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Key words

Trust, management, discretionary extra-role behaviour, relational trust

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Introduction

O’Malley and Tynan (1997) contend that trust is a belief, expectation, confidence or perception that another party’s motives and intentions are honourable and that they will behave with integrity. As a result of this trust, individuals are willing to rely on the other party in an exchange relationship in order to achieve positive outcomes for themselves. Trust is important in a changing environment and Stompka (1999) argues that trusting becomes a crucial strategy for dealing with an uncertain and uncontrollable future. Weick (2001) also supports this and claims that unexpected problems that occur in difficult situations can only be handled by an organisation which places high importance on trust. Trust is having confidence in the ability, character, integrity and truth of a person and is an essential element in all social relations.

According to Fiol (2003), without trust in social relations, discretionary effort will be curtailed. When the level of trust is low, people are likely to be gripped by worry and fear, and will use their energies to protect themselves and limit personal involvement. Employees are primarily concerned with the commitment by the organisation to them and their perception that the organisational support will potentially provide benefits to them. An assessment that the organisation values their contribution and shows an interest in their well-being, is likely to create an expectation of approval, monetary rewards, access to resources and respect for the employee and may result in an employee engaging in positive discretionary extra-role behaviour.

Trust and the social capital connection

According to Tyler (2003), trust can be viewed as the perceptions about the future behaviours of others and the possible positive benefits or consequences that will result. This social capital view is that the other party is likely to behave in a fair and
ethical way. Tyler (2003) argues that this social or attitudinal approach, has an effect on internal motivations coming from, for example, enjoyment of the job. He argues that this motivation is likely to be much more valuable than outcomes that might result from institutional or external factors affecting motivation. Tyler (2003) in fact claims that attitudes (commitment and intrinsic motivation) are the most important predictors of extra-role behaviours (Multiple regression $\beta = 0.54 \ p < 0.001$). This suggests that emphasis should be placed on obtaining support from employees rather than trying to shape their behaviour via sanctions or incentives.

In a similar way, Beccerra and Gupta (1999) argue that a reliance on agency theory, rather than the development of an environment of trust, is likely to involve higher organisational transaction costs. Under agency theory, relationships are designed to minimise the cost of transactions to the principal. However to overcome the risks involved, the principal needs to either (i) provide incentives for the agent to act in the interests of the principal, or (ii) monitor the actions of the agent to ensure compliance. As above, a reliance on incentives and monitoring is likely to be associated with high cost relationships, where managers spend considerable amounts of time, money and energy in seeking compliance. On the other hand, high-trust relationships enjoy open communication, where people are not afraid to share information and are likely to have faith in the information they receive. Similarly, in high trust relationships managers are not afraid that other employees will use the shared information against them (Beccerra and Gupta 1999).

Like Tyler (2003), Barney and Hansen (1994) suggest that the importance of trust lies in its connection to social capital because it can lead to positive social outcomes resulting from improved individual or group performance. This is supported by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) who argue that social capital is embedded in social networks in the organisation and can provide the basis for trust, cooperation and collective action which in turn provides the basis for improved performance.

Cohen and Prusak (2001) also assert that employees are more likely to give their energy, talent and loyalty to an organisation if those around them are helpful and honest as opposed to uncooperative and if the leadership takes a fair approach to the
people who work for them. On the other hand, where trust is lacking or has been betrayed, no amount of enthusiasm for a subject can hold these collective identities together (Cohen and Prusak, 2001).

Beccerra and Gupta (1999) argue that a failure to develop an environment of trust between employees and the organisation, is likely to involve the organisation in high transaction costs. This is likely, because in the absence of a high trust relationship, management is likely to be faced with considerable costs, time and energy in seeking the compliance of employees. The importance of obtaining support from employees rather than trying to shape their behaviour via incentives or sanctions, received strong support from Tyler (2003 p 563) who claims that ‘Attitudes, commitment and intrinsic motivation are the most important predictors of extra-role behaviour’.

The perception of trust as relational and based on perceived organisational support operates as a social exchange process (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard and Werner, 1998; Dirks and Ferrin, 2002) that is over and above the normal commercial contract relationship between an employer and employee. This perception incorporates the psychological contract elements of trust, goodwill and mutual obligation (Blau, 1964). Trust from this perspective represents a high quality relationship where mutual care and consideration are essential elements in the psychological contract.

Relational trust, which is based on the perception of organisational support, develops from reciprocity to the care and concern that is perceived in the relational aspects of management policies and procedures. If management demonstrates care and concern for the well-being of the employee, then the employee is likely to exhibit increased trust and potentially an increased willingness to engage in discretionary extra-role behaviour. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) argue that positive relational trust is likely to lead to improved job related outcomes such as increased job performance. Konovsky and Pugh (1994) also support the argument that positive relational trust will encourage employees to go beyond their normal job role.

Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa (1986) use a social exchange framework, to contend that an employee’s belief that the organisation cares about their welfare and values their contribution will be related to the level of their
reciprocal contribution to the organisation. This paper uses the indicator, Perceived organisational support, to measure the care an organisation shows to the employee. From the findings, it will be contended that Perceived organisational support is a moderator of the level of Trust, which in turn may effect the willingness of employees to engage in discretionary extra-role behaviour.

Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) assert that employees seek a balance in their exchange relationships with the organisation, by having attitudes and behaviours commensurate with the degree of employer commitment to them as individuals. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa (1986) similarly contend that high levels of perceived organisational support can increase an employee’s feeling of obligation to engage in behaviour that supports the goals and objectives of the organisation.

**Perceptions of organisational support**

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) define perceived organisational support as the view formed by employees about the level of care and consideration that is directed to them by their organisation. Thus employees form beliefs about how the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa, 1986). Research by Eisenberger, Fasalo and Davis-LaMastro (1990) shows that where an employee makes a positive assessment that the organisation values them and cares for their well-being, this has a positive effect on them in the following areas:

(i) Even in the absence of the expected direct rewards, employees exhibit an increase in their innovative output. Innovation and the contribution to spontaneous problem solving was measured by Eisenberger, Fasalo and Davis-LaMastro (1990) as the likelihood that an employee would provide management with their ideas for changes that would improve productivity in their organisation.

(ii) The level of their desire to become involved with the organisation in a calculated way increases, as does their expressed desire to assist the organisation.
(iii) The research showed that employees exhibit increased conscientiousness in carrying out their conventional role responsibilities.

Shore and Tetrick (1991) contend that perceptions by an employee about the level of support and commitment by the organisation to them, will directly influence the employee’s subsequent commitment to the organisation. According to the authors, employees become attached to an organisation because they develop a perception that an equitable relationship will develop between the two parties. The employee believes they will receive material benefits or social rewards from the organisation in return for providing loyalty and effort to the organisation. Shore and Tetrick further claim that these two elements, the giving and receiving under the trading arrangement, are treated as separate components by the employee.

Using a social exchange interpretation of the relationship between an employee and an organisation, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) assert that an employee will form a global view about the level of organisational support, based on their own emotional needs. Their individual need for approval, praise, esteem and affiliation, leads them to make assessments of the likelihood that the organisation will respond to greater efforts by the employee to support the achievement of the organisation’s goals, by adequately rewarding the employee for their extra effort (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa, 1986).

Perceived positive organisational support is likely to encourage the employee to identify with the organisation and make a commitment to organisational objectives. This relational involvement with the organisation is consistent with the employee’s needs for recognition, approval and influence and moderates their feeling of unity with the values of the organisation. According to Eisenberger, Fasalo and Davis-LaMastro (1990), the relational attachment to the organisation has the potential to increase performance by raising the likelihood that the employee will interpret the organisation’s gains and losses as their own; by biasing the employee towards positively viewing the actions and characteristics of the organisation; and by increasing the likelihood that the employee will internalise the values and norms expressed by the organisation.
In assessing perceived organisational support, employees take a wide view of organisational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa, 1986). Managers and supervisors are seen as agents of an organisation and employees view the actions of these agents as representing the actions of top management. Employees therefore form perceptions about the level of appreciation for their efforts and the level of care about their well-being based on their view of their managers and supervisors. In turn, they attribute their perception of favourable treatment or otherwise to the expectation that the organisation favours or disfavours them.

Bowen, Gilliland and Folger (1999) argue that the relationship between employer and the employee is through the psychological contract, which is an implicit agreement about what each party gives and gets from the relationship and it is also embodies the implicit rules and regulations that determine the relationship. Guest (2002) argues that an employee’s response, by way of an increased willingness to contribute, will be reflected through the psychological contract and its links to performance and hence output. The need for a worker centred or worker friendly approach is needed to encourage the development of trust and the consequent discretionary extra-role activities of employees. This discretionary contribution will be encouraged, according to Ashford and Saks (1996) by the reinforcement of a supportive environment, which in turn contributes to the self worth of the employee. Grover and Crooker (1995) also found a strong connection between a worker commitment and the demonstration by the organisation that it provided organisational support, care and concern and that the organisation was fair in its dealings with employees.

**Discretionary effort outside the traditional employment contract**

Following a major review of the literature on perceived organisational support, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) conclude that the expectation of reciprocity allows the employee to reconcile the dilemmas associated with differing wants of the employer and the employee. Employees are primarily concerned with the commitment by the organisation to them, and they perceive organisational support as providing potential benefits to them. A positive assessment that the organisation values their efforts and shows concern for their well-being can lead to an expectation of approval, respect, monetary rewards, and access to resources that can enable them
to perform their job successfully. Employers on the other hand value employees’ loyalty, effort and contribution to the organisation’s performance and the expected reduction in absenteeism, reduction in resignations and an increase in dedication and effort which follows from the developing of emotional attachment by their employees (Meyer and Allen, 1997).

Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998) uphold that the psychological contract concerning the mutual obligations between the employee and the organisation is dynamic, with employees continually monitoring and responding to changes in their perceptions of the organisation’s commitment to them. Repeated violations of this contract are therefore likely to result in withdrawal behaviour by the employee, such as increased absenteeism. On the other hand, a build up of confidence in this relational contract, over the longer term, is likely to lead to a perception of continued satisfaction of the employee’s needs. In turn this creates trust that the organisation will meet its future obligations (Robinson and Wolfe Morrison, 1995).

Cabrera (2003) also argued that a non judgmental acceptance of an employee’s contribution would be likely to encourage further contributions. The importance of this non judgemental culture was also supported by Oldham, (2003), who argued that organisations need to develop a culture of sharing, but that they also needed to acknowledge both the ideas that were submitted and the person who submitted them, because this would encourage employees to share their creative ideas with others. In a similar way Shalley and Perry-Smith (2001) also argued that, if employees expected that their work would be critically judged, then their creative contributions were likely to be lower. Likewise Edmondson (1999) said that the anticipation of a critical judgement would constitute a threat to the employee’s self interest and self esteem and result in lower contributions and in the sharing of fewer ideas.

Dirks and Ferrin (2002) argue that the relational based perspective of trust suggests that there will be responses by an employee outside the traditional employment relationship. In this response there will be elements of trust, goodwill and mutual obligation, with the employee likely to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour. According to Bass (1990) this will be in response to the perceptions about their supervisor’s day to day supervision of the employee on the job. Konovsky and Pugh
(1994) also support the suggestion that, under the relationship based perspective of trust, the employee may be willing to go beyond their normal role description if they perceive that the supervisor is demonstrating appreciation of, and care towards, the employee.

Based on a review of the literature, Ross and LaCroix (1996) contend that trust in supervisors is strongly associated with strong relationships and more risk taking actions. Kerkhof, Winder and Klandermans (2003) also support this view, based on their research with council workers. They conclude that a relational model of trust predicts that trust is enhanced when management shows respect for and values the input from its members by giving them information on time and by dealing with them in a friendly and respectful way. According to Tyler and Degoey (1996) this approach communicates that employees are important to the organisation and are valued members of the organisation.

Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) demonstrated that there was a strong positive relationship between the perception of organisational support and the feelings that the employee had about their supervisor. Tan and Tan (2000) argue that the relationship between an employee and a supervisor is likely to be stronger when they share the same values and attitudes. A supervisor will be assessed as benevolent if they help the employee, and they will be assessed as competent if they offer to help the employee solve their work problems. Amabile (2005) claims that the behaviours which do the most to promote feelings of leader support are: obtaining information about the progress of a project without undercutting a subordinate’s sense of autonomy; demonstrating an openness to a subordinate’s idea; helping alleviate stressful situations; and showing empathy for a subordinate’s feelings, especially their need for recognition.

Research by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) showed that there were two particularly strong relationships with Perceived organisational support: Perceived fair treatment by the organisation; and perceptions of perceived support being received from supervisors. Bijlsma and van de Bunt (2003) strongly supported these findings claiming that perceptions of positive supervisor support for employees, is the most important independent variable in explaining variations in trust of supervisors. Other
relationships were: guidance given to improve performance; perceptions of openness; and monitoring of performance. All these factors together explained 69% of the variance in trust.

**Empirical research results**

Research by Sharkie (2007) conducted with 325 employees of Local Government Councils in NSW, Australia, and analysed using the software package AMOS 6 gave strong support to the arguments in this paper.

![Model 1: Trust & discretionary extra-role behaviour](image-url)
Perceived organisational support and trust in management are indicators of Trust with strong factor loadings – 0.86 and 0.80 respectively. In addition Trust is a determinant of Discretionary extra-role behaviour (Discretionary effort) with a strong regression loading of 0.91 (Sharkie 2007).

**Conclusion**

Success for an organisation is likely to depend on management’s ability to foster the development of a culture which supports and encourages the accessing, developing and then the utilisation of the knowledge and skills of their employees to enable the organisation to build on its capabilities. Zwell (2000) argues that a successful culture in this context will be one which displays, to employees, that employee development is valued and a culture that encourages highly competent employees to exercise their talents to impact positively on the organisation.

The culture of an organisation will be seen as setting the conditions under which employees are expected to work, and a positive culture would provide a working environment in which people are engaged, motivated and rewarded in a positive way for their contribution to the success of the organisation.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) support the argument that creating a strong organisational culture can be a significant factor in determining the extent to which employees will contribute to the organisation. Guest (1994) also supports this proposition by arguing that culture, by helping employees understand what their obligations to the organisation are, is a better motivator to perform in a cooperative way to support the organisation’s interests, than would financial incentives or bureaucratic requirements.

Relational trust, based on the perception of organisational support, develops from reciprocity to the care and concern that is perceived in the relational aspects of management policies and procedures. If management demonstrates care and concern for the well-being of the employee, then the employee is likely to exhibit increased trust and potentially an increased willingness to engage in discretionary extra-role behaviour.
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