor's assessment literacy (DeLuca, 2012; DeLuca et al., 2016; Xu & Brown, 2016; Rasooli et al., 2018).

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Rasooli et al. (2019) suggested that fairness has recently moved into the spotlight as a core foundation of classroom assessment. Eight major themes that define fairness were identified by Rasooli et al. (2018) in their comprehensive review of classroom fairness: pedagogy, students' views on fairness, distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, sex bias, group projects and peer evaluation, and instructional accommodations. For Rasooli et al. (2019, p. 8):

> The review of fairness definitions suggests that few classroom assessment studies have attempted to explicitly define fairness; fairness has been equivocally defined, and fuzziness abounds in the distinctions between fairness and related keywords; and classroom assessment researchers seem to be predominantly concerned with the assessment dimension of fairness, with few studies reaching beyond the assessment domain to define fairness for classroom assessment contexts'.

According to Chory (2023), classroom justice affects student learning, the atmosphere in the classroom, and the well-being of both teachers and students. Positively, learning and the relationship between students and teachers are generally improved when students perceive that the classroom is equitable. Chory (2023) argues that fairness in the higher education classroom relates to several important educational experiences and outcomes. University lecturers who apply fair procedures tend to enhance student learning and improve their relationships with students, whereas those who violate justice expectations are more likely to negatively affect student achievement and relationships. Procedural and distributive justice judgements are the two main categories. Interactional justice has been suggested as another form of justice (Bies & Moag, 1986). Equity theory served as the foundational framework for distributive justice research (e.g., Adams, 1965). Throughout the literature, concepts such as justice and fairness are employed interchangeably.

According to Kazemi et al. (2008), retributive justice is closely connected to equity-based distributive justice, as it seeks to restore balance by compensating victims of rule violations for the losses they have incurred. Thibaut and Walker (1975) started the study of procedural justice by examining when and why people turn to third parties and contrasting adversarial and inquisitorial conflict settlement processes. According to Kazemi et al. (2008), the perceived fairness of the decision-making process used to decide the results is the focus of procedural justice research. In contrast to the formal procedures that are the focus of procedural justice research, interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986) refers to fairness associated with the interpersonal treatment received during the implementation of decision-making procedures.

Distributive Justice

According to equity theory (Adams, 1965), distributive justice judgments are formed in two steps: first, people carefully analyze the ratio of their own pertinent input to their output, and then they compare this ratio to a referent's input to outcome ratio. Because it outlines three interconnected processes by which justice judgments are made, fairness theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001) can be seen as an extension of referent cognitions theory. According to Zhaleh and Estaji (2025), distributive justice is based on the three principles of

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equality, fairness, and need, which suggest that educators should allocate resources according to each student's unique requirements, performance, and consistency.

Distributive justice is a complex concept in the classroom that describes how students perceive the fairness of outcomes. Understanding of distributive justice is shaped by educational research, theories of equity, and theories of fairness. It does not matter how these theories are merged in terms of need, equality, or justice. What matters the most is how they advocate for the economic distribution of educational resources and their positive impact on fostering meaningful learning, maintaining positive working conditions, and building a positive rapport.

Procedural Justice

The theory of procedural justice focuses on how individuals view fairness with respect to the rules and decisions that govern the distribution of resources over the course of a series of transactions. The eight principles of procedural justice, according to Zhaleh and Estaji (2025), are consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, voice, ethicality, correctability, transparency and reasonableness. Application of these principles should lead teachers to equally and fairly, based on sufficient information, ethical grounds, and student input, make reasonable classroom rules and procedures that can be changed if required.

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice is the perception of fairness regarding the relaying of information and social relations; high interactional justice is marked by showing concern and care when communicating. It leads to the feeling of inclusion and welcoming by others into an environment and involves sharing appropriate information. Chory-Assad (2002) explains interactional justice through two facets. The first is the delivery of information in an open and complete fashion, and the second is the delivery of information in a respectful manner. Zhaleh and Estaji (2025) describe the three principles of the informational aspect of interactional justice as communicating timely, truthful, and justified/sufficient information, and the three principles of the interpersonal aspect as showing respect, propriety, and care.

