Pisco Med Publishing

Human Resources Management and Services 2026, 8(4), 6831.
https://doi.org/10.18282/hrms6831

Conceptual paper

How university social responsibility shapes staff citizenship behavior: a theory synthesis for teaching, research, and student support

Thanh Hai Phan[1], Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen[2,3,*], Thi Phuong Thao Nguyen[4]

[1] School of Business and Economics, Duy Tan University, Da Nang 50316, Vietnam
[2] Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Da Lat University, Lam Dong Province 66124, Vietnam
[3] Department of Science, Technology and International Projects, Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance, Ho Chi Minh City 72330, Vietnam
[4] Faculty of Business Administration, Ho Chi Minh University of Banking, Ho Chi Minh City 71010, Vietnam
*** Corresponding author:** Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen, trangntt@uef.edu.vn

CITATION

Phan TH, Nguyen TTT, Nguyen TPT. How university social responsibility shapes staff citizenship behavior: a theory synthesis for teaching, research, and student support. Human Resources Management and Services. 2026; 8(4): 6831.
https://doi.org/10.18282/hrms6831

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2026 by author(s). *Human Resources Management and Services* is published by PiscoMed Publishing Pte Ltd. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license.
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Abstract: Universities depend on staff contributions that exceed formal duties, such as sharing teaching practices, supporting students beyond scheduled hours, and volunteering for curriculum and quality-assurance work, to sustain teaching, research, and student support. University social responsibility (USR) is enacted largely through these same staff. Yet it remains unclear when staff perceptions of USR strengthen such discretionary contributions and when they are experienced as additional, unrecognized demands. This theory-synthesis article integrates USR, micro-level corporate social responsibility, organizational behavior, and recent higher education research to explain how perceived USR may translate into organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) among academic and administrative staff. Two pathways are proposed. A relational pathway links perceived USR to organizational justice, grounded in workload allocation, teaching assignments, promotion, and participation in decisions, and then to organizational trust, work engagement, and OCB. A motivational pathway links perceived USR to intrinsic motivation, engagement, and OCB when responsibility-related academic activities support autonomy and competence. Perceived organizational support is proposed to strengthen the relationship between perceived USR and organizational trust. Eight numbered propositions (P1-P8) are developed; Proposition 7 contains two constituent serial pathways (P7a and P7b). OCB is differentiated by its target: colleagues, students, and the institution. The framework identifies professional autonomy, collegial norms, role type, and workload systems as conditions that shape these relationships. Implications concern aligning USR commitments with fair academic workload, supportive practices, and recognized voluntary collaboration that benefits teaching and the learning environment.

Keywords: university social responsibility; organizational citizenship behavior; academic staff; work engagement; teaching and learning

1. Introduction

Universities fulfill their educational and societal missions largely through the work of their employees. Teaching quality, research collaboration, student support, and community engagement depend not only on formally assigned duties but also on contributions that no employment contract fully specifies. Examples include lecturers who share teaching materials with newly appointed colleagues, staff who help students resolve problems beyond formal service hours, and faculty who voluntarily contribute to curriculum review or quality-assurance work. At the same time, university social responsibility (USR) requires institutions to manage the educational, cognitive, organizational, and social impacts of their activities (Vallaeys et al., 2009;

Latif, 2018), and these commitments are enacted primarily by the same employees. This creates a problem specific to higher education. Staff may perceive USR as institutional rhetoric that adds unrecognized workload. In that case, the voluntary contributions supporting teaching, learning, and academic collaboration may weaken. If they perceive it as consistent with fair treatment and meaningful academic work, USR may strengthen those contributions.

The problem has become more pressing as USR moves from institutional declarations into strategies, quality assurance, and community-engagement targets. Staff responses to this shift are not uniformly favorable. Academics in two universities that had signed a USR declaration were largely unaware of the commitment, doubted that it would change institutional practice, and were concerned that USR-related tasks would be added to an already heavy workload (Moczulska & Spodarczyk, 2025). Knowledge and perceptions of USR also differ between academic and administrative employees and across departments (Reichel et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the discretionary work on which universities rely is unevenly recognized. Institutional service is pervasive across academic roles, whereas service to students remains largely invisible in promotion criteria (Smith & Walker, 2024), and internal service is unequally distributed among faculty members (Guarino & Borden, 2017). Whether USR strengthens or erodes staff citizenship therefore depends on how staff interpret responsibility commitments in relation to their own academic work.

Research on the psychological microfoundations of corporate social responsibility (CSR) offers a starting point. Reviews and meta-analytic evidence show that employees' perceptions of organizational responsibility are associated with their attitudes and behaviors through several mediating and moderating mechanisms (Gond et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2022). Studies in academic settings have begun to test similar relationships. Among academics in Pakistani universities, for instance, perceived CSR predicted trust, commitment, and OCB, but trust did not mediate the relationship between perceived CSR and OCB (Ahmad et al., 2020). This result suggests that the route from institutional responsibility to academic citizenship is not captured by a single relational mediator. Moreover, USR differs from corporate responsibility because the operations and objectives of universities, namely education, knowledge production, and public service, differ inherently from those of business organizations (Ali et al., 2021). Transferring corporate models to universities without specifying how academic work shapes staff responses therefore leaves the central question unanswered.

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) provides the outcome through which this question is examined. OCB comprises discretionary contributions that support organizational functioning and can be directed toward other individuals or toward the organization (Organ, 1988; Williams & Anderson, 1991; Podsakoff et al., 2000). In universities, this distinction acquires educational meaning. Helping colleagues, for example by sharing course materials, co-designing assessments, or informally mentoring new lecturers, supports teaching quality and collegial learning. Assisting students beyond formal duties supports their progression and well-being. Contributing to curriculum development, accreditation, or community initiatives beyond assigned roles supports institutional functioning and the university's societal mission. Whether such behavior is discretionary depends on the employee's formal role, since committee work or mentoring may be contractual for some staff and voluntary for others. Because these targets may reflect different motives and produce different educational consequences, the framework treats their differentiation as an explicit

question rather than an assumption.

University employees occupy a dual position with respect to USR. They are stakeholders affected by institutional decisions about workload, promotion, research support, and governance, and they are also the agents through whom the university's educational, research, and community commitments are delivered. In higher education, this dual position is shaped by features that are less prominent in corporate settings. Academic staff exercise considerable professional autonomy over teaching and research, participate in collegial decision-making, and hold professional identities anchored partly in their disciplines rather than in the institution. Administrative staff, by contrast, experience USR mainly through student-facing services, operational procedures, and implementation tasks. These differences imply that the same USR commitment may be interpreted as an opportunity for meaningful academic work by one group and as an additional burden by another.

This article proposes that staff interpretations of USR operate through two distinguishable processes. In a relational process, staff read USR as information about how the university makes decisions and judge whether the decisions that affect them are fair, including workload allocation, teaching assignments, promotion, access to research opportunities, and participation in governance. Fairness judgments then inform trust in the institution. In a motivational process, staff experience USR through the academic activities in which it is enacted, such as service-learning courses, community-based research, or outreach projects. These activities may become intrinsically motivating when they offer autonomy and opportunities to use and develop professional competence. This motivation must be distinguished from the motivation staff already derive from teaching or research as such: the framework concerns the additional interest generated by responsibility-related academic work, not interest in academic work in general. Both processes are proposed to converge on work engagement, which increases the likelihood of discretionary contributions. Perceived organizational support (POS), the belief that the university values employees' contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), is proposed to condition how strongly perceived USR informs trust. Staff who experience support are more likely to regard external responsibility commitments as credible evidence of institutional conduct.

