
L'IMPACT DU LEADERSHIP SITUATIONNEL SUR L'IMPLICATION ORGANISATIONNELLE DU PERSONNEL UNIVERSITAIRE AU MAROC : UNE ÉTUDE A L'UNIVERSITE MOULAY ISMAIL MEKNES MAROC

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Abstract:

This study seeks to determine the impact of situational management dimensions (adaptability and leadership support), on organizational commitment (affective, normative and continuity) within a particular and little explored context such as the Université Moulay Ismaïl de Meknès Maroc. The data, collected via a self-administered questionnaire from 275 collaborators (administrative staff), we used SPSS for data processing and analysis, and to test our hypotheses we used structural equation modeling (AMOS).

The results of our research show that: supportive, caring leadership significantly boosts emotional attachment ($\beta=0.66, p<.001$) and feelings of moral obligation ($\beta=0.45, p<.001$) to the institution. Paradoxically, although leadership adaptability favors continuity involvement - i.e., staying by calculating costs/benefits ($\beta=0.54, p<.001$) - it seems to weaken affective involvement ($\beta=-0.29, p<.01$). whereas The control variables (gender, age, experience) have no moderating effect on normative and continuity involvement. These highlight the importance of nuanced leadership, uniting contextual flexibility and recognition, to optimize organizational commitment in Moroccan academic institutions, thus offering concrete avenues for local managerial practices.

Keywords: Situational leadership; Organizational involvement; Structural equation modeling (SEM); Moroccan university; Commitment.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly complex and ever-changing organizational world, leaders need to find ways to engage and motivate their team members. This is the key to performance and resilience (Yukl, 2010). Indeed, organizational commitment is a multidimensional construct that reflects the strong psychological bond an employee forges with his or her organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). A number of studies have explored the determinants of this involvement, but the effectiveness of managerial practices and the very nature of employee commitment are generally influenced by specific cultural, social and sectoral contexts. This realization underlines the growing importance of conducting empirical research in industrialized country contexts (Hofstede, 1980; Vandenberghe et al., 2009). In response to this call, our study aims to determine the impact of situational leadership dimensions on organizational involvement dimensions in a more specific and unique context, namely the higher education sector in Morocco, more specifically at the Université Moulay Ismaïl Meknès.

Situational management, as conceptualized by Hersey and Blanchard (1969), postulates that leadership effectiveness lies in the leader's ability to adjust his or her management style to the skill and commitment levels of his or her subordinates (Arnault, 2009). This flexibility manifests itself notably through the leader's adaptability, i.e. his ability to modulate his behavior, and the support he provides, symbolizing the attention and guidance offered to his teams. At the same time, organizational commitment, according to Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-dimensional model, can be broken down into an emotional attachment to the organization (affective commitment), a pragmatic assessment of the costs associated with leaving (continuity commitment), and a sense of moral obligation to remain within the entity (normative commitment).

Although these theoretical frameworks have been validated in Western contexts, their application remains limited within Moroccan public organizations, and particularly in the Moroccan higher education department. In fact, the Moroccan university system has a number of distinct characteristics, including: a singular administrative structure, its own regulatory guidelines, cultural dynamics influencing hierarchical relationships, and a unique public service mission. The complexity of the university's staff composition (administrative and research) demands constant

agility on the part of managers to address managerial issues and particularities in terms of commitment. It is therefore essential to understand how adaptability and support from leaders impact the commitment of civil servant managers in this context, in order to enrich our knowledge and optimize human resources management practices. This quantitative study seeks to fill a significant gap in the literature by providing empirical data on the links between situational management and organizational involvement in a non-Western context. Focusing on Moulay Ismail University, we seek to determine whether and how the dimensions of adaptability and leadership support influence the dimensions of organizational involvement. The results seek not only to enrich the field of theoretical knowledge by testing the generalizability of existing models, but also to provide practical implications suitable for leaders of Moroccan public organizations wishing to improve the engagement of their staff.

2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Our theoretical framework draws on two major fields of research, management and organizational psychology, namely situational leadership theory and the organizational involvement model. These theoretical foundations are discussed, and then we present the conceptual model relating the various hypotheses we seek to test to the context of Moroccan higher education (Moulay Ismail University).