Student Satisfaction

Recent studies suggest that motivational factors are key considerations in understanding student success, and perhaps the most important factor in students' ongoing success. Higher satisfaction levels lead to greater acquisition of knowledge and proficiency in skills (Malik et al., 2010), while students' evaluations of the quality of (or satisfaction with) their educational experiences are, according to Letcher and Neves (2010), pivotal in determining the satisfaction level. Besides motivation, students' satisfaction levels also depend on their perceptions of the fairness (or justice) of the classroom. In studies on classroom justice, it has been shown that students' evaluations of their educational experiences are significantly affected by the distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (or fairness) of the classroom (Chory, 2007; Zhaleh & Estaji, 2025). Students are more inclined to satisfaction and/or active participation when they believe that they are treated with dignity, classroom rules are applied consistently and in a transparent manner, and when results, especially marks, are allocated in a fair manner. The link between students' perceptions of justice and

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satisfaction shows that fairness is, beyond being a moral value, a practical factor of success, motivation, and persistence.

In summary, while distributive, procedural, and interactional justice are interconnected, fairness in the classroom has led some scholars to treat these issues as separate entities (Chory, 2007). In the view of Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004b), procedural justice refers to the fairness and transparency of students' perceptions of the decision-making processes involved in the allocation of resources, while distributive justice has to do with the fairness of the outcomes. Thus, classroom justice is a multidimensional construct which involves distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions. Distributive justice, often viewed in terms of equity, equality, and need, is concerned with the justness of the outcomes that are distributed. On the contrary, procedural justice hinges more on the justness of the rules and the processes, which involve, but are not limited to, fairness, equity, transparency, and voice (Zhaleh & Estaji, 2025). Interactional justice involves sharing information, treating students with respect and in a civil manner, and caring for them (Chory-Assad, 2002; Zhaleh & Estaji, 2025). All of these things together create a comprehensive framework for how justice perceptions shape students' engagement, motivation, and learning in the university.

The present study aims to empirically examine the relationship between students' perceptions of classroom justice and their overall satisfaction in higher education contexts. Specifically, it seeks to test whether the three dimensions of classroom justice are significant predictors of student satisfaction, both independently and in combination as a global construct of classroom justice.

A considerable body of research has shown that students' perceptions of fairness play a decisive role in shaping both their attitudes toward learning and their broader academic experiences. Using elements of organizational justice theory and integrating it into the classroom (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004b; Estaji et al., 2023; Zhaleh & Estaji, 2025), scholars define classroom justice as including the distributive, procedural, and interactional aspects. This framework enables an examination of fairness in the distribution of outcomes, the fairness (or lack thereof) of the decision makers, and the quality of the interpersonal relationships. Studies show that students with lower perceptions of these aspects of fairness are less likely to benefit in the classroom, including being less likely to be academically engaged, less likely to be motivated, and less likely to trust the learning environment (Grazia et al., 2024; Yan, 2021). Using these theories and studies as a base, this study proposes four hypotheses to determine the impact of classroom justice on students' satisfaction. Specifically, it is hypothesized that distributive, procedural, and interactional justice will each be positively associated with student satisfaction (H1–H3), and that overall perceptions of classroom justice will significantly predict student satisfaction (H4).

- H1: Students' perceptions of distributive justice, defined as the fairness of outcome allocation in the classroom, will be positively associated with their overall satisfaction.
- H2: Students' perceptions of procedural justice, referring to the fairness of rules, procedures, and decision-making processes in the classroom, will be positively associated with their overall satisfaction.

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- **H3:** Students' perceptions of interactional justice, encompassing fairness in teacher–student communication and interpersonal treatment, will be positively associated with their overall satisfaction.
- **H4:** Students' overall perceptions of classroom justice will be positively associated with their overall satisfaction.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Using a quantitative research design, this study examined the theoretical relationship between classroom justice and student satisfaction using a sample of 350 university students from five different disciplines. Perceptions of distributive and procedural justice were assessed with the Classroom Justice Scale (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004b) and perceptions of interactional justice were measured with Chory's (2007) interactional justice scale. The link to the questionnaire was sent to students through their email addresses.