Accordingly, this theory synthesis addresses two research questions. Research question 1 (RQ1): Through which relational and motivational mechanisms might university staff's perceptions of USR translate into OCB that supports teaching, research, and student support? RQ2: How might perceived organizational support condition the relationship between perceived USR and organizational trust? The article makes three contributions to higher education research. First, it relocates the USR-OCB relationship from a generic employee-organization exchange to the conditions of academic work, specifying how workload systems, teaching assignments, promotion, and collegial governance shape staff interpretations of USR. Second, it distinguishes motivation arising from responsibility-related academic activities from motivation inherent in teaching and research, and identifies when USR is likely to enrich rather than burden academic work. Third, it differentiates citizenship directed toward colleagues, students, and the institution, linking each to distinct educational consequences. Eight propositions are offered for empirical assessment.

Section 2 describes the theory-synthesis approach. Section 3 synthesizes the literature on USR, staff experiences of USR in higher education, and the

focal mechanisms. Section 4 develops the framework and propositions. Section 5 discusses theoretical contributions, implications for teaching, learning, and university management, a research agenda, and limitations. Section 6 concludes.

2. Research method

2.1. Research design and analytical scope

This study adopts an integrative theory-synthesis approach to explain how university staff's perceptions of USR may translate into OCB. The purpose is theory development rather than effect-size estimation or hypothesis testing. The synthesis integrates complementary streams of literature to identify explanatory mechanisms, establish construct boundaries, specify a theoretically defensible ordering of constructs, and derive propositions for empirical assessment.

The individual staff member is the unit of theoretical analysis. The framework covers both academic staff (teaching, research, and teaching-and-research positions) and administrative or professional staff, because both groups enact USR commitments and both are affected by institutional decisions. Their roles differ, however, in the activities through which USR is experienced and in the behaviors that count as discretionary, and these differences are treated as conditions shaping the proposed relationships. Perceived USR refers to a staff member's assessment of the university's responsibility across its educational, research, organizational, and societal activities. Organizational justice, organizational trust, intrinsic motivation, work engagement, POS, and OCB are likewise treated as individual-level judgments, states, perceptions, or behaviors. Institutional USR practices are the object of evaluation; they are not assumed to be equivalent to staff perceptions of those practices.

2.2. Literature identification and selection

Literature was identified through targeted searches of Scopus, Web of Science, and Education Resources Information Center, supplemented by backward and forward citation tracing of foundational and highly relevant studies. Search terms were organized around four domains: (1) university social responsibility and staff perceptions; (2) micro-level CSR and employee responses; (3) the organizational behavior mechanisms included in the framework; and (4) higher education research on academic work, including workload, service, collegiality, and academic citizenship.

Search combinations paired "university social responsibility" OR "USR" with "academic staff," "faculty," "lecturer," "administrative staff," and "employee," and with the focal constructs "organizational citizenship behavior," "organizational justice," "organizational trust," "work engagement," "intrinsic motivation," and "perceived organizational support." Complementary searches paired "perceived CSR" with the same constructs to identify mechanisms established outside higher education. Further searches paired "higher education" OR "university" with "academic citizenship," "faculty service," "workload allocation," and "collegiality" to identify features of academic work that may condition these mechanisms. Recent higher education research was prioritized to position the framework within current scholarship, whereas foundational works were retained irrespective of publication year when they established a construct or theory underlying a proposition.

Potentially contradictory or disconfirming evidence was assessed rather than set aside. For example, Ahmad et al. (2020) found that organizational trust did not mediate the perceived CSR-OCB relationship among academics, challenging a trust-

only explanation and motivating the examination of work engagement as a distinct intervening mechanism. Evidence that staff doubt institutional USR commitments or anticipate unrecognized additional work (Moczulska & Spodarczyk, 2025) was considered when specifying scope conditions and alternative explanations. These findings were used to refine the proposed mechanisms, not to infer that the framework has been empirically validated. Because this is a purposive theory synthesis rather than an exhaustive systematic review, the propositions remain open to falsification through comparisons with direct, reciprocal, and alternative indirect pathways.

2.3. Theory-synthesis procedure

The synthesis proceeded in four stages. The first stage, conceptual differentiation, established the explanatory domain of each construct. Organizational justice was treated as an evaluation of fairness, organizational trust as willingness to accept vulnerability based on favorable expectations, intrinsic motivation as interest or enjoyment inherent in an activity, work engagement as investment of the self in work, and OCB as discretionary behavior beyond prescribed role requirements. This stage prevented adjacent constructs from functioning as interchangeable indicators of a general favorable response.

The second stage, mechanism specification, examined why one construct should theoretically precede another. Justice and social exchange perspectives informed the relational sequence from responsibility perceptions to fairness judgments, trust, and engagement. Self-determination theory informed the motivational sequence by distinguishing intrinsic interest from the internalization of valued institutional goals. Engagement theory explained how relational confidence and intrinsic motivation may translate into investment in work before discretionary behavior occurs.

The third stage, educational contextualization, examined each proposed relationship against the features of academic work identified in the higher education literature. For every mechanism, the synthesis asked through which concrete university practices staff would experience it (for example, workload allocation, teaching assignments, promotion criteria, research support, or participation in governance), how it might differ between academic and administrative staff, how professional autonomy and collegial norms might strengthen or substitute for it, and what consequences it would have for teaching, research, and student support.

The fourth stage, theoretical integration, examined how the relational and motivational mechanisms could coexist in a single framework without losing their explanatory differences. The pathways were treated as complementary rather than competing, and reciprocal, direct, and alternative sequences were retained as competing explanations for empirical testing.

2.4. Proposition development

Propositions were developed only when four conditions were met. First, the constructs involved had to remain conceptually distinguishable. Second, a theoretically specified mechanism had to explain why variation in one construct should be associated with variation in the next. Third, the relationship had to generate a prediction distinguishable from at least one plausible alternative explanation. Fourth, the mechanism had to be specifiable in terms of identifiable practices and experiences in academic workplaces.

These criteria produced two serial pathways. The relational pathway specifies perceived USR → organizational justice → organizational trust → work engagement → OCB. The motivational pathway specifies perceived USR → intrinsic motivation

→ work engagement → OCB. The pathways converge on engagement because engagement represents investment in work rather than a fairness evaluation or a motivational reason for action. POS was introduced as a moderator only of the direct perceived USR-trust relationship, for which organizational support theory provides a specific rationale. Features of academic work, namely role type, professional autonomy, collegial norms, and workload and promotion systems, were specified as contextual conditions in Section 3.6 and the research agenda rather than as additional constructs, preserving the parsimony of the core model. The eight numbered propositions include one proposition (P7) with two constituent serial pathways (P7a and P7b). The synthesis is purposive rather than exhaustive: its transparency rests on explicit construct boundaries, stated selection purposes, specified mechanisms, consideration of competing explanations, and propositions that remain open to empirical falsification.

3. Literature synthesis: from university social responsibility to staff citizenship

3.1. University social responsibility and the educational mission

University social responsibility concerns how universities manage the consequences of their educational, knowledge-producing, organizational, and societal activities. An impact-based approach locates responsibility within institutional decisions and everyday practices rather than in philanthropy or isolated community projects (Vallaeys et al., 2009). A stakeholder-based approach adds the obligations that arise from the university's relationships with the groups affected by its activities (Latif, 2018). Reviews of the field further emphasize that USR differs in nature from corporate responsibility because the purposes and operations of universities differ from those of business organizations (Ali et al., 2021). Similarly, USR has been described as change along four axes: organization, knowledge, education, and participation (Markus & Govender, 2023).