2.1. Situational Management: An Adaptive Approach to Leadership

Leadership is a fundamental concept in management research, aimed at clarifying how leaders motivate their teams to achieve set objectives (Yukl, 2010). Among the many theoretical approaches, situational management, first proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969), stands out for its fundamental premise: there is no single, universally effective leadership style. Rather, managerial efficiency lies in the leader's ability to modulate his or her behavior and approach according to the characteristics of his or her collaborators and the specific requirements of each situation (Arnault, 2009).

This theory marks a break with more rigid visions of leadership by emphasizing flexibility. The leadership styles (Directive, Persuasive, Participative and Delegative) identified by Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1977), whose optimal application depends on the employee's level of maturity. This maturity encompasses not only technical skills (knowledge, know-how, experience), but also psychological commitment (motivation, self-confidence) to a given task (Hersey et al., 2013). By assessing the maturity of each member of his team, the leader can adjust his degree of task orientation (directive behavior) and his level of socio-emotional support (supportive behavior), improving the performance of his organization and the individual fulfillment of his collaborator.

The appeal of situational management lies in its pragmatic dimension, offering managers a reflexive framework for analyzing and adapting their practices (Arnault, 2009). It promotes personalized management, likely to foster more productive and harmonious working relationships, and represents a valuable tool for guiding employees towards greater autonomy (Hersey et al., 2013).

In this study, we focus on two key dimensions of leader behavior intrinsic to situational leadership:

- Leader adaptability: This reflects the leader's ability to modulate his or her behavior and managerial approach according to the situation, in particular by adjusting the degree of directive (task orientation) and the degree of support (relational orientation) he or she provides. High adaptability implies behavioral flexibility to meet the changing needs of teams and individuals.
- Leadership support: This dimension refers to the quality of relational support offered by the leader. It encompasses active listening, recognition of efforts, encouragement, provision of constructive feedback and consideration of employees' personal and professional concerns. A supportive leader is perceived as a valuable psychological resource for his teams.

These two dimensions are essential levers through which leaders can influence the attitudes and behaviors of their employees, including their level of organizational commitment.

2.2. Organizational Involvement: A Three-Dimensional Approach

Organizational involvement is a fundamental construct in human resource management that describes the psychological bond between an individual and his or her organization, and is widely recognized as a multidimensional phenomenon. Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model is the most influential and widely used theoretical framework for understanding this complexity. This model distinguishes three dimensions of organizational involvement:

- Affective involvement: This component of organizational involvement represents the deep emotional attachment an individual develops towards his or her company. It manifests itself in strong identification with its values and objectives, and a sincere desire to stay with the organization because the employee truly wants to. Authors such as Mathieu and Zajac (1990) have also explored this idea of a strong identification of the individual with his or her company, often linking it to an attitudinal dimension of commitment.

Continuity commitment: Continuity commitment is based on a pragmatic assessment of the perceived costs associated with a potential departure from the organization. An employee demonstrating this type of involvement maintains his or her position primarily out of necessity. This dimension, sometimes referred to as "calculated commitment" or "commitment to continue" (Meyer and Allen, 1990), stems mainly from the fear of losing accumulated advantages (such as seniority, social benefits, or company-specific skills) or the lack of perceived professional alternatives. It's a rational decision, motivated by past investments.