Participants

Through convenience sampling, 350 Moroccan university students were recruited to participate in this study. Participants' demographic information is presented in Table 1. In terms of discipline, students studying social sciences represented the biggest share of the sample (33.1%), followed by science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM; 18%) and law (18%). Students from economics and management also comprised 15.4% each of the sample. Regarding sex, there was a considerably higher proportion of women (58.9%) than men (41.1%) in the sample.

Table 1.
Students' Demographic Information

Demographic information		Percentage
Academic Discipline	STEM	18.0
	Economics	15.4
	Law	18.0
	Management	15.4
	Social Sciences	33.1
Gender	Female	58.9
	Male	41.1

Instruments

The data were adapted and reworded from established Classroom Justice Scales (Chory, 2007; Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004b; Zhaleh et al., 2025) and addresses student's perceptions of fairness in teaching. The original instrument had three subscales (distributive, 13 items; procedural, 17 items; interactional, 8 items), and each was adjusted to the Moroccan higher education context and to reflect students' overall assessments of fairness, as opposed to more specific judgments regarding particular classroom policies and practices. Additionally, a 4-item student satisfaction scale was employed (adapted by the authors from Malik et al., 2010; Letcher & Neves, 2010; Wilson et al., 1997; Castillo, 2017; Yang, 2021). The items fell along a five-point Likert scale, with classroom justice rated 1 = Extremely unfair to 5 = Extremely fair; 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree for student

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satisfaction. The higher the score, the greater the perceived justice and satisfaction. The survey was conducted from April to July 2025.

Data Analysis

We used SPSS (version 27) to examine the relationship between classroom justice and student satisfaction. We first ran the demographic information as well as the responses across the scales to generate descriptive statistics to get an overview of the participants. Reliability was measured through the use of Cronbach's alpha to check how consistent the responses were across the data collection instrument. The factor structures of the Classroom Justice Scales were also used to check for validity. For this purpose, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the Classroom Justice Scales using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. The hypotheses were tested through correlation and regression analysis to see how distributive, procedural and interactional justice as independent variables were able to predict the level of satisfaction of students, which was used as a dependent variable.

Results

Reliability Analysis

The measurement model (Table 2) demonstrated strong psychometric properties for Distributive Justice, Interactional Justice, Procedural Justice and Student Satisfaction, with high factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha (> .96), composite reliability (> .99), and AVE values well above the .50 threshold, confirming excellent reliability and convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019). After examining the procedural justice scale's properties, three items (PJ5: The procedures used to determine my grade were based on good standards, PJ6: The procedures used to determine my grade were fair, and PJ15: The procedures used to determine my grade were flexible when appropriate) were identified as problematic due to low item-total correlations. These items were removed from the subscale during the final analysis to improve internal consistency. The total number of items in our questionnaire was reduced from 42 to 39 items. An exploratory factor analysis (principal component analysis with varimax rotation) was conducted to determine the underlying factor structure of the Classroom Justice Scale, and the factor loadings obtained are provided in Table 2.

Table 2.
Reliability Analysis

Construct	Measurement items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Distributive Justice	DJ1	0.922			
	DJ2	0.922			
	DJ3	0.918			
	DJ4	0.918			
	DJ5	0.925	0.932	0.979	0.778
	DJ6	0.934			
	DJ7	0.920			
	DJ8	0.922			
	DJ9	0.922			

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	DJ10	0.947			
	DJ11	0.941			
	DJ12	0.925			
	DJ13	0.930			
Procedural Justice	PJ1	0.899	0.643	0.971	0.765
	PJ2	0.794			
	PJ3	0.531			
	PJ4	0.987			
	PJ7	0.987			
	PJ8	0.708			
	PJ9	0.966			
	PJ10	0.891			
	PJ11	0.888			
	PJ12	0.658			
	PJ13	0.761			
	PJ14	0.966			
	PJ16	0.897			
	PJ17	0.924			
Interactional Justice	IJ1	0.966	*0.966*	*0.990*	*0.924*
	IJ2	0.966			
	IJ3	0.964			
	IJ4	0.964			
	IJ5	0.955			
	IJ6	0.955			
	IJ7	0.966			
	IJ8	0.955			
Student satisfaction	STS1	0.987	*0.989*	*0.993*	*0.971*
	STS2	0.985			
	STS3	0.985			
	STS4	0.985			