Each of these dimensions carries a specific responsibility toward learners. Educational responsibility concerns what and how students learn, including whether curricula prepare them to act responsibly in their professions and communities. Cognitive or knowledge-related responsibility concerns how research is produced, shared, and connected to societal problems, and therefore what knowledge reaches students through teaching. Organizational responsibility concerns how the university treats its members, including students and staff, through governance, procedures, and working and learning conditions. Social responsibility concerns the university's engagement with communities, which frequently occurs through student projects, service-learning, and community-based research. USR is thus not an external addition to the educational mission; it is a way of judging how responsibly that mission is carried out.

The focal construct in this article is perceived USR: a staff member's assessment of the university's responsibility across these educational, research, organizational, and societal activities. This perception is distinct from the existence, quality, or independently verified outcomes of institutional practices, and it connects USR scholarship with research on how individuals evaluate organizational responsibility (Gond et al., 2017). A broad definition nevertheless creates a risk of conceptual overlap. If the organizational dimension of perceived USR is measured entirely through fair treatment or employee support, its relationships with organizational justice and POS may partly reflect duplicated content. The framework therefore

distinguishes the scope of each judgment. Perceived USR concerns responsibility across institutional activities and stakeholders. Organizational justice concerns the fairness of decisions and treatment that affect the staff member. POS concerns whether the university values the staff member's contributions and cares about his or her well-being.

3.2. How university staff experience university social responsibility

Staff rarely encounter USR as an abstract strategy. They experience it through the practices in which responsibility is translated into academic work. Teaching policies may require sustainability or civic content in curricula, service-learning components, or inclusive teaching practices. Research practices include ethical review, community-based or applied research, and decisions about how research funds and opportunities are distributed. Student-related decisions include admissions and support policies, handling of complaints and disputes, and provision for students with additional needs. Community engagement includes outreach projects, partnerships, and continuing education. Institutional governance determines who participates in these decisions and how transparently they are made. Each of these practices simultaneously expresses the university's responsibility toward external stakeholders and changes the content, workload, or conditions of staff work.

Recent evidence shows that these experiences shape how staff evaluate USR. Academics interviewed in two universities that had signed a USR declaration described a lack of information about the criteria used in decisions affecting them, including how research funds were distributed, alongside heavy teaching loads and publication pressure (Moczulska & Spodarczyk, 2025). They doubted that a general declaration would change institutional practice, and several expected that USR would add tasks to existing roles (Moczulska & Spodarczyk, 2025). Survey evidence also shows that knowledge and perceptions of USR differ across departments, between academic and administrative staff, and across age groups (Reichel et al., 2023). Perceived USR is therefore built from situated experiences rather than from institutional communication alone.

Staff experiences of USR also differ by role. Academic staff encounter USR mainly through teaching, research, and community engagement, where they exercise substantial professional autonomy over methods and content. For them, a USR initiative can be an extension of disciplinary interests, such as a community-based research project, or an externally imposed requirement, such as mandatory reporting of sustainability content in syllabi. Administrative and professional staff encounter USR mainly through student-facing services, operational procedures, and the implementation of institutional programs, often with less discretion over how initiatives are designed. The same initiative may thus enrich the work of one group and add procedural demands for another.

These experiences matter beyond the individual because they spread through academic units. Perceptions formed in one department shape how teaching teams cooperate, how student-facing services respond to students, and how much informal support new colleagues receive. When staff in a department see responsibility commitments matched by fair decisions and adequate resources, they are more likely to treat USR-related work as a shared professional task. When they see commitments that add work without recognition, the learning environment may lose the informal cooperation on which teaching quality depends. This is why the translation from institutional responsibility to staff behavior is an educational question and not only a human resource question.

3.3. Relational and motivational processes in academic workplaces

Micro-level CSR research provides an established basis for examining employee responses to organizational responsibility. Reviews organize this scholarship around individual perceptions, evaluations, and reactions, and meta-analytic evidence identifies several mechanisms and conditions connecting perceived responsibility with employee outcomes (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Gond et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2022). The contribution of a USR-OCB framework therefore does not lie in showing that favorable responses exist. It lies in specifying how distinct mechanisms operate through the practices of academic work.

The relational process distinguishes fairness judgments from trust. Organizational justice concerns the fairness of outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment, and explanations associated with organizational decisions (Colquitt et al., 2001). In universities, these judgments concern workload distribution, teaching assignments, promotion, and evaluation. Access to research opportunities and participation in institutional decisions also matter. Evidence from academic departments shows that perceived workload equity depends on identifiable conditions. Faculty in departments with transparent and clear workload practices and rotation of time-intensive roles were more likely to be satisfied with workload distribution and with their teaching and service activities (O'Meara et al., 2019). Women faculty, meanwhile, perform more internal service than men even after controlling for rank and field (Guarino & Borden, 2017). Such patterns give staff concrete information about whether the university's responsibility commitments extend to its own internal decisions.

Organizational trust concerns willingness to accept vulnerability based on favorable expectations about the institution (Mayer et al., 1995). A judgment that a teaching allocation was fair and an expectation that the university will act reliably in future decisions about promotion or research support are related but analytically different. Social exchange theory explains why staff may respond to favorable treatment with contributions beyond formal obligations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). However, reciprocity requires staff first to connect a USR practice with the institution and to regard it as relevant to their own relationship with it. The justice-trust sequence addresses this interpretive step.

The motivational process addresses a different question: whether responsibility-related academic activities can support interest and enjoyment in staff work. Self-determination theory distinguishes intrinsic motivation from extrinsic motivation that has been internalized and personally endorsed (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Academics already differ in their motivation for teaching and research, and self-determined motivation for teaching is associated with the use of effective teaching practices (Stupnisky et al., 2018). The framework must therefore separate two sources of motivation. The first is motivation inherent in teaching or research as such, which exists independently of USR. The second is additional interest generated by responsibility-related academic activities. Examples include service-learning course design, community-partner research, and materials for underserved learners. Such activities can offer autonomy and opportunities to use and extend professional competence. Only the second source is attributed to USR in the proposed framework.

This distinction has direct educational consequences. Staff who undertake responsibility-related teaching because they find it interesting are more likely to sustain and improve it than staff who comply with a requirement. Teachers' autonomous motivation for teaching has also been linked to students' autonomous

motivation for learning (Roth et al., 2007). Conversely, a USR initiative implemented through compulsory participation, close monitoring, or additional reporting without discretion would not activate the motivational process, even if staff endorse the university's social mission. The motivational pathway thus remains distinct from the relational pathway: confidence in the institution and interest in responsibility-related work need not develop together.

3.4. Work engagement and citizenship in academic work

Engagement scholarship concerns the investment of the self in work and the experience of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002). The framework uses work engagement to refer to involvement in one's work rather than identification with the university or a general favorable attitude toward it. Trust concerns expectations about the institution; intrinsic motivation concerns the reason for undertaking an activity; engagement concerns the energetic involvement with which staff carry out their teaching, research, and service.

A specific rationale is needed for placing engagement between these responses and citizenship in academic settings, because collegiality, professional norms, and service expectations may already encourage discretionary contributions. Two considerations support the proposed position. First, a trust-based explanation alone appears insufficient. Among academics in Pakistani universities, trust mediated the relationship between perceived CSR and affective commitment but not between perceived CSR and OCB (Ahmad et al., 2020). Trust may make involvement less risky without itself producing additional effort. Second, collegial norms increasingly define a baseline of expected service rather than discretionary contribution. Analysis of promotion criteria shows that institutional service is now formally recognized as part of the academic workload across roles, whereas service to students remains largely invisible (Smith & Walker, 2024). Norms thus explain why staff perform the expected minimum of collegial service; engagement explains why some staff contribute beyond that minimum, and with greater initiative, when relational confidence or intrinsic interest is present. Engagement is therefore proposed as the state through which favorable interpretations of USR become additional discretionary effort, not as the only source of academic citizenship.