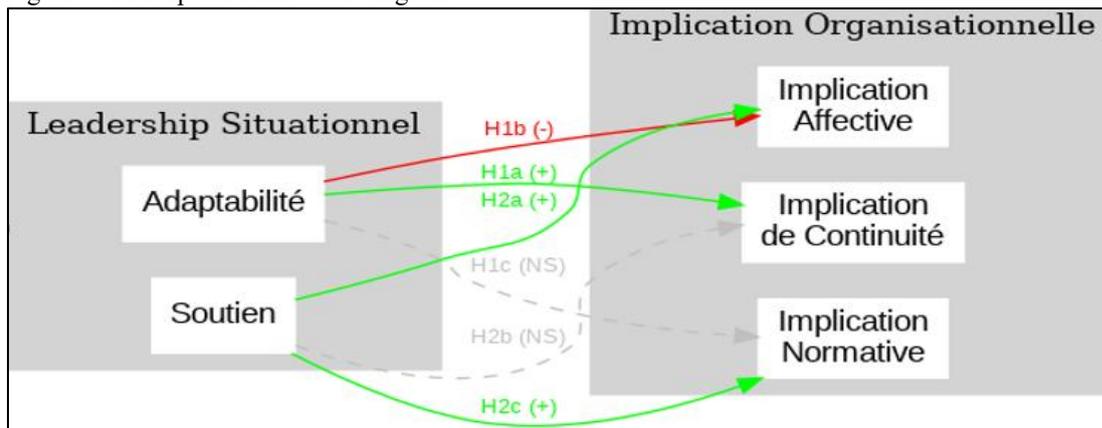
- Normative commitment: This dimension is defined by a sense of moral obligation or duty to the organization, prompting the employee to stay. As described by Bentein et al (2004, p. 1), it is “an attitude of loyalty to the organization, stemming from a sense of moral obligation to it”. This type of involvement can be fuelled by the internalization of organizational norms, a perceived debt to the company (e.g., as a result of employer training or investment), or a strong sense of loyalty.

Each of these dimensions may have different determinants and consequences, and studying them together offers a more in-depth analysis of employee engagement.

2.3 Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of situational management and organizational commitment, we propose a conceptual model that postulates that adaptability and leadership support influence the three dimensions of organizational commitment differently. This model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework diagram:



Source: Developed by us under python

Based on this model, we formulate the following research hypotheses:

- Hypothesis H1: Concerning leadership adaptability

H1a: Leader adaptability will have a positive impact on continuity involvement.

H1b: Leader adaptability will have a negative impact on affective involvement.

H1c: Leader adaptability will have no significant impact on normative involvement.

- Hypothesis H2: Concerning leadership support

H2a: Leadership support will have a positive impact on affective involvement.

H2b: Leadership support will have no significant impact on continuance involvement.

H2c : Leadership support will have a positive impact on normative involvement.

Control variables (gender, age, professional experience) are introduced into the model to neutralize possible socio-demographic effects and thus isolate more precisely the influence of leadership variables on involvement.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of our study is to determine the impact of situational leadership dimensions (adaptability and support) on the three dimensions of organizational commitment. This quantitative study was conducted among employees of Moulay Ismail Meknes University in Morocco.

3.1. Population and sample

The target population for this research is staff at the Université Moulay Ismail (UMI). This population is relevant because it is directly subject to leadership practices within the institution, and its involvement is crucial to the smooth running of the university.

A non-probability sample was used for data collection (Etikan et al., 2016). Data collection was conducted over a 3-month period covering the period between September and December 2024. A total of 275 administrative managers responded to a self-administered questionnaire. This number of observations is considered sufficient for the statistical analyses envisaged, particularly structural equation modeling, which requires an adequate sample size for stability of estimates (Kline, 2016). Table 1 summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample (n = 275)

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Men	58
	Women	42
Age	< 30 ans	12
	30-45 ans	63

	> 45 ans	25
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Source: Developed by us in SPSS

3.2. Measurement tools

Two validated measurement scales recognized in the literature were used to collect data on the key variables in our study:

Situational leadership: To assess employees' perceptions of their direct superior's leadership style, we mobilized an adapted version of the SLII (Leadership Situational II Instrument) scale, developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1996). This scale measures the two central dimensions of our study: Leader Adaptability (ability to adjust style) and Support Offered (behaviours of consideration and encouragement). The internal consistency of these measures in our sample proved satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 for Adaptability and 0.87 for Support.

Organizational commitment: Participants' commitment to Moulay Ismail University was measured using Meyer and Allen's (1997) three-dimensional TCM (Three-Component Model of Commitment) scale. This instrument makes it possible to separately assess Affective Commitment (emotional attachment), Continuity Commitment (based on the costs of leaving) and Normative Commitment (sense of obligation). The reliability of these measures was also confirmed, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.89 for Affective Involvement, 0.87 for Normative Involvement and 0.84 for Continuity Involvement