The test of reliability for the total scale of 39 items is Cronbach's alpha = .887 (standardized α = .862), which is above the generally acceptable value of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). This result indicates that the instrument demonstrates good internal consistency, suggesting that the items are measuring a coherent underlying construct and can be considered reliable for subsequent analyses. The scale statistics for the 39-item scale yielded a mean of 154.34, a standard deviation of 11.29, and a variance of 127.61. Such values indicate that the scores of the population from which the data were drawn are homogenous because the mean and scores were closely aligned to one another. Overall, the scale meaningfully captured the participants' perceptions, and the data obtained using it are sufficient to allow for valid inferential statistics to be performed.

Reliability Analysis for Distributive Justice

For Distributive Justice, most items had substantial positive corrected item-total correlations (≥ .76), indicating the items were consistent with the underlying construct of the measure (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2018). The Distributive Justice subscale exhibited excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .93). The scores produced ranged between 13 and 65, with an overall mean of around 50.8 (item-level M = 3.91) and a standard deviation of roughly (2.4), suggestive of moderate variability among the participants. These outcomes demonstrate that the items on the distributive justice scale are functioning reliably and, in fact, reflect a

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unified view of fairness in outcomes among the students. Items DJ6: My grade in this class reflects the exams I have taken. DJ10: My grade in this class reflects the time I have invested, and DJ11: My grade in this class reflects the accuracy of my work. had relatively lower correlations (.456, -.101, and .287, respectively), but deleting them would not have resulted in substantial improvement in reliability, so all 13 items were retained.

Reliability Analysis for Procedural Justice

The Procedural Justice subscale had modest internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .63). The scores obtained ranged between 17 and 85, with an overall mean of around (56.6) (item-level M = 3.43) and a standard deviation varied from 0.26 to 1.09, suggestive of comparatively low variability among the respondents. The item-total statistics indicate lower levels of measurable psychometric performance than that of the other constructs. There are widely varying corrected item-total correlations, with several items demonstrating low or even negative correlations (e.g., PJ2: The procedures used to determine my grade were free of bias = .038; PJ3: The procedures used to determine my grade were applied accurately = -.101; PJ4: The procedures used to determine my grade were ethical = .001), indicating low consistency with the total scale. Some of the items appear to yield negative changes in Cronbach's alpha, indicating a reduction in internal consistency and suggesting that they should be removed. Other items included (PJ9: The procedures used to determine my grade considered my viewpoints and PJ10: The procedures used to determine my grade provided me with information about how the decision was made), demonstrate acceptable correlations (>0.50), while the rest show lower levels of correlation than what would be desirable.

Reliability Analysis for Interactional Justice

The Interactional Justice subscale had a Cronbach's α of (0.97), indicating excellent internal consistency. The scores on this subscale ranged from 8 to 40, with a mean total subscale score of (31.5), the mean score on each item in the subscale was equal to (3.93) and a standard deviation of (3.0), indicating that the scores were spread out, but to a moderate extent. For Interactional Justice, all items have high corrected item-total correlations (.785–.982), confirming strong consistency with the overall construct. Cronbach's alpha remains very high (.966) without any deletions. Notably, some items (IJ5: My instructor showed concern for my rights as a student; IJ6: My instructor provided adequate justification for decisions about my grade; and IJ8: My instructor's explanations regarding my grade were reasonable) demonstrated exceptional correlations (.982), strengthening the case for their retention. Overall, the results suggest that Interactional Justice is not only reliable, but is also measured with a high degree of homogeneity.