OCB represents the behavioral outcome. Foundational scholarship distinguishes citizenship directed toward individuals (OCB-I) from citizenship directed toward the organization (OCB-O) (Organ, 1988; Williams & Anderson, 1991; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Higher education research adds that academic citizenship serves several overlapping communities, including students, colleagues, institutions, disciplines or professions, and the wider public (Macfarlane, 2007). For the purposes of this framework, three targets within the university are distinguished, as illustrated in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Illustrative forms of OCB in university settings

Target	Illustrative discretionary behavior	Likely motivational basis	Primary educational consequence
Colleagues (OCB-I)	Sharing syllabi, assessment designs, or teaching practices; informally mentoring newly appointed lecturers; covering classes during a colleague's absence; co-authoring with junior colleagues	Collegial relationships and reciprocity among peers	Continuity and quality of teaching; professional development of new staff; research collaboration

Continuation Table:

Target	Illustrative discretionary behavior	Likely motivational basis	Primary educational consequence
Students (individual-directed, beyond role)	Providing consultation outside scheduled hours; informal academic, career, or well-being guidance; supporting student projects beyond assessment requirements	Professional identity as an educator; intrinsic interest in teaching	Student support, progression, and learning experience
Institution (OCB-O)	Volunteering for curriculum revision or accreditation work beyond assigned duties; proposing improvements to teaching or administrative processes; representing the university in community initiatives	Trust in the institution and confidence that contributions will be used fairly	Institutional functioning, program quality, and societal engagement

Note. Whether a behavior constitutes OCB depends on the staff member's formal role and institutional expectations. For example, mentoring is in-role for staff formally assigned as mentors, and committee work may be contractual in some appointments.

These targets may reflect different motives and produce different educational consequences. Helping colleagues is rooted primarily in relationships among peers and may persist even when trust in the institution is low. Supporting students informally draws on professional identity and interest in teaching, and is therefore closely related to the motivational pathway. Contributing to institutional initiatives requires confidence that the institution will use contributions fairly and recognize them, and is therefore closely related to the relational pathway. The framework retains OCB as a multidimensional domain and treats differences among these targets as a central question for empirical testing rather than assuming that the proposed relationships are uniform.

3.5. Organizational support and the interpretation of responsibility

POS concerns employees' beliefs that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In universities, support is experienced through concrete practices: time release or workload credit for participation in USR initiatives, funding for teaching development and research, recognition of service in evaluation and promotion, and attention to staff well-being during periods of heavy teaching or institutional change. POS is analytically distinct from perceived USR because its referent is the university's relationship with its staff rather than its responsibilities across stakeholders. It is also distinct from justice: staff can judge a workload procedure fair without believing that the university provides adequate support for the work it assigns.

This distinction makes POS relevant to the interpretation of responsibility. Staff may compare the university's external commitments with their own experience of support when judging what those commitments imply about the institution's trustworthiness. A university that publicizes community engagement while giving no workload credit to the staff who deliver it provides inconsistent information. The proposed moderation concerns the strength of the direct perceived USR-trust relationship. It does not redefine POS as a measure of authenticity or imply moderation of the justice-mediated sequence.

3.6. Organizational features of universities that condition these relationships

Four features of universities are expected to shape how the proposed mechanisms operate. They are treated as contextual conditions rather than as additional constructs in the core model, in order to preserve its parsimony while specifying why the framework is situated in higher education.

First, role type distinguishes academic from administrative staff. Because the two groups experience USR through different practices and exercise different degrees of discretion, the motivational pathway is expected to be more relevant where staff can shape responsibility-related activities, typically in academic roles. The relational pathway may be equally relevant to both groups, since both are affected by decisions about workload, evaluation, and participation.

Second, professional autonomy and disciplinary identity shape how USR initiatives are received. Academic identities are anchored partly in disciplines and in the freedom to define one's own teaching and research agenda (Henkel, 2005). USR initiatives that align with disciplinary interests and leave room for professional judgment are likely to support intrinsic motivation. Initiatives experienced as external constraints on academic autonomy may instead be resisted, even when their social aims are endorsed.

Third, collegial norms and expectations of academic citizenship provide alternative sources of discretionary behavior. Colleague-directed citizenship may be sustained by peer relationships and professional norms regardless of institutional USR, whereas institution-directed citizenship depends more on staff confidence in the university (Macfarlane, 2007; Smith & Walker, 2024). These norms do not make engagement redundant, but they imply that the explanatory contribution of the proposed pathways should be greatest for institution-directed and student-directed contributions that exceed normative expectations.

Fourth, workload, evaluation, and promotion systems determine whether participation in USR is recognized. Where publication metrics dominate evaluation and service is poorly rewarded, staff may perceive USR-related work as a cost borne disproportionately by some colleagues, which lowers justice judgments and limits the opportunity to contribute beyond formal duties (Guarino & Borden, 2017; O'Meara et al., 2019; Moczulska & Spodarczyk, 2025). Where workload models credit such work transparently, the same initiatives may strengthen fairness perceptions and create space for voluntary contribution.

Taken together, the synthesis identifies two proposed sequences, one boundary condition, and four contextual conditions. The relational sequence connects responsibility perceptions with fairness judgments, trust, engagement, and citizenship. The motivational sequence connects responsibility perceptions with intrinsic interest in responsibility-related academic work, engagement, and citizenship. POS qualifies the direct inference from perceived USR to trust. Role type, professional autonomy, collegial norms, and workload and promotion systems shape the strength of these relationships across university settings. Section 4 develops the corresponding propositions.

4. Conceptual framework and propositions

Figure 1 presents the proposed framework. It specifies two pathways from perceived USR to OCB. The relational pathway connects perceived USR with organizational justice, organizational trust, work engagement, and OCB. The

motivational pathway connects perceived USR with intrinsic motivation, work engagement, and OCB. A direct perceived USR-trust relationship is also retained, with POS proposed as its moderator. All constructs refer to individual staff members' perceptions, states, or behavior; institutional USR practices are the object of evaluation and are not treated as interchangeable with staff perceptions. The contextual conditions identified in Section 3.6 (role type, professional autonomy, collegial norms, and workload and promotion systems) may shape these relationships but are not modeled as additional constructs or formal moderators. The framework contains eight numbered propositions (P1-P8); P7a and P7b label the two serial routes within Proposition 7, rather than two additional propositions.

