

Organizational trust: Mayer, Davis and Schoorman model, a review

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Abstract—Trust is a relevant variable in interpersonal relationships in organizations. This review intends to aggregate literature on trust, based specifically on the model by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman [1]. New developments and practice implications are discussed

Keywords- trust, risk, trustworthiness, antecedents of trust

I. INTRODUCTION

Trust plays a relevant role in interpersonal relationships. In all areas of life and work trust seems to interfere in relations, people, objectives and contracts. Until this day there is still no clear conceptualization of the construct and its construction process. Confusion remains, in its conceptualization and clarity of its components, background and results. Trust, specifically in the organizational context is constituted as one of the pillars on which employment relations are built. The bond of trust to the organizational context is of particular importance in understanding the relations between management and employee [1] and between the employee-institution itself [2].

II. ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AND RISK

Organizational trust is no longer seen as a personality trait [5] rather as an individual construction that varies within each individual, in different contexts and according to different relationships.

The existence of diverse teams in particular requiring multicultural occasionally virtual contexts, global and international work designs assume that formal contracts between employee and organization become less relevant on organizational performance. As trust becomes more relevant on the relationship between people and institutions, replacing control contracts, the main assumption is that trust will have an impact on individual and team performance [2, 3]. Knowledge of the organizational trust behavior, development and results may facilitate the connection between people and the establishment of a positive relationship [3].

Other authors [4] state that one of the most important aspects in organizational trust model has to do exactly with the importance of the face to face relationship. Trust is dependent of a relationship between two people, varying along relations and contexts.

Trust is described as "the will of a party to be vulnerable to other parts of operations, based on the expectation that the other will have a particularly important area for those who trust, regardless of the ability to monitor / control the other party." [3].

Vulnerability is assumed as inseparable from trust. In order to exist trust, vulnerability has to be present. The "leap of faith" [6] that trust enables is a key requirement for the existence of trustworthiness. That is, to trust other person the subject has to want to put himself in a position of vulnerability, accept it and then decide to risk and engage in a behavior that may not have reciprocity. This vulnerable position assumes that the actions of others will be important, without considering the opportunity to monitor or control the behavior of the other party. Trust is described as psychological mechanism that substitutes control [3].

Other similar constructs are described in the literature, but is relevant to differentiate them. Cooperation, for example, can exist without risk. Cooperation can exist as organizational management in imposing tasks, without having necessarily to rely on others. Trust is inseparable from the concept of risk and vulnerability. Trust can lead to behaviors of cooperation but the two concepts cannot be confused since we can always cooperate with someone who we not trust [3].

III. THE FACTORS OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

The characteristics in which subjects trust will influence our perception of trustworthiness. This perception arises when we are faced with each other and conduct a trustworthiness judgment. The subject faced with a new situation evaluates the information that comes to him from another party. This impression construction evaluates essentially three characteristics that are referred as antecedents of trust and together give rise to the perception of trustworthiness on others. These are competence, integrity and benevolence. The weight of each one in the process or how they influence each other is not yet sufficiently explored empirically. The original model refers to each of these factors and how they vary independently of others, and it is possible that the lack of one has impact on the other [3, 4]. The development of the relation is also a factor that can alter the relative importance of the factors involved in the process [3].

Competence is the perception that the subject builds based on others perception of technical ability, assessing his body of knowledge and professional profile in a specific field. If the perceived competence built over the other is high in a given area the subject is more likely to trust him [3]. Take the example of a relationship between supervisor and employee. A supervisor more easily trusts his subordinate if perceives that he dominates a set of essential knowledge essential to perform the task. Is appropriate to remember that there are two more antecedents that contribute to the final perception of trustworthiness.

Benevolence is described as the perception towards the other as selfless, loyal, and someone who acts without any selfish motive [3]. This perception of benevolence is nothing more than a feeling that the other is an authentic person, not individualistic, with moral values and with whom we can establish a positive identification.

Integrity, the third antecedent of trust is described as the perception of consistency in others past behaviors. Translates as an assumption that others adhere to a series of principles shared by the one who is in the position of trust [3].

The background to trust will be mediated by propensity to trust [3]. In this model propensity to trust is an individual variable, which translates into a general willingness to trust others [3]. It results from the life story of each subject, their interaction with the environment and is described as a personality trait [5]. This individual characteristic establishes an inter-variability and is distinguished from subject to subject. According to these authors it is difficult to alter. Its importance was described by the authors as an essential dimension of an early moment in a state of zero information. One example highlighted is blind trust. A zero state of knowledge about each other's propensity to trust will be the most decisive factor in leveraging the trust process.