Reliability Analysis for Student Satisfaction

The Student Satisfaction scale had a Cronbach's α of (0.99) indicating excellent internal consistency again. The scores on this scale ranged from 4 to 20, with a mean total score on this scale of (15.9), the mean score per item was equal to (3.99) and a standard deviation of (1.6), indicating that the scores were clustered together and did not have much spread and dispersion at all. For Student Satisfaction, all variables have high corrected item-total

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correlations (.968–.974), indicating a solid association with the construct. Cronbach's alpha is high (.987) without any deletions.

Validity Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis results show that six components had eigenvalues greater than 1 and were retained as factors (for Kaiser, 1970, the criteria for extraction and retention of factors are that the eigenvalue > 1): 15,297, 8.472, 6.520, 4.562, 1.572, 1.156). These six components accounted for 96.35% of the variance, with the first four accounting for 84.99% of the variance. After varimax rotation of the 96.35% variance factors, they became interpretable, as the first factor explained 31.22% of the variance, the second, 24.08%, the third, 17.89%, and the fourth, 11.79%, for a cumulative 93.19% of the variance.

The scree plot (Figure 1) corroborates the results of the factor analysis, displaying a sharp decline in eigenvalues across the first four components, after which the curve levels off to form the characteristic "elbow." This pattern suggests that the substantive variance is primarily captured by the first four factors, which together accounted for more than 84% of the cumulative variance.

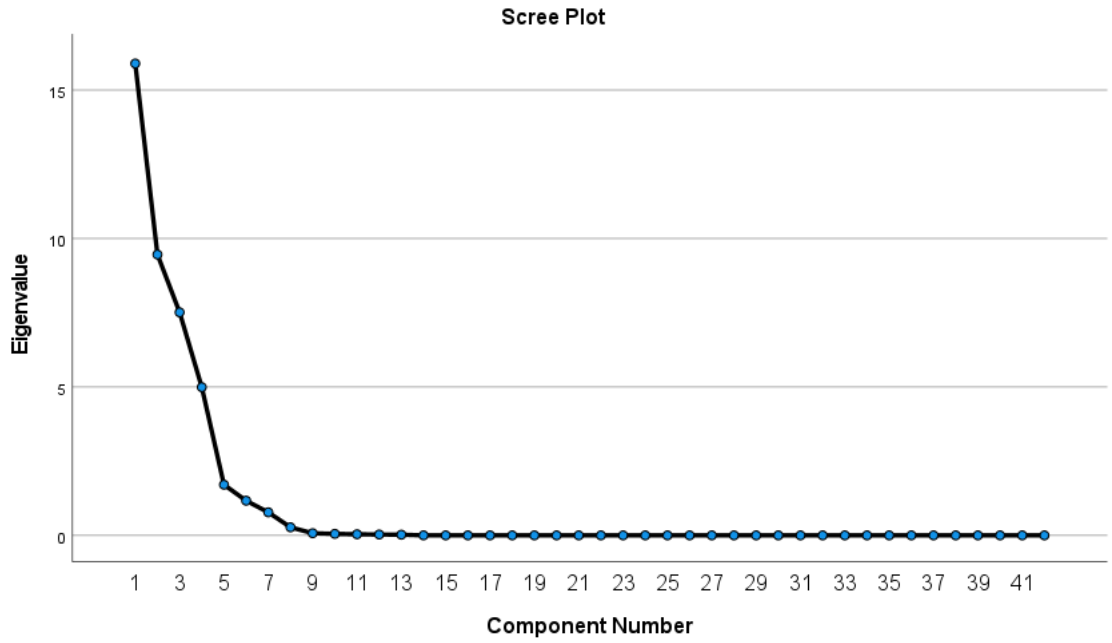

Figure 1. Scree Plot

The Pearson correlation (Table 3) analysis showed distinct patterns of relationships between classroom justice and student satisfaction. Student satisfaction highly positively correlated with interactional justice (r = 0.88, p < .01), which shows that respectful and supportive teacher–student relationships are crucial for satisfaction. Further, distributive justice was correlated with satisfaction at a moderate level (r =0.47, p < .01), which indicates that an equitable distribution of outcomes positively correlates with satisfaction, although perhaps to a lesser degree than satisfaction is correlated with relational factors. On the other hand, procedural justice had a negative correlation with student satisfaction (r = -0.32, p < .01), which shows that satisfaction is limited in this case and fair formal procedural aspects might have an unsatisfying influence.