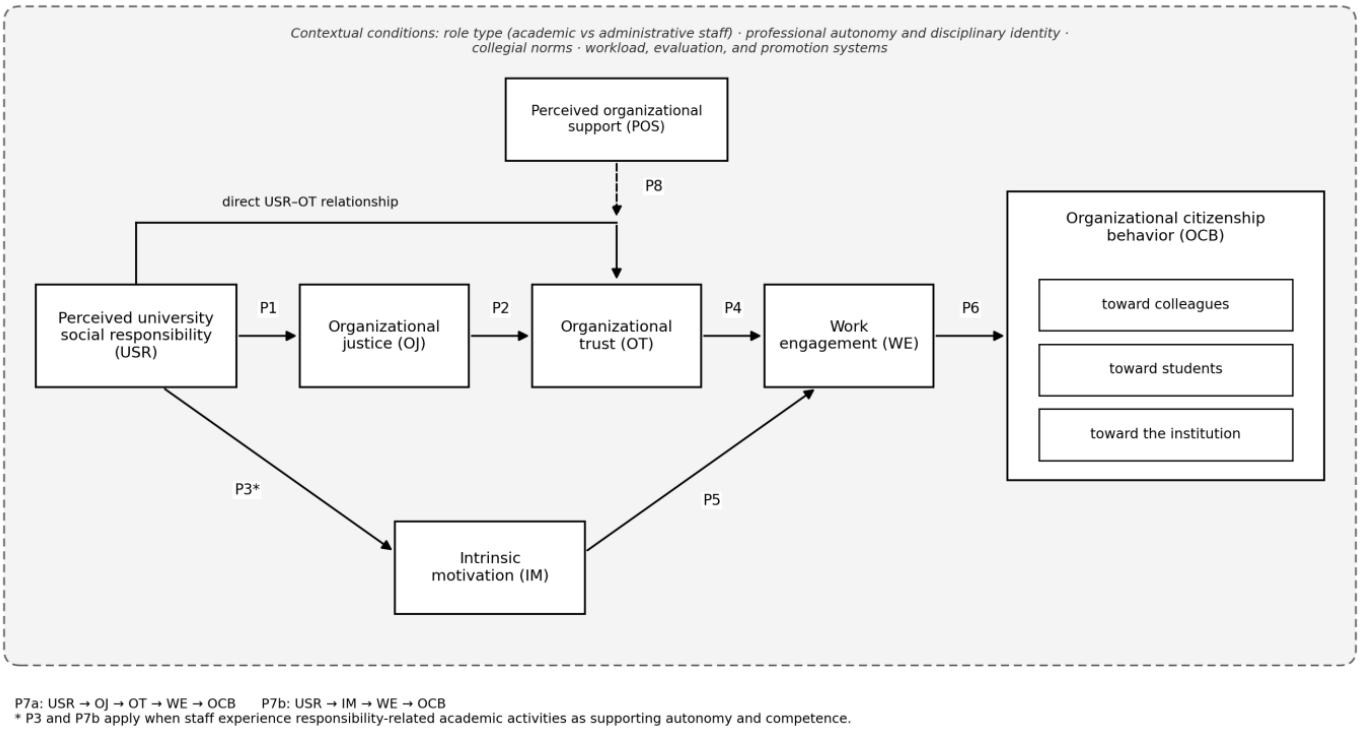


Figure 1. Theory-synthesis model linking perceived university social responsibility to staff organizational citizenship behavior

Note. Solid arrows represent the proposed relational and motivational pathways. The dashed arrow represents the moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the direct perceived USR-trust relationship. OCB is differentiated by target: colleagues, students, and the institution. Contextual conditions (role type, professional autonomy, collegial norms, and workload and promotion systems) are expected to influence the strength of the relationships and are shown as a surrounding frame rather than as modeled constructs. P7a and P7b denote the two serial pathways within Proposition 7. Autonomy and competence support are contextual scope conditions for P3/P7b, not modeled interaction effects; POS in P8 is the sole formal moderator. All relationships are theoretical and require empirical testing.

The proposed sequences distinguish judgments about institutional conduct from motivation and involvement in work. They do not imply that staff always form these responses in a fixed order or that engagement is the only route to citizenship. For each proposition, the theoretical mechanism is stated first, followed by its expression in academic workplaces.

4.1. Perceived university social responsibility and organizational justice

Organizational justice concerns the fairness of decision outcomes, procedures, interpersonal treatment, and explanations (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Staff form these judgments from specific encounters with decisions, but broader observations of institutional conduct also inform their expectations about how competing interests will be handled. USR provides such information because it concerns the university's obligations toward multiple stakeholders. Staff who observe transparent decisions, attention to the consequences of decisions for students and communities, and accountability for institutional impacts may infer that the university applies principles that extend beyond immediate institutional advantage. These observations can inform judgments about whether the university's own decisions and procedures are fair.

In academic workplaces, this inference is tested against the decisions that most directly affect staff. A university that publicly commits to responsible education is expected to allocate teaching loads, assign courses, distribute research funds, and evaluate staff according to transparent and consistent criteria. When staff see responsibility commitments accompanied by clear workload models, published promotion criteria, and genuine consultation on curriculum and governance decisions, perceived USR and perceived justice are likely to reinforce each other. When the same commitments coexist with opaque allocation of teaching and research opportunities, or when responsibility-related tasks fall disproportionately on particular groups of staff, the inference weakens (Guarino & Borden, 2017; O'Meara et al., 2019).

The mechanism is therefore an inference, not a definitional claim that a responsible university is necessarily perceived as fair. Staff may distinguish external responsibility from internal treatment, and direct experiences of unfair decisions may override broader favorable impressions. For the same reason, perceived USR must retain its broader institutional referent. If it is measured mainly through items asking whether staff are treated fairly, the resulting relationship offers little evidence for the proposed mechanism.

Proposition 1. *Perceived university social responsibility is positively associated with staff perceptions of organizational justice*.

4.2. Organizational justice and organizational trust

Trust entails willingness to accept vulnerability based on favorable expectations about another party (Mayer et al., 1995). Applied to the staff-university relationship, organizational trust concerns whether staff expect the institution to act reliably and with regard for their legitimate interests in decisions they cannot fully control. Justice judgments provide information relevant to these expectations. Fair procedures indicate that decisions are constrained by rules rather than by arbitrary preferences, and respectful treatment and adequate explanations show how the institution responds to those affected by its decisions. Over time, such experiences reduce uncertainty about the exercise of institutional authority (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In academic workplaces, the vulnerability involved is concrete. Staff depend on the university for decisions about contract renewal, promotion, teaching assignments, and access to research resources, often over time horizons of several years. A lecturer who accepts an additional curriculum-development role, or who invests time in a community-engagement project that does not produce publications, accepts the risk that this work will not be recognized. Fair and transparent decisions in the past make it more reasonable to expect that such investments will be treated fairly in the future.

Justice is therefore positioned before trust in the relational sequence. Perceived

USR supplies broad information about institutional conduct; justice judgments translate part of that information into an assessment of fairness; trust concerns expectations about future vulnerability. The sequence does not require all trust-relevant information to pass through justice. Staff may also infer institutional benevolence or integrity directly from responsibility practices, which supports retaining the direct USR-trust relationship examined in Section 4.8.

Proposition 2. *Organizational justice is positively associated with organizational trust and partly mediates the positive relationship between perceived university social responsibility and organizational trust*.

4.3. Perceived university social responsibility and intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation concerns undertaking an activity because it is interesting or enjoyable. It differs from undertaking that activity because its outcomes are personally valued, even when the individual freely endorses those outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Approval of a university's social mission is therefore insufficient to establish intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory proposes that social conditions supporting autonomy and competence sustain intrinsic motivation, whereas controlling conditions undermine it (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

In academic workplaces, USR is enacted through activities that can provide these conditions. Designing a service-learning course allows a lecturer to experiment with new teaching approaches. Conducting research with a community partner allows a researcher to work on problems with direct practical consequences. Developing support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds allows staff to apply professional expertise in new ways. These activities can make the work itself more interesting and satisfying, beyond the value attached to its social outcome. The relevant motivation is distinct from the motivation staff already derive from teaching or research in general (Stupnisky et al., 2018). The proposition concerns the additional interest generated by responsibility-related academic activities, not a general increase in work motivation.

The scope of the relationship follows from this mechanism. USR is expected to support intrinsic motivation when staff have discretion over how they participate and when the activity uses and extends their professional competence. A highly publicized initiative accompanied by compulsory participation, close monitoring, standardized reporting, or additional tasks without discretion would not provide the same conditions, and may undermine motivation, particularly among academic staff whose professional identity rests on autonomy (Henkel, 2005). Autonomy and competence support define the contextual scope of this mechanism. They are not specified as separate mediators or formal moderators in the present model; their conditioning role can be examined in future empirical research.

