Management Competencies and Trust in a Private Service Company

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ABSTRACT

This non-experimental, descriptive and correlational research aims at identifying the relationship between the management competencies of middle managers and trust within the work teams of a private services company. The sample consisted of the total population of the company. The management competencies scale of García-Lombardía, Cardona and Chinchilla and the trust dimension of the Lencioni team assessment scale were used; both with adequate psychometric properties for the study. The results show with a 99% probability that trust is significantly and positively related to management competencies, i.e., the greater development of management competencies, the greater the trust within the work teams; similarly, if management competencies are less developed, the lower the level of trust.

Keywords: management competencies; trust; work teams; strategic competencies; interpersonal competencies.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the effectiveness of work teams is an important aspect for the good performance of employees within an organization, and trust is one of the success factors in achieving results among the members of the company.

Trust is based on the behaviors of managers and bosses, which favors communication, teamwork, performance, satisfaction and commitment of collaborators, and consequently makes the organization more productive (Cardona & Wilkinson, 2009; Chand, 2018).

Lencioni (2003) defines trust as the conviction that the intentions of the team members are good; therefore, there is no reason to be careful when speaking about the mistakes, defects and limitations of the team members.

If there is trust in a team, members can speak up and be aware of their shortcomings and turn them into opportunities for improvement in order to enhance the team's development and effectiveness. Similarly, where trust exists, there is the possibility of asking for help and expressing ideas or opinions about what is happening within the team and the organization. Therefore, trust is a fundamental aspect for the development of the organization; leaders are the ones who promote the proper relationships based on high levels of trust (Yukl, 2008).

Searle and Ball (2004) address the importance of trust within organizations and emphasize that it is a fragile construct within companies, in view of the complexity of the process of building it or rebuilding it if an event causes a trust breakdown in the relationship between the employee and the organization.

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