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Table 3.
Pearson Correlations: Classroom Justice Dimensions and Student Satisfaction

	Distributive Justice	Procedural Justice	Interactional Justice	Student Satisfaction
Distributive Justice	1	-.632**	.342**	.466**
Procedural Justice	-.632**	1	.004	-.327**
Interactional Justice	.342**	.004	1	.881**
Student Satisfaction	.466**	-.327**	.881**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Multiple regression analysis has been applied to assess the predictive relationship between the components of justice and the satisfaction of students. The overall model yielded good fit statistics, $F(3, 346) = 938.90$, $p < .001$, and an $R^2 = .891$. Therefore, the model managed to account for 89.1% of the variance in satisfaction of students ($R^2 = .891$). Unexpectedly, H1 was not supported, distributive justice stands out as a significant and negative predictor ($\beta = –0.095$, $t = –3.71$, $p < .001$), despite a positive correlation with satisfaction at the bivariate level ($r = .466$). This could point to the possibility of suppression along with some other dimensions of justice. H2 was not supported, as there was a negative prediction concerning satisfaction of students and justice of procedures ($\beta = –0.391$, $t = –16.27$, $p < .001$), which contradicts a negative relationship as hypothesized. This indicates that higher perceptions of fairness in classroom procedures are associated with lower student satisfaction. Although such a result contrasts with much of the existing literature, it may reflect contextual factors in the Moroccan educational setting, where formal and standardized procedures, even when perceived as fair, may be viewed as overly rigid or bureaucratic, thereby reducing students' overall satisfaction. H3 was supported, as interactional justice emerged as a strong and positive predictor of student satisfaction ($\beta = 0.916$, $t = 46.10$, $p < .001$). This means that a strong positive predictor relationship exists for interactional justice, signifying the importance of communication that is both respectful and to the point between teachers and students. H4 was partially supported as the total model of classroom justice predicted student satisfaction, but the effects were in different directions across the facets of justice. Only interactional justice had the hypothesized positive relationship.

Table 4.
Summary of Hypotheses Testing Using Multiple Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	Predictor Variable	β	t	p
H1	Distributive Justice	−0.095	−3.71	< .001
H2	Procedural Justice	−0.391	−16.27	< .001
H3	Interactional Justice	0.916	46.10	< .001
H4	Classroom Justice (Model)	—	—	—

Model statistics:
$R^2 = 0.891$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.890$,
$F(3, 346) = 938.90$, $p < .001$

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Findings and Discussion

This research illustrates how Moroccan university students perceive justice in the classroom and how this affects their satisfaction with their educational system. Interactional justice was found to be the most influential dimension that affects Moroccan student satisfaction. In contrast to expectations, procedural justice demonstrated a negative relationship with student satisfaction. The students who perceived classroom procedures as fair were, paradoxically, less satisfied. This finding may suggest that student satisfaction is influenced not just by fairness in processes, but by how well those processes align with relational and contextual expectations within the learning environment. Distributive justice is also important, but has less impact when other justice dimensions are present. Students perceived educational outcomes and procedural justice as less important. They valued justice from a relational perspective.

Overall, the students emotionally reacted the most to the ways the teachers were communicating with them and the interactions that they were having, thus making relational justice the fundamental reason for the students' emotional experiences. Interactional justice was the most influential predictor of student satisfaction due to the encouragement of honest, courteous, and nurturing communication. Students from Morocco emotionally reacted very positively to this structure, trusting, feeling motivated, and respecting the dimension. This aligns with Chory's work (2007, Chory-Assad, 2002) and Chory et al. (2017), as they highlighted the importance of respectful relationships in the improvement of students' academic involvement and satisfaction. Fair relationships and respectful treatment of students were also discussed as being protective of well-being and trust in the classroom by Holmgren and Bolkan (2014), Vallade et al. (2014), and Horan et al. (2010).