Proposition 3. *Perceived university social responsibility is positively associated with intrinsic motivation for responsibility-related academic work*.

4.4. Organizational trust and work engagement

Work engagement concerns the investment of cognitive, emotional, and physical energies in work and the experience of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Such investment exposes staff to uncertainty, because contributing ideas, seeking help, and committing effort to activities with uncertain outcomes may involve professional or interpersonal vulnerability. Organizational trust makes this investment more acceptable. Staff who expect dependable and considerate institutional conduct have less reason to anticipate that their involvement will be

exploited, and therefore less need for defensive withdrawal (Kahn, 1990).

In academic workplaces, this mechanism applies to forms of involvement that carry career risk. Redesigning a course around active learning may initially lower student evaluations. Joining an interdisciplinary or community-based project may delay publications. Raising concerns about curriculum or student support in faculty meetings may expose staff to conflict. Staff who trust that the university will judge such efforts fairly are more likely to invest themselves fully in their teaching and research rather than limit their effort to what is safely rewarded.

Trust does not supply unlimited energy or remove workload constraints. A lecturer may trust the university while remaining exhausted by heavy teaching loads or unable to engage fully because of inadequate resources. The proposed relationship is therefore probabilistic: trust is expected to facilitate engagement without being sufficient to produce it.

Proposition 4. *Organizational trust is positively associated with work engagement.*

4.5. Intrinsic motivation and work engagement

Intrinsic motivation provides a reason to undertake and sustain an activity, whereas engagement describes involvement while working. Staff who find their activities interesting have a basis for directing attention and effort toward them without relying solely on external demands, which supports persistence and absorption (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002).

In academic workplaces, intrinsic interest in responsibility-related activities can extend to involvement in work more broadly. A lecturer who finds a community-based teaching project rewarding may bring renewed energy to course design and student interaction. A researcher who enjoys collaborating with external partners may become more absorbed in related research. Because responsibility-related activities are often embedded in regular teaching and research rather than separated from them, interest generated in one part of the role can sustain involvement in the role as a whole.

Conceptual proximity nevertheless requires caution. Intrinsic motivation and engagement must be represented by distinct content for the relationship to be informative. If both are measured through nearly identical statements about enjoyment or enthusiasm, their association may reflect overlapping measurement rather than the proposed motivational process.

Proposition 5. *Intrinsic work motivation is positively associated with work engagement.*

4.6. Work engagement and organizational citizenship behavior

Engagement and OCB differ in form and scope. Engagement is a state of involvement in work; OCB comprises discretionary behavior directed toward individuals or the organization (Williams & Anderson, 1991; Saks, 2006). Staff can be fully engaged in assigned tasks without contributing beyond them. The proposed relationship rests on the possibility that active involvement extends to contributions supporting the wider work environment: engaged staff are more attentive to colleagues' needs, more aware of problems in teaching and student support, and more likely to see opportunities for improvement.

In academic workplaces, this extension takes the forms illustrated in **Table 1**. An engaged lecturer may share a successful teaching approach with colleagues, spend additional time helping a struggling student, or volunteer for a curriculum review. As argued in Section 3.4, collegial norms already sustain a baseline of expected

service. Engagement is proposed to explain contributions that exceed this baseline, and its effect is expected to be strongest for student-directed and institution-directed contributions, which are less fully sustained by peer relationships than colleague-directed help.

This extension is not automatic. Heavy teaching loads and publication pressure may absorb engaged staff's available effort within formal duties. Institutional expectations may also convert activities described as voluntary into implicit obligations. The proposition therefore concerns an increased likelihood of citizenship where staff have opportunities to contribute beyond their prescribed roles; it does not imply that engaged staff should be expected to provide unlimited additional work.

Proposition 6. *Work engagement is positively associated with organizational citizenship behavior directed toward colleagues, students, and the institution*.

4.7. Two serial pathways from perceived USR to OCB

The preceding relationships define two serial explanations of how perceived USR may relate to citizenship. In the relational pathway, staff interpret responsibility as information about institutional conduct. This information informs fairness judgments about workload, assignments, evaluation, and participation; fairness judgments contribute to trust; trust supports investment in work; and engagement increases the likelihood of discretionary contribution. Each construct performs a different function: perceived USR supplies the broad responsibility perception, justice the fairness evaluation, trust the willingness to accept vulnerability, engagement the involvement in work, and OCB the behavior.

The motivational pathway does not require favorable responses to arise from reciprocity. Responsibility-related academic activities may generate intrinsic interest that sustains engagement and discretionary contribution. As explained in Section 4.3, this mechanism is most plausible where such activities support autonomy and competence; these are contextual scope conditions, not a formally modeled interaction. This pathway distinguishes finding responsibility-related work interesting from evaluating the university as fair or trustworthy.

The two pathways are expected to relate differently to the targets of citizenship. The relational pathway, which runs through trust in the institution, is expected to be most relevant to institution-directed contributions such as voluntary participation in curriculum and quality-assurance work. The motivational pathway, which runs through interest in academic activities, is expected to be most relevant to student-directed contributions. These differential expectations are offered for empirical assessment rather than as separate propositions. The sequences are complementary rather than exhaustive: trust and intrinsic motivation may coexist, and both may relate to citizenship through routes not represented here. Separate positive relationships between adjacent constructs would be insufficient to establish the proposed sequence, which requires direct comparison with alternative orderings and shorter pathways.

Proposition 7. *Perceived university social responsibility is positively associated with organizational citizenship behavior through two theoretically proposed serial indirect pathways: (a) P7a: perceived USR → organizational justice → organizational trust → work engagement → OCB; and (b) P7b: perceived USR → intrinsic motivation → work engagement → OCB. P7b is subject to the contextual scope conditions discussed in Section 4.3. Both pathways require empirical testing*.

4.8. Perceived organizational support as a moderator of the direct USR-trust relationship

POS reflects staff beliefs that the university values their contributions and cares

about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It provides information about the staff member's own relationship with the institution, whereas perceived USR concerns responsibility across a broader range of activities and stakeholders. The direct USR-trust relationship involves an inference about institutional benevolence or integrity from responsibility practices. POS is expected to affect the strength of that inference. When staff perceive substantial support, their own treatment is consistent with a favorable interpretation of institutional responsibility, and responsibility toward students and communities is more readily regarded as evidence of dependable institutional conduct.

In academic workplaces, this consistency is visible in specific practices. A university that promotes community engagement and also grants workload credit, funding, and recognition to the staff who deliver it signals that its responsibility extends to those staff. A university that promotes the same engagement while expecting staff to absorb it within existing workloads, without recognition in evaluation, signals a gap between external commitments and internal treatment (Moczulska & Spodarczyk, 2025). Under low support, external commitments provide a weaker basis for trusting the institution with staff interests. The proposed effect is attenuation of the positive USR-trust relationship; a reversal into distrust would require additional reasoning and is not assumed.

POS is not treated as a measure of authenticity or consistency. Rather, staff experience of support is proposed to influence how much trust-relevant information they derive from USR. The moderation applies to the direct USR-trust relationship after accounting for organizational justice; it does not establish that POS moderates the USR-justice or justice-trust relationships.

Proposition 8. *Perceived organizational support positively moderates the direct relationship between perceived university social responsibility and organizational trust, such that the relationship is stronger at higher levels of POS, after accounting for organizational justice*.