3.4. Statistical Analysis Methods

The data collected were processed and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software for descriptive statistics and IBM SPSS Amos software for structural equation modeling (SEM). Scale reliability was checked via Cronbach's alpha (α), as well as composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The SEM model was evaluated in terms of goodness of fit (χ^2/df , RMSEA, CFI, TLI, SRMR), and standardized coefficients (β) and their significance were examined for hypothesis testing, incorporating control variables as covariates.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Internal Reliability of Measurement Scales

The internal consistency of each measurement scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (α), Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability indices for latent variables

Latent variable	Alpha (α)	CR (Composite Reliability)	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)
Adaptability	0.88	0.90	0.65
Support	0.85	0.88	0.62
Affective involvement	0.89	0.91	0.68
Normative involvement	0.87	0.89	0.66
Continuity involvement	0.84	0.86	0.60

Sources : Elaboration by ourselves

All reliability indicators are above commonly accepted acceptability thresholds ($\alpha > 0.70$; CR > 0.70; AVE > 0.50, as recommended by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results confirm the internal consistency and convergent validity of the latent constructs measured, ensuring the robustness of subsequent analyses.

4.2. SEM Model Fit Quality

The proposed structural model was evaluated using several global fit indices to determine its compatibility with the observed data. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. SEM model goodness-of-fit indices

Index	Value obtained	Acceptability threshold	Interpretation
χ^2/df	2.17	< 3	Good fit
RMSEA	0.047	< 0.08	Excellent fit
CFI	0.96	> 0.90	Very good fit
TLI	0.95	> 0.90	Very good fit
SRMR	0.041	< 0.08	Good overall fit

Source: Compiled by us using AMOS25

Taken together, these indicators show that the hypothesized model provides an excellent fit to the empirical data, in line with the recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999). This validates the overall structure of the relationships studied.

4.4. Structural relationships and Hypothesis testing

The structural model was analyzed to assess the hypothesized causal relationships between the latent variables. Table 8 shows the standardized regression coefficients (β), standard errors (S.E.), critical ratios (CR), probability values (p), and conclusion for each relationship.

Table 4. Structural Regression Results and Hypothesis Testing

Structural relationship	β	S.E.	CR	p	Conclusion
Adaptability \rightarrow Affective	-0.29	0.07	-4.14	< 0.001	Negative effect sig.
Adaptability \rightarrow Normative	0.08	0.06	1.20	0.230	NS
Adaptability \rightarrow Continuity	0.54	0.08	6.75	< 0.001	Positive effect sig.
Support \rightarrow Affective	0.66	0.05	9.80	< 0.001	Strong positive effect
Support \rightarrow Normative	0.45	0.06	7.50	< 0.001	Positive effect sig.
Support \rightarrow Continuity	0.10	0.06	1.50	0.134	NS

Sources: Compiled by us using AMOS 25

The results of the structural analysis confirm or refute our initial hypotheses:

- Impact of Leader Adaptability:

Hypothesis H1a (Adaptability \rightarrow Continuity Involvement) is confirmed: leader adaptability has a positive and significant effect ($\beta=0.54, p<0.001$). This suggests that perceived managerial flexibility can reinforce utilitarian or pragmatic reasons for remaining in the organization.

Hypothesis H1b (Adaptability \rightarrow Affective Involvement) is also confirmed: leader adaptability exerts a negative and significant effect ($\beta=-0.29, p<0.001$). This unexpected result suggests that in this context, excessive adaptability could potentially be perceived as a lack of consistency or authenticity, affecting emotional attachment. Hypothesis H1c (Adaptability \rightarrow Normative Implication) is confirmed: leader adaptability has no significant effect ($\beta=0.08, p=0.230$).