The relationship between these findings and love, respect, and dialogue, central to transformative education by Freire (1994) and hooks (2002), is clear and grounded. Looking at Freire's words, "Dialogue cannot exist… in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people" (p. 89), it is easy to see students' needs for transparent and humane teacher–student communication. hooks also emphasizes that love, as a component, unlike some of the other educators, allows mutual recognition, and thus, deeper learning and psychological well-being. Iacono and Loveland (2004) also explored such theories and research. They reported that student-instructor relationships were strengthened through critical relational pedagogy, which also led to more active participation in classes. Moroccan students' main concern was how they were treated, more than the rules of the game or how the game was played.

Students in the current study indicated that relational justice, particularly mutual respect and communication, was necessary for their classroom satisfaction more than the procedural transparency or equity of grades. Among the three dimensions of justice, procedural justice had the lowest mean, indicating that students considered the classroom rules and procedures less fair when compared to distributive and interactional justice. While previous research indicates that clear and transparent procedures lead to positive outcomes (Chory & Horan, 2018; Zhaleh & Estaji, 2025), the findings of our study show a surprising result: higher perceptions of procedural fairness were connected with lower student satisfaction. This does not imply that rigid or harsh rules were perceived as fair. It might

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suggest that even when rules and procedures are viewed as consistent, they may not enhance satisfaction in certain institutional contexts.

In the Moroccan higher education system, which is often characterized by centralized governance, bureaucratic constraints, and massification (Jaida & Haoucha, 2025; Mkharbcha & Taouab, 2023), fair procedures may simultaneously heighten students' awareness of institutional limitations, such as restricted flexibility, limited student voice, or weak participation. Under these conditions, procedural fairness may reinforce perceptions of institutional distance rather than foster a sense of inclusion or empowerment, thereby weakening its positive association with satisfaction. This interpretation remains tentative and would benefit from further qualitative investigation to better capture students' lived experiences of procedural fairness. Furthermore, the measurement modifications made in the present study may help explain the unexpected negative relationship between Procedural Justice and Student Satisfaction.

Considering other justice dimensions, the impact of distributive justice on satisfaction was minimal. Despite the moderate correlation at the bivariate level, the multiple regression analysis shows a significant negative relationship between distributive justice and student satisfaction. In contrast to Malik et al. (2010), Yang (2021), and Letcher and Neves (2010), whose works showed a strong connection between fairness of outcomes and satisfaction, the present finding is more consistent with ideas of Chory-Assad (2002) and Zhaleh and Estaji (2025), which assert that when relational or procedural dimensions dominate the students' lived experiences, distributive justice may be of lesser importance.

In contrast to interactional justice, distributive justice perceptions were a relatively weak predictor of student satisfaction when other types of justice were considered. This aligns with the works of DeLuca et al. (2016) and Xu and Brown (2016), which indicate that the fairness of outcomes may not be concretely tied to emotional engagement unless there is fairness in the processes and treatment, as fairness in outcomes is viewed as dry and abstract. The emotional effect of justice perceptions is consistent with the prior work on behaviour outcomes. For instance, Uludag (2014) verified that perceptions of fairness are correlated with students exhibiting lower levels of deviant behaviours, which reinforces the prior work of Chory-Assad (2002) and Chory-Assad and Paulsel (2004a, 2004b). Likewise, Arnold et al. (2007), McCabe (1993), and McCabe and Trevino (1993) studied and documented how justice systems such as honour codes can reduce acts of misconduct. Aluede et al. (2006), Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke (2005), and Kidwell and Kent (2008) also studied and documented the impact of perceptions of fairness on the moral and behavioral standards of students. This led Kura et al. (2014) to suggest the establishment of respect codes and the inclusion of ethics in the curricula as a means to provide a justice pedagogy educational setting. The results contribute to the theory of justice in the classroom by stating that in particular higher education settings, interactional justice seems to be the most important disregarding procedural or distributive justice and that the perception of fairness seems to be different when justice is perceived as more institutional and less relational.

The statistical analysis demonstrates that classroom justice is a strong predictor of student satisfaction, explaining 89.1% of the variance. Among its dimensions, interactional justice emerged as the most influential and consistent factor, highlighting the central role of respectful and supportive teacher–student interactions. The effect of justice from a relational perspective suggests that the formal rules and procedures had a weaker impact

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on student satisfaction than the relational aspects. These results suggest that students value fairness in communication and interpersonal treatment above procedural rules or outcome distribution in shaping their overall satisfaction. In summary, the main reason students expressed the most satisfaction was due to elements of interactional justice rather than procedural or distributive fairness. The link between satisfaction and procedural justice is negative and could be due to the way the constructs were framed, in particular, the grading-related procedures and the possible increased descriptions of tightness and bureaucratic control.

Conclusion

Several studies have been conducted to consider how students view fairness and positive connections between teachers and their students. As per Yang (2021), a teacher's feeling of appreciation increases if their students are happy, and the teacher's supportive atmosphere helps students achieve their goals. This work extends the literature on the extent to which ‘‘Moroccan’’ students perceive classroom justice to influence their emotions. Factors that enhance students’ satisfaction primarily through the impact of satisfaction on trust, motivation, and a sense of belonging include the relational aspect of respect and dignity. Among the three dimensions of justice, interactional was the most significant. Distributive justice predicted student satisfaction, to a lesser degree, in a negative way when all the other dimensions of justice were controlled. However, procedural justice showed an unexpected negative association with student satisfaction, indicating that higher perceptions of procedural fairness did not translate into greater satisfaction in this context. Classroom justice accounted for 89.1% of the variance in overall student satisfaction, which demonstrates the major influence of justice on the classroom experience. The interactional justice outcome indicates that students appreciate relational and communicative justice more than other justice constructs. More theories are gaining popularity, like the ones proposed by Freire (1994) and hooks (2002), which aim for a more gentle, inclusive, and open classroom environment.

The purpose of this study clearly informs policy related to leadership. It is important for educational leaders and policymakers to realize that fostering a just classroom is not simply a teaching issue, but one that is critical to improving institutional advocacy, student retention, and emotional well-being. On the policy front, there is a need for institutions to adopt, in a more anticipatory manner, student-centred models of justice that incorporate relational communication norms such as respect, transparency, equitable decision-making, and active participation in the classroom. These practice norms ought to be embedded in practice codes, assessment expectations, and teaching evaluation frameworks. From the leadership perspective, university leaders and deans need to champion and facilitate faculty training that aims to enhance educators’ abilities in the pedagogy of relations. Such training should encourage reflection on teaching, inclusive dialogue, and process adaptability around conflict and flexible procedural needs. Leadership may further increase the justice of the classroom by creating conditions that enable students to express their ideas, offer constructive criticisms, and participate in the process. Furthermore, inclusive governance frameworks that streamline the hierarchical relationships among students, faculty, and administrators can help cultivate a culture of collective engagement and respect.

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Though this study contributes valuable information, it has its limitations. First, there's a risk of social desirability bias because of the self-reported surveys. Second, the cross-sectional design makes it challenging to conclude cause and effect. Third, the weak psychometric validity of the procedural justice scale pertains to its explanatory reliability. Fourth, given the cultural and institutional peculiarities of the Moroccan context, there is a lack of wider applicability of the findings.

In future investigations, qualitative research is needed to gain deeper insight into how students interpret and experience procedural fairness and how this shapes their satisfaction. Research questions should include mixed-method and longitudinal designs to capture the possible evolution of people's justice perspectives and/or to study in more detail the emotional narratives of the students. The procedural justice scale requires further enhancement by removing or altering problematic items in even more sophisticated ways to better reflect the everyday situation of Moroccan classrooms. In addition, the findings of other educational systems may use these findings for cross-cultural comparative study purposes to explore the effects of training faculty interventions on achieving classroom justice. This, in turn, will assist the purposeful operationalization of justice-enhancing strategies and the ability to measure their impact. In the end, the goal is to transform justice and enhance the students' educational experience in higher education. Rather than only complying with the needs, institutions should have the sophisticated leadership enveloping equity, communication, and dignity as the centre of academic life.

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