5. Discussion

5.1. Contributions to higher education research

This article develops a theory-synthesis framework explaining how university staff's perceptions of USR may translate into citizenship behavior that supports teaching, research, and student support. Prior micro-level CSR research has established links between responsibility perceptions and favorable employee responses (Gond et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2022). The present contribution is to explain how these responses depend on the conditions of academic work. Three contributions follow.

First, the framework relocates the USR-OCB relationship from a generic employee-organization exchange to the practices through which staff actually encounter USR. Existing studies in academic settings have largely tested whether perceived responsibility predicts staff attitudes and behavior (Ahmad et al., 2020) or described how staff perceive USR (Reichel et al., 2023; Moczulska & Spodarczyk, 2025). The present framework connects these two lines of work by identifying the decisions that convert institutional commitments into staff judgments: workload allocation, teaching assignments, evaluation and promotion, access to research opportunities, and participation in governance. Perceived USR is thus explained as a situated interpretation formed in academic units rather than as a reaction to institutional communication.

Second, the framework separates two processes that are often merged in research on responsibility and employee behavior. The relational process concerns whether staff can trust the institution with their interests; the motivational process concerns whether responsibility-related academic activities make work more interesting. By distinguishing motivation generated by such activities from motivation inherent in teaching and research, the framework identifies when USR is likely to enrich academic work and when it is likely to be experienced as an additional burden. This distinction responds to evidence that staff may endorse the social purposes of USR while doubting institutional commitments and fearing added workload (Moczulska & Spodarczyk, 2025).

Third, the framework connects organizational behavior research on OCB with higher education research on academic citizenship. Scholarship on academic citizenship has emphasized that service is directed toward several communities and is unevenly recognized and distributed (Macfarlane, 2007; Guarino & Borden, 2017; Smith & Walker, 2024), but it has rarely specified the psychological mechanisms through which institutional practices shape such service. Organizational behavior research has specified these mechanisms but has rarely distinguished students as a target of discretionary behavior. By differentiating citizenship directed toward colleagues, students, and the institution, and by expecting the relational and motivational pathways to relate differently to these targets, the framework links staff behavior to distinct educational consequences.

Organizational justice is represented as an overall fairness judgment to preserve parsimony in this theory-synthesis model, not because its dimensions are interchangeable. Distributive justice concerns outcomes such as workload allocation; procedural justice concerns the consistency and transparency of promotion and resource-allocation processes. Interpersonal justice concerns respectful treatment, whereas informational justice concerns the adequacy of explanations for institutional decisions (Colquitt, 2001). These dimensions may relate differently to organizational trust across academic and administrative roles. Future research should compare the aggregate justice specification with dimension-specific pathways rather than assume equivalent effects.

5.2. Implications for teaching, learning, and university management

The framework suggests that the educational value of USR depends on how universities align external commitments with the conditions of staff work. Four implications follow. They are presented as theoretically derived possibilities rather than empirically established recommendations.

First, fair and transparent workload allocation is a precondition for USR to support rather than erode teaching. When responsibility-related teaching, community engagement, and student support are credited in workload models, staff are less likely to experience USR as a hidden cost borne by some colleagues. Departmental practices such as clear workload expectations, transparent reporting of how work is distributed, and rotation of time-intensive roles have been associated with greater satisfaction with workload distribution and with teaching and service activities (O'Meara et al., 2019). Such practices protect the time staff need for course preparation and student interaction, which in turn sustains the quality of the learning environment.

Second, USR initiatives in teaching are more likely to sustain staff motivation when they are designed around professional autonomy. Embedding social responsibility in courses that lecturers design, for instance through service-learning or community-based projects chosen with disciplinary relevance, is more likely to

support intrinsic interest than requiring standardized content or additional compliance reporting. Because teachers' autonomous motivation for teaching has been linked to students' autonomous motivation for learning (Roth et al., 2007), the way USR is introduced to staff may affect how students experience responsibility-related learning.

Third, universities can recognize the forms of citizenship that most directly support learners. Informal student support and help among colleagues often remain invisible in evaluation and promotion (Smith & Walker, 2024). Recognition through teaching awards, peer review of teaching contributions, or acknowledgement in promotion narratives can signal that such contributions are valued. However, recognition should not convert voluntary contributions into implicit obligations, because doing so would shift work onto staff who are already most willing to contribute and would weaken the discretionary basis of citizenship.

Fourth, support should precede or accompany USR commitments rather than follow them. Workload credit, funding, training, and visible management attention to staff well-being make external commitments credible to staff and, according to Proposition 8, strengthen the trust that staff derive from USR. Involving academic and administrative staff in diagnosing needs and designing USR strategies may further reduce skepticism about commitments perceived as declarative (Moczulska & Spodarczyk, 2025). Because academic and administrative staff experience USR through different practices, these measures should be tailored to each group: autonomy in designing responsibility-related activities is most relevant to academic staff, whereas clear procedures, adequate resources, and recognition of student-facing work are most relevant to administrative staff.

5.3. Research agenda

The propositions are intended for empirical assessment, and several directions follow from the framework. First, measurement requires construct separation. Instruments for perceived USR, such as stakeholder-based scales (Latif, 2018), should be reviewed to ensure that items on internal treatment do not duplicate measures of justice or POS, and intrinsic motivation and work engagement should be measured with clearly distinct content. Researchers should also distinguish motivation for responsibility-related activities from motivation for teaching and research in general (Stupnisky et al., 2018).

A further measurement and model-comparison priority is to distinguish distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. Researchers should test whether workload outcomes, promotion procedures, interpersonal treatment, and institutional explanations have different associations with trust, and compare these models with the aggregate justice specification. The two serial indirect effects in Proposition 7 (P7a and P7b) should be tested separately against direct, shorter, and reverse-order alternatives; neither has been established empirically by this conceptual article.

Second, research designs should match the sequential claims. Multi-wave surveys could test whether justice precedes trust and whether trust and intrinsic motivation precede engagement. Researchers should compare these sequences with direct paths, alternative orderings, and possible reverse causation. Multilevel designs can capture department-level workload practices and leadership, which may shape staff perceptions of USR beyond individual differences. Ratings of citizenship from colleagues, supervisors, or students would reduce reliance on self-reports.

Third, the differential expectations in Section 4.7 can be tested directly. Studies can examine whether the relational pathway relates more strongly to institution-

directed citizenship and the motivational pathway more strongly to student-directed citizenship, and whether these patterns differ between academic and administrative staff.

Fourth, the contextual conditions in Section 3.6 can be examined as moderators. Comparisons across institutions with different workload and promotion systems, degrees of professional autonomy, and governance arrangements would show where the proposed mechanisms are strongest. Such comparisons are particularly relevant in higher education systems undergoing rapid change in governance and institutional autonomy, and between public and private institutions whose staff relationships and resource conditions differ.

Fifth, the educational consequences of staff citizenship warrant direct study. Research linking staff citizenship to student-reported support, teaching quality indicators, or the learning environment would test whether the framework's educational rationale holds. Qualitative studies of how staff interpret specific USR initiatives would complement these designs by revealing interpretations that survey measures may miss.

5.4. Limitations

Several limitations qualify the framework. First, the synthesis is purposive rather than exhaustive. Literature was selected to identify mechanisms, construct boundaries, and contextual conditions, not to estimate effects or map the entire field, and other relevant mechanisms, such as organizational identification, may have been excluded to preserve parsimony. Second, none of the eight propositions, including the two serial indirect routes within Proposition 7, has been tested in this conceptual article. Third, the contextual conditions in Section 3.6 are specified qualitatively and are not formalized as propositions; their effects may be more complex than the framework suggests. Fourth, the relationships may be reciprocal. Engaged staff who perform citizenship behavior may come to perceive their university as more responsible and fair, so cross-sectional associations cannot establish the proposed direction. Finally, the framework treats staff responses at the individual level, whereas USR is implemented through departments and institutional cultures that vary across national higher education systems. The mechanisms may therefore operate differently across cultural and regulatory contexts.