Other authors disagree with this temporal view of the propensity to trust as striking only at the beginning of the relationship. Other authors [7] conducted a study with 114 psychology students at a university in Canada, 62% of them with work experience in part-time and 38% with full-time work experience. Their aim was to empirically test the antecedents of trust in the model of organizational trust [3], assessing specifically the propensity to trust, and the intention of trust. In their first study they obtained conclusive results regarding the correlation between the antecedents of trust and the intention to trust, but the tendency was not significant. The authors conducted a second study with 183 students differing conditions of the first only in a situation. The background information of competence, integrity and benevolence was unclear. In this development authors found a correlation on propensity and establishment of trust. Propensity has a significant effect in situations that are not clear and immediate, but ambiguous and diffuse.

IV. TRUST AND OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Trust and risk are inseparable and have a confusing relationship along the literature. Several have been the authors that reinforce the importance of vulnerability and risk taking in the trust [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]. These authors state that trust itself, is the willingness to take risk. It is the behavior of trust that is associated with risk. Only when we risk, when we act, trust ceases to be just a perception, a psychological attitude and takes a behavioral dimension. The amount of risk we are willing to take depends on the specific situation, especially on the assessment we make of it and on the level of trust that we have already established towards the other. Trust, with the establishment of a positive relationship with each other, facilitates the vulnerability to run risks. The positive relationship with others in whom we trust increases the likelihood of assessing risk as more diminished and incur on the behavior of trust.

Similar conclusions were found [8] in the model that these authors produced, exploring more thoroughly the role of feelings and motivations in trust, as well as its link to the risk. They assume the importance of feelings of dependence on others in whom we trust. If the relationship we have with each other has strong feelings of dependence, our personal attributions, our perception of reliability will also be strongly influenced. If the feelings of dependence on each other are high, perceived trustworthiness, can be exaggerated, contrary to the situation in which the dependency is weak where feelings interfere trustworthiness, lowering it. This relationship is strongly related to risk, since risk is seen as diminished when there are high dependence on feelings. The feelings of dependence influence the motivations for trust, which will interfere in tasks performed and has impact on trustworthiness judgments. Risk perception, specifically, is influenced by the same feelings of dependence but also by motivations [8].

However, other authors [4] goes against the model described above [8] proposing that emotion can play an important role in the trust and risk perception process. Also, commitment is another important variable in this trust game. Other author [9] speaks of the importance of the presence of an affective relationship between the two parties in the trust process, which makes the emotions change the trust game. Strong relationships and frequent interactions are seen as an increase in emotional relationship having therefore an effect on the strength of a trust [1]. Emotions and commitment appear to be directly related to the level of risk that those who trust are willing to take.

When risk is greater than trust, context can lower risk perception if structured and controlled. If the context has low risk, there is little space for the development of trust, since risk decreases, it diminishes the need to develop trust [4]. If on the contrary control is virtually nonexistent it stops trust development: the confusion in the type of relationship established disturbs trust development [1].

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Organizational trust is a complex psychological attitude that requires empirical research to understand the process development and its effect as a mediator on organizational processes and dynamics. Propensity to trust interferes with the intention to trust and is especially prevalent in ambiguous situations [7].

The information we receive from others allows us to shape the trustworthiness perception. This perception results from the interaction of three distinct characteristics that we evaluate in whom we will trust: competence, benevolence and integrity. This will be the starting point for trust, obtained after consideration of the subject gains and losses, e.g. the risk that runs incurring or not on trust behaviors [3].

The model of Mayer et al. [5] brings clarity in the conceptualization of concepts and emerges as robust and conclusive. However, according to the authors would be important to conduct empirical research to be possible to determine the weights of each one on the process, which one is more important and enables the development of trust along time. Among other things emerges the importance of the study of mutual trust, not just from one to the other, but the study of the

process dynamics. The process itself of building trust also needs more empirical exploration.

Also, there is the need to verify if personality factors, such as propensity is the determining factor in ambiguous situations. We can assume that the weight and importance of propensity varies with the ambiguity of the information, [7]. Another relevant empirical issue would be the empirical exploration of the effects of dependency feelings [8] in determining the perception of reliability. Also, the exploration of trust on multilevel models [4] assuming that the model is valid for the multilevel designs on organizations. The former authors suggests that it would be necessary empirical exploration of this argument, to understand if the raise and development of trust on multilevel relationships and organizational dimensions is similar to interpersonal trust, following the dynamic implications of the feedback to the employment relationship within the organization.

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