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TRUST IN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS

Raluca RUSU

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

Abstract: *In this paper we emphasizes the importance of trust in today's organizational environment, including the military organization. In view of this approach, we analyzed what influence the level of organizational trust, so the organizational structure with the two variables, formalization and centralization, is what makes the greatest impact on all indicators of trust.*

Keywords: organizational trust, organizational structure, centralization

1. Introduction

Both personally and professionally, trust is essential to our lives and our work. In many contexts, the need to trust others appears as a reduction in the complexity of social relationships [1]. It is almost impossible to predict the actions and to know how they would react in each situation, and this uncertainty brings the "danger" of having unwanted results. Without trust, people should be constantly vigilant and constantly monitor breaking expectations about how others are accustomed to acting in different situations. Trust simplifies the expectations we use to predict how people will behave. When we decide to trust, we decide to believe that others will act consistently in the common interest [2].

Cook and Wall (1980) defined trust as "an extremely important ingredient in the long-term stability of the organization and the well-being of its members" [3]. One of the key aspects of organizational development, becomes the organizational trust.

2. Organizational structure and trust

Summarizing the factors to be considered when discussing a member of the organization's intention to trust the organization, the following were identified: (1) the personal predisposition for general trust, (2) the behavior of colleagues, (3) the character and behavior of leaders, (4) the structure of the organization (5) the behaviors outside the organization, and (6) the individual tendency not to trust. All these six variables vary depending of centralizations and formalization of the organization, which we will discuss in the context of the military organization. There are studies that support the idea of a correlation between the degree of structuring of organizations (organization, formalization and centralization) and the level of trust of employees, in the context in which organizations have increasingly migrated from mechanical to organic structures, and we will discuss in this paper also in terms of the military organization [4].

Following political, economic, technological and social pressures, traditional forms of organization, are subject of transformation which allow organizations to adapt better to their external environment. Mint berg (1983) suggests that with the advent of professionalization of the human resources,

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traditional organizations have had to develop in order to provide a place for new competencies. The author refers to the emergence of a new type of organization, namely professional bureaucracy and states that although the usual bureaucratic characteristics - such as hierarchical authority, standardizations, centralization - are also found in the new form of organization, professionals in organizations are given a greater autonomy in decision-making and less control from the strategic hierarchy. The military organization as a type of structure oscillates between a mechanical bureaucracy and a professional one, an aspect that sometimes makes organizational trust more difficult to achieve.

There are several necessary aspects that support the development of trust in organizations. *Interdependence* is one of them. There would be no need for trust if our results were not dependent in one way or another on other people. Since we can never fully understand the actions of others, we take a risk. Also, *vulnerability* is an important predictor of trust. We have to face the risk of suffering certain losses (this means being vulnerable to a person) when the workload involves interaction in its realization. This background is seen as necessary in any organizational situation to solve trust issues.

Referring to the two conditions in the development of trust, it is a certainty why trust is an important issue in military field. The fact that the military context is characterized by a high degree of risk, vulnerability and uncertainty, in this organizations there are many trust issues. At the same time, high levels of interdependence are needed, even if the cost of breaching trust can be fatal (if we refer to war situations).Sometimes the own resources requirements (cognitive and physical) are so high that they can prevent the constant observe the actions of subordinates or colleagues. In short, we can never be sure what others are capable of doing, and so we must assume that their intentions and skills will be positive.

Trust is a necessary precedent for cooperation and leads to constructive behaviors that are considered vital to long-term relationships. In military operations, trust assures the military that every effort will be made to ensure their safety and the difficulties incurred or the sacrifices made will always be justified. It inspires trust in the military that leaders and other comrades will ensure their safety. Confidence authorize administration to save time in explaining the motivation behind the actions needed to be taken and it helps to complete tasks in a timely and accurate manner [5].

Next, we will analyze how the management of these uncertainties specific to the military environment with an impact on the development of organizational trust depends on the organizational structure. If we refer to H. Mintzerberg's classification of how the bureaucratic context has evolved, for professionals in professional bureaucracies, organizational trust becomes a vital element, because it would not be possible for an independent professional functioning of this system of organization if there were a pressure to maintain absolute control over professional operations [6].

Formalizing the organization complicates the development of trust. Increased control in organizations has an impact on what Darley (1998) argued, namely that in terms of organization, work relationships characterized by trust determine the employees desire to cooperate in order to ensure organizational performance. While breach of trust has a negative effect on performance and collaboration [7].

If for civilian organizations organizational trust plays a rather instrumental role (it is not a matter of life and death) which mainly affects transaction costs, general cooperative behaviors, effectiveness and organizational flexibility [8], for military organizations, especially in war situations, trust plays a vital role, whether we are

talking about vertical or horizontal interpersonal relationships.

Since military organizations are based on *principle of impersonality*, the development of trust seems somewhat impossible, because as many relationships of trust involve some degree of self-exposure. On the other hand, there are studies, that suggest that developing trust in organizations does not necessarily require self-exposure; however, trust cannot be developed without reciprocity and common interests and goals [8].

Another organizational characteristic, with major impact on trust in the military organization is the *hierarchical authority*. Trust in *authority* determine increased acceptance of norms and also to a high level of trust in the organization, which contributes to the formation of an emotional organizational commitment among employees, which is extremely important in the military organization, where the congruence of the individuals' values with those of the organization is necessary in their internalization not only their acceptance [9].

Today's pressure to have more flexible and decentralized organizational structures and to optimize the decision-making process has resulted in improved communication and, consequently, in building the premises for reciprocity and implicitly trust between members of the organization.