6. Conclusion

Universities rely on staff contributions that exceed formal duties to sustain teaching quality, student support, research collaboration, and engagement with society. This article has argued that university social responsibility can strengthen these contributions, but only when staff experience it as consistent with fair treatment and meaningful academic work. The proposed framework explains this possibility through two pathways. In the relational pathway, staff read USR as information about how the university makes decisions on workload, assignments, evaluation, and participation, and fair decisions build the trust that makes investment in work acceptable. In the motivational pathway, responsibility-related academic activities that respect professional autonomy and develop competence make work more interesting. Both pathways converge on work engagement, which increases the likelihood that staff help colleagues, support students beyond their formal duties, and contribute to institutional initiatives. Perceived organizational support strengthens the trust that staff derive from external responsibility commitments.

For higher education, the central implication is that USR is enacted through staff

work rather than alongside it. Responsibility commitments that add unrecognized tasks may weaken the voluntary collaboration on which teaching and learning depend, whereas commitments supported by fair workload allocation, professional autonomy, and recognition may reinforce it. The framework offers eight propositions and a research agenda for testing these mechanisms across staff groups, citizenship targets, and institutional settings, and for examining their consequences for the learning environment.

Author contributions: Conceptualization, Thanh Hai Phan, Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen, and Thi Phuong Thao Nguyen; methodology, Thanh Hai Phan, Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen, and Thi Phuong Thao Nguyen; validation, Thanh Hai Phan, Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen, and Thi Phuong Thao Nguyen; investigation, Thanh Hai Phan, Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen, and Thi Phuong Thao Nguyen; resources, Thanh Hai Phan, Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen, and Thi Phuong Thao Nguyen; writing—original draft preparation, Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen; writing—review and editing, Thanh Hai Phan, Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen, and Thi Phuong Thao Nguyen; visualization, Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen; supervision, Thanh Hai Phan and Thi Phuong Thao Nguyen; project administration, Thi Thanh Trang Nguyen. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: None.

Acknowledgments: None.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Aguinis, H., & Glavas, A. (2012). What we know and don't know about corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Management, 38*(4), 932-968. doi: 10.1177/0149206311436079

[2] Ahmad, R., Ahmad, S., Islam, T., & Kaleem, A. (2020). The nexus of corporate social responsibility (CSR), affective commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour in academia: A model of trust. Employee Relations, 42(1), 232-247. doi: 10.1108/ER-04-2018-0105

[3] Ali, M., Mustapha, I., Osman, S., & Hassan, U. (2021). University social responsibility: A review of conceptual evolution and its thematic analysis. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 286*, 124931. doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.124931

[4] Colquitt, J. A. (2001). On the dimensionality of organizational justice: A construct validation of a measure. Journal of Applied Psychology, 86(3), 386-400. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.386

[5] Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C. O. L. H., & Ng, K. Y. (2001). Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. Journal of Applied Psychology, 86(3), 425-445. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.425

[6] Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management, 31*(6), 874-900. doi: 10.1177/0149206305279602

[7] Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. Journal of Applied Psychology, 71(3), 500-507. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.71.3.500

[8] Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). Self-determination theory and work motivation. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 26(4), 331-362. doi: 10.1002/job.322

[9] Gond, J., El Akremi, A., Swaen, V., & Babu, N. (2017). The psychological microfoundations of corporate social responsibility: A person-centric systematic review. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 38*(2), 225-246. doi: 10.1002/job.2170

[10] Guarino, C. M., & Borden, V. M. H. (2017). Faculty service loads and gender: Are women taking care of the academic family? *Research in Higher Education, 58*(6), 672-694. doi: 10.1007/s11162-017-9454-2

[11] Henkel, M. (2005). Academic identity and autonomy in a changing policy environment. *Higher Education, 49*(1-2), 155-176.

doi: 10.1007/s10734-004-2919-1

[12] Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal, 33*(4), 692-724. doi: 10.5465/256287

[13] Latif, K. F. (2018). The development and validation of stakeholder-based scale for measuring university social responsibility (USR). *Social Indicators Research, 140*(2), 511-547. doi: 10.1007/s11205-017-1794-y

[14] Macfarlane, B. (2007). Defining and rewarding academic citizenship: The implications for university promotions policy. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 29*(3), 261-273. doi: 10.1080/13600800701457863

[15] Markus, E. D., & Govender, N. (2023). Can universities of technology in South Africa achieve transformation by promoting a culture of social responsibility among academic and student agents? *Public Organization Review, 23*(4), 1571-1589. doi: 10.1007/s11115-023-00701-9

[16] Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review, 20*(3), 709-734. doi: 10.5465/amr.1995.950808033

[17] Moczulska, M., & Spodarczyk, E. (2025). The actions of a university that is accountable towards internal stakeholders. The perspective of academics. *e-mentor, 3*(110), 21-31. doi: 10.15219/em110.1712

[18] O'Meara, K., Lennartz, C. J., Kuvaeva, A., Jaeger, A., & Misra, J. (2019). Department conditions and practices associated with faculty workload satisfaction and perceptions of equity. *The Journal of Higher Education, 90*(5), 744-772. doi: 10.1080/00221546.2019.1584025

[19] Organ, D. W. (1988). *Organizational citizenship behavior: The good soldier syndrome*. Lexington Books.

[20] Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Paine, J. B., & Bachrach, D. G. (2000). Organizational citizenship behaviors: A critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Management, 26*(3), 513-563. doi: 10.1177/014920630002600307

[21] Reichel, J., Rudnicka, A., & Socha, B. (2023). Perspectives of the academic employees on university social responsibility: A survey study. Social Responsibility Journal, 19(3), 486-503. doi: 10.1108/SRJ-08-2021-0336

[22] Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. Journal of Applied Psychology, 87(4), 698-714. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.87.4.698

[23] Roth, G., Assor, A., Kanat-Maymon, Y., & Kaplan, H. (2007). Autonomous motivation for teaching: How self-determined teaching may lead to self-determined learning. Journal of Educational Psychology, 99(4), 761-774. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.99.4.761

[24] Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. American Psychologist, 55(1), 68-78. doi: 10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68

[25] Saks, A. M. (2006). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 21(7), 600-619. doi: 10.1108/02683940610690169

[26] Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 3*(1), 71-92. doi: 10.1023/A:1015630930326

[27] Smith, S., & Walker, D. (2024). The instrumental academic: Collegiality and the value of academic citizenship in contemporary higher education. *Higher Education Quarterly, 78*(4), e12551. doi: 10.1111/hequ.12551

[28] Stupnisky, R. H., BrckaLorenz, A., Yuhas, B., & Guay, F. (2018). Faculty members' motivation for teaching and best practices: Testing a model based on self-determination theory across institution types. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 53, 15-26. doi: 10.1016/j.cedpsych.2018.01.004

[29] Vallaeys, F., de la Cruz, C., & Sasia, P. M. (2009). *Responsabilidad social universitaria: Manual de primeros pasos*. Inter-American Development Bank. doi: 10.18235/0012439

[30] Williams, L. J., & Anderson, S. E. (1991). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviors. Journal of Management, 17(3), 601-617. doi: 10.1177/014920639101700305

[31] Zhao, X., Wu, C., Chen, C. C., & Zhou, Z. (2022). The influence of corporate social responsibility on incumbent employees: A meta-analytic investigation of the mediating and moderating mechanisms. Journal of Management, 48(1), 114-146. doi: 10.1177/014920632094610