ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AND LEADERSHIP

Raluca RUSU

"Nicolae Bălcescu" Land Forces Academy, Sibiu, Romania
rbalasoiu@yahoo.com

Abstract: *In this paper we analyzed organizational trust on an intentionality sample of military personnel, starting from one of the most used theoretical and empirical models in the literature, namely the scale of Mayer and Davis (1999), built on three dimensions: competence, benevolence and integrity of the leader. The analysis shows that the confidence in the leader in the military organization is high on all three dimensions.*

Keywords: organizational trust, ability, benevolence, integrity, leadership

1. Introduction

The concept of trust has long been launched in the literature, but its direct applicability to organizational and managerial issues is relatively recent. The spectacular evolution of this topic has reached unexpected levels, which is able to open new perspectives on understanding and optimizing organizational behavior and organizational efficiency.

In the literature there are a multitude and a variety of definitions, which make it difficult to develop a unitary and coherent picture of the phenomenon in question. Starting from the idea that organizational reality implies interdependence in achieving organizational purposes, several models appeared in order to describe the mechanisms involved in minimizing the risk related with workplace relationships. Thus, probably the most appropriate approach to study the development and need for trust in organizational networks is that of social exchange, namely: "trust is mandatory in an exchange, before you know how the other person will react" [1], or "trust is the ability to rely on someone and to believe in colleagues and managers" [2].

But probably the simplest definition of trust is given by Stephen Covey (2006) who states: "simply put, trust means trust...when you trust people, you trust them, their integrity and their abilities" [3].

2. Dimensions of organizational trust

Mayer and Davis (1999) and after improved with explanations by Schoorman, Mayer and Davis (2007) present one of the most widely used models of organizational trust [4]. The model conceptualizes organizational trust based on three dimensions: competence, goodwill and perceived integrity, dimensions that can vary independently, but also interdependently in relation to others. The convergence of these three dimensions is where trust really exists. If one is missing, trust does not exist. Subordinates who believe that their superiors have these characteristics are more willing to engage in a certain required organizational behavior, even if it involves a certain risk. It was also argued that the three components can be treated as separate elements of the decision in the trust process. [5]. It is important to note that this model is used in the analysis

of trust given to leaders in an organizational context, which we will do.

Ability refers of characteristics, skills and competencies and that allow a person to have influence in a certain field. The skill area is specific because a trusted person may be extremely competent in certain technical areas, but may have little experience or training in another area. Although in such a person we can trust that he will perform the analytical tasks in his technical area, it is possible that individuals do not trust that he/she will initiate a contact with an member of organization. Thus, trust is field specific.

To be trusted, a member of the organization must be competent. This does not mean that he/she must be the best, but that must be able mentally, physically and emotionally to perform the tasks that his/her role imposes. If other members of the organization have to constantly help that person, or fix their mistakes, they will not be able to succeed. Moreover, leaders need to be competent in the field of activity, in order to coordinate the work of subordinates and to teach them how to achieve optimal results. Leaders need to be competent in understanding issues, even under the pressure of time, and also in organizing and presenting their ideas. When faced with a problem, they need to be able to understand the essence of the problem and know what questions to ask in order to find a solution.

Benevolence is caring for the other person, without having a personal interest. Positive intentions appear as signs of cooperation between individuals. Benevolence suggests a specific attachment to the person you trust. An example could be of the relationship between a leader and a subordinate. The leader wants to offers support to the subordinate, even if there is no egocentric profit. Leaders need to show that they understand the problems their subordinates face, that they value them and that they want the best for them. Positive intentions appear as signs of cooperation and proactive behavior of individuals.

It can be seen that in the literature, many researchers have analyzed some dimensions about prosocial behavior, similar to benevolence as a basis for trust. Some of them, described trust in the antithesis with the lying. This hypothesis is related with the point of view that perceived goodwill/benevolence it has an crucial role in assessing trust, in which a high level of benevolence would be inversely proportional to the ability to lie [6]. In the same vein, others researchers discussed loyalty among the determinants of trust [7] and suggested that trust in a leader is partially influenced by the extent to which the leader's shows support to the needs and expectations of individuals [8]. Thus, all these researchers used similar constructions of goodwill, concluding that this dimension has an important role in the trust process.

Integrity is another antecedent of organizational trust. It implies the perception of the one who invests trust, on the adherence of the targeted one, to a set of criteria that the first one considers acceptable. The degree to which a person is evaluated from the perspective of integrity depends on aspects such as: if the person's previous actions are consistent, if the information about them are credible, the belief that they have a strong sense of organizational justice and last but not least the fact that, their actions are congruent with what they say [9].

To build staff trust, leaders must demonstrate their values and principles, keeping their word that issues will be dealt with correctly, taking into account the system and context of incidents. Integrity is a quality that is developed by respecting moral principles. As one's integrity increases, so does their trust in others.

Integrity, ability and benevolence are important in the process of building trust. But, each of them, can vary independently of the others. This statement does not mean that the three dimensions are not related to each other, but only that they are separable. Also, each of the three dimensions can vary along a continuum. Although the simplest

case of high trust involves a high level of all three, there may be situations in which trust can develop even if one of the three dimensions has a lower level [10].

3. Research methodology

Next, we used this theoretical and empirical model in the analysis of leadership trust in the military organization. We tried to identify the level of trust in the leader but also which of the three dimensions of trust are considered to be more important, starting from the dimensions identified by Mayer and Davis (1999) [10]. In this approach we used the tool designed by the authors, composed of 17 items, organized on the dimensions of benevolence, integrity and competence. Thus, the first six items refer to the competence of the leader, the next five items refer to the goodwill of the leader, and the last six items refer to the integrity of the leader. The response measurement scale used is Likert's Scale, a seven-step response scale, in which 1 - strongly disagrees, and 5 - strongly agrees. *The intentionality sample* consisted of different military personnel from the point

of view of socio-demographic characteristics, the questionnaire being applied by Google Forms taking into consideration the special conditions due to the pandemic and the data analysis was done using the SPSS program.

4. Identifying the three dimensions of organizational trust

In order to be able to identify the level of trust in the leader and to see which of the three essential dimensions of trust predominates in the perception of military personnel, the averages of the items on each dimension were calculated.

As can be seen, (see Table 1) the perception of subordination, no matter what dimension of trust we are talking about, is positive. Trust is high (the average is over 4.5 in most cases) and does not vary depending on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. All three dimensions of the theoretical and empirical model are valued by the military personnel from the sample. Leader competence, benevolence and integrity are attributes that subordinates find in military leaders.

Table 1 Dimensions of organizational trust

Current no.	Dimensions of organizational trust	Average
Competence of the leader		
1.	My leader is very capable of doing his job.	4.73
2.	My leader successfully carries out the activities he/she has to undertake.	4.81
3.	The leader has a lot of knowledge about the work he/she has to do.	4.74
4.	I feel very confident in my leader's abilities.	4.72
5.	My leader has specific skills that can increase the performance of the organization.	4.79
6.	My leader is qualified in his/her job.	4.84
The benevolence of the leader		
7.	My leader is very concerned about the welfare of his/her subordinates.	4.85
8.	Knowingly, my leader would do nothing to hurt his/her subordinates.	4.83
9.	The needs and desires of subordinates are very important to my leader.	4.83
10	My leader really considers what is important for subordinates.	4.85

11.	My leader will do everything in his/her power to help his/her subordinates.	4.80
Leader integrity		
12.	My leader has a strong sense of justice.	4.90
13.	I never had to wonder if my leader would keep his/her word.	4.88
14.	My leader is trying his/her best to be fair to his/her subordinates.	4.86
15.	My leader's actions and behaviors are not consistent.	1.16
16.	I like my leader's values.	4.93
17.	Solid principles seem to guide my leader's behavior.	4.96

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the trust that leaders place in those they lead develops the ability of subordinates to excel in what they do.

Moreover, trust is not a momentary event, but a series of investments over time that will truly enable the success of organizations.

Definitely, confidence is crucial for those in leadership positions. Individuals are more likely to accept organizational decisions when they have confidence in management actions, even when actions are not conducive to individuals.

The organizational culture of trust involves manifestation of support, advice, listening; caring for each other, promoting clear values and norms, all common. Values sharing is the first step through which people are experimenting the highest form of trust, namely the unconditional trust. When organizations cannot rely on this

congruence of values, management must introduce and use a reliable form of impersonal, calculative trust with precise contractual clauses. Another direction of management that can increase trust is to encourage the participation of employees in decision making, which shows that a participative leadership style is favorable for building an organizational climate based on trust. The literature devoted to the study of organizational trust, it emphasizes the importance the self-lead teams because control mechanisms are reduced, and trust takes the place of supervision. How can managers versus leaders create an organizational climate in which people trust each other? The answer is complex: to communicate, which means talking and listening, to have a supportive conduct, by showing mutual respect, honesty, openness, consistency, fairness.

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