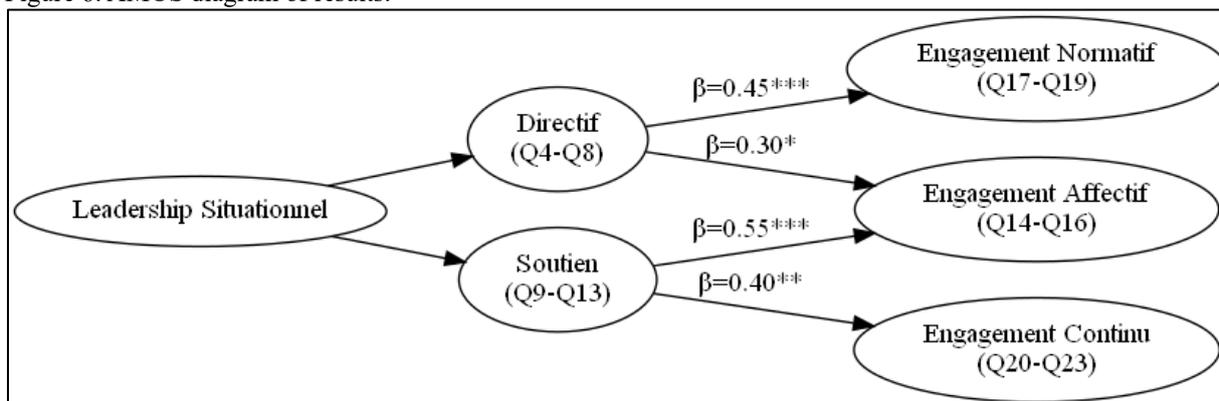
- Impact of Leadership Support:

Hypothesis H2a (Support \rightarrow Affective Involvement) is strongly confirmed: leadership support has a positive and highly significant effect ($\beta=0.66, p<0.001$). This is the strongest effect observed, underlining the preponderant role of support in the development of emotional attachment.

Hypothesis H2b (Support \rightarrow Continuity Involvement) is confirmed: leadership support has no significant effect ($\beta=0.10, p=0.134$). This corroborates the idea that reasons for staying out of necessity are less influenced by psychosocial support.

Hypothesis H2c (Support \rightarrow Normative Implication) is confirmed: leadership support has a positive and significant effect ($\beta=0.45, p<0.001$). A supportive leader reinforces the feeling of reciprocity and moral obligation towards the university organization.

Figure 6. AMOS diagram of results:



Source: Developed by us in Python

4.7. Interpreting the Role of Control Variables

In the structural model, three control variables - gender, age and work experience - were incorporated to explore possible contextual effects and refine the explanation of individual variations in engagement levels.

4.7.1. Gender

Statistical analyses revealed no systematically significant effect of gender on the three dimensions of organizational commitment. This result suggests a homogeneity in the perception of their connection to the institution by men and women within Moulay Ismail University, irrespective of gender. This could indicate a shared organizational culture and management practices that address all staff equally. In the Moroccan context, where professional equality is gradually being implemented in the public sector, these results could testify to a shift in

attitudes towards recognition of professional commitment based less on gender than on the organizational environment itself.

4.7.2. Age

Age was found to be weakly but significantly correlated with normative involvement and, to a lesser extent, with continuity involvement. Older employees seem to develop a stronger sense of moral loyalty to their organization. This tendency can be explained by a deeper rooting in the institutional culture and a gradual adherence to the university's norms and values, as suggested by Meyer and Allen's (1997) work on seniority. Furthermore, age may be an indicator of stability: older employees, often closer to retirement, are less inclined to consider change, thus reinforcing normative or cautious involvement.

4.7.3. Professional experience

Seniority within the company, measured by years of experience, is positively associated with continuity. This finding is consistent with the idea that the longer employees stay, the more they perceive the significant costs associated with a departure (loss of statutory benefits, severance of professional relationships, uncertainties linked to a new position). This reinforces the idea that continuity involvement is primarily a product of rational reasoning (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In the specific context of the Moroccan public university, where prospects for external mobility may be perceived as limited and professional experience is difficult to transfer, experience becomes a particularly significant retention factor.

5. GENERAL DISCUSSION

This section deepens the interpretation of the study's key findings, puts them into perspective with the existing literature and discusses their theoretical and managerial implications, taking into account the Moroccan public university context.

5.1. Differentiated Impact of Situational Leadership on Involvement

Our results highlight the distinct and sometimes paradoxical role of the dimensions of adaptability and leadership support on the different dimensions of organizational involvement.

Firstly, leadership support appears to be a key driver of both affective and normative involvement. The correlation with affective involvement is very strong ($\beta=0.66$). A leader perceived as benevolent, attentive and encouraging fosters strong emotional attachment on the part of managerial staff. This relationship is consistent with work highlighting the importance of social support and supervisor support in building an affective bond with the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Similarly, the positive impact on normative involvement ($\beta=0.45$) suggests that leader support reinforces employees' sense of reciprocity and moral obligation, encouraging them to "give back" to an organization that invests in them via their superiors.

Secondly, leadership adaptability shows a positive impact on continuity involvement ($\beta=0.54$) indicates that managerial flexibility can reassure staff of their ability to evolve and integrate sustainably, reducing uncertainty and reinforcing the perception of the long-term benefits of staying. However, the most surprising and intriguing result was the negative effect of adaptability on affective involvement ($\beta=-0.29$). Contrary to the intuition that an adaptive leader is more appreciated, this study suggests that, in the Moroccan university context, excessive adaptability could be perceived as a lack of coherence, authenticity or stable principles. Staff might interpret constant adaptation of style as a lack of clear direction or opportunistic management, which could erode feelings of emotional attachment and trust. This finding calls for careful consideration of the "right" measure of adaptability, particularly in environments where stability and clarity of direction are valued.

5.2 Specific Implications for the Moroccan Public University Context

The results of this study are particularly illuminating for the Moroccan higher education sector. The fact that leader support is such a powerful factor in affective and normative involvement underlines the importance of relational dimensions in a context where material benefits and mobility opportunities may be perceived as limited. Administrative managers seem to place a high value on the quality of relations with their superiors, and on the feeling of being listened to and valued.

The negative effect of adaptability on affective involvement is a contextual specificity worth discussing. The Moroccan public sector, including universities, is often characterized by a relatively formal hierarchy and clear expectations in terms of processes and rules. In such an environment, overly pronounced leader adaptability could be interpreted not as strength, but as weakness, inconsistency or lack of fairness, undermining trust and emotional attachment. This contrasts with more dynamic or private contexts, where adaptability is often perceived as a major asset for innovation and responsiveness.

5.3 Managerial implications

The results of this research offer concrete courses of action for managers at Moulay Ismail University and other public academic institutions in Morocco:

- Prioritize Relational Support: Leadership development programs should emphasize the importance of active listening, recognition, constructive feedback and benevolence. A supportive leader is a pillar of emotional and moral commitment among staff.
- Adaptability: Adaptability must be exercised with discernment. The aim is not to eliminate it, but to contextualize it. Leaders should be trained to see adaptability as a skill for optimizing performance, not as a lack of vision or coherence. Clear communication on the reasons for adaptability can be crucial to maintaining trust.

- Segmenting Engagement Strategies: The implications of control variables (age, experience) suggest that HR policies should be nuanced. More experienced or older employees, who demonstrate a stronger continuity or normative commitment, could be mobilized by programs valuing their know-how, mentoring or recognizing their longevity. For young people, the focus could be on professional development and career opportunities.
- Developing Contextually Relevant Leadership: Beyond universal theories, manager training needs to integrate Moroccan cultural and organizational specificities, so that leadership practices are perceived as legitimate and effective by local staff.

6. CONCLUSION

This study explored the influence of situational leadership on organizational commitment at Moulay Ismail University in Morocco. Our results highlight the crucial importance of leadership support for affective and normative involvement, and the complex role of adaptability, which, while promoting continuity involvement, can paradoxically undermine affective attachment. These results, enriched by the analysis of control variables (gender, age, experience), highlight the need for nuanced and contextually adapted leadership to optimize staff engagement in Moroccan public academic institutions.

By contributing to the literature on leadership and involvement in a non-Western context, this research offers valuable managerial avenues for university decision-makers keen to strengthen the stability, loyalty and emotional attachment of their teams.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. Firstly, its cross-sectional nature does not allow us to establish definitive causal relationships, but rather associations. Longitudinal studies could explore the evolution of these relationships over time. Secondly, the use of a convenience sample limited to a single university in Morocco restricts the generalizability of the results to other institutions or sectors. Future research could extend the sample to other Moroccan universities, or to other Maghreb countries, to increase external validity.

Furthermore, the negative effect of adaptability on affective involvement merits in-depth qualitative exploration to understand the mechanisms underlying this perception. Semi-structured interviews or case studies could shed light on the reasons why adaptability is sometimes perceived negatively. Finally, the integration of additional moderating or mediating variables, such as perceived organizational culture, organizational justice or task type, could refine our understanding of these complex relationships.

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