As we have seen, in organizations where there is a high level of trust, more responsibility can be given to employees in terms of decision-making autonomy, while in organizations where there is a low level of trust employees are surrounded by bureaucratic walls, exactly because the right organizational structures are missing.

The problem is that in the military organization, this desideratum is not always possible, and flexibility can be achieved not by downsizing but by more flexible structures (work teams) superimposed over the structure of formal authority. The result is rather a matrix form of organization. And the issue of trust must be managed at the level of work teams.

3. Determinants of organizational trust in the military

Trust is hard to build and maintain. With the exception of very rare cases of high levels of initial trust, it takes a long time and interaction for it to develop. In addition, trust is fragile, it can be easily lost, and even never regained.

The military organization is based on people and their relationships. Therefore, in order to reach a high level of organizational trust, we need to first *build trusting relationships with the members of the organization*. There are some general findings about the conditions that promote trust in organizations: they need to be less bureaucratic (we explained in the previous chapter how this can be solved in the military organization) and have more staff participation in the decision-making process, i.e. increased autonomy.[10] On the other hand, Carnevale and Wechsler (1992) identified the following conditions as the most important in building trust: safety at work, open communication, fairness of rewards and punishments.[11]

In decentralized organizations there is a greater likelihood that trust will increase, because there is a shorter distance from the highest to the lowest level, and communication should be more effective. So, *decentralization* is another factor that contributes to the development of trust. As organizations make decisions, acting as closely as possible to front-line staff, trust becomes more important - trust that subordinates will do their job well, which includes learning from mistakes, but also confidence that leaders will provide them with the necessary resources which allow this. Their decision-making process involves identifying and choosing alternatives to act appropriately on the requirements of a particular context [12], and the most effective way to do this is through the interactive group method, in

which individuals identify the problems the team/organization face, each coming up with an alternative solution. Decentralization requires everyone to participate in the decision-making process, regardless of their hierarchical position or military rank. The challenge is to build trust in these decentralized social organizations, no matter what we call them, departments, sections, teams, given that there are no formal procedures for minimizing the perceived risk in relationships. When all individuals participate in the decision-making process, they will feel that their opinion matters and is respected, which will lead to increased trust in the team, leaders, and organization.

Safety at work concerns us all, as all employees want to work in a safe and secure atmosphere. Security is the main factor that promotes the well-being of both leaders and subordinates. Even if we face a high degree of risk and danger in the military, it is the moral duty of the organization to protect its members, to ensure that no person is affected by any organizational pathology that could have been prevented.

Open communication is another feature that frequently appears in research on the development of organizational trust. The first step in building a trustworthy organization is to support open and honest communication in the workplace. If leaders can maintain an honest dialogue with subordinates, both in favorable and unfavorable conditions, then subordinates will gradually learn to follow him/her. It should also be remembered that the gestures, tone and expression of the speakers are much stronger variables than the communication itself; these are non-verbal signs that show subordinates that their opinion is appreciated. Because each person has a different perspective on things, potential problems and solutions can come from anyone. For this reason, leaders should encourage open communication with all team members. A key element of open conversation is respect; if both sides respect each other, it will be easier to reach a resolution when there are disagreements. There should always be open channels of communication between leaders and subordinates, which will help to get to know each other well and build a bond.

Rewards and punishments are beneficial in any organization because they lead to motivating staff, how they are managed and how this is perceived by employees is another matter. Motivated people are more productive and confident in the organization, which is why motivation should be a priority. Those who have strong motivations feel that the effort they put in every day is not only for the organization, but also helps them to evolve. Punishments also play an important role; if they did not exist, staff would continue to make mistakes, knowing that they would not be penalized. Therefore, in order to increase confidence in the organization, there must be a fair system of reward and punishment. Given that in the military organization we are talking about increased control, despite decentralization, the perception of organizational justice (the way rewards and punishments are divided) can sometimes be distorted, which does not help to build trust.

Staff knowledge is also a factor that contributes to the development of trust, encouraging team members to get to know each other better as people, not as soldiers. We can make stronger connections through socializing, revealing personal information, hobbies, or values. We can find topics that cover the interest of the whole team and start conversations that allow people to share their own experiences, highlighting the informal side of social organization.

Also, the *diversity of human resources* has an increasing impact on the functioning of organizations. Especially in international missions, this diversity combined with the uncertainty and risk associated with missions, makes building trusting relationships a challenge. So, in performance of work tasks, they rely less

on similarities and shared experiences to increase mutual attraction and desire to work together. In this context, the development of mutual trust provides a mechanism for employees to work more efficiently together [13].

In a low-trust organization, team members do not trust each other, their leaders, or even their mission, and this can have a major impact on job satisfaction and performance. The greater the trust given to the people in the organization, the higher the chances of improvement. Confidence is also linked to *conflict reduction* and the development of innovation. When employees trust each other, there is no competition between them and they tend to communicate honestly, thus providing an advantage for the organization.

Another determining factor of organizational trust is a trend related to the increasing implementation in modern organizations of *participatory leadership styles and self-led work teams,* an aspect which relates to leadership. In fact, in modern organizations, including the military, the leadership process is responsible for developing organizational trust.

4. Conclusions

The pressure to build an organizational world that values skills, commitment and better working climates has led more and more voices to say that they should replace the old bureaucratic hierarchical structures with more flexible organizational structures. In this context, organizational trust has a double relevance. On the one hand, the fact that for creating competitive advantages organizations need to boost trust. And, on the other hand, it is necessary to find more and more complex means of increasing the emotional organizational commitment, beyond the simple extrinsic motivation, and one option is to provide an organizational climate based on trust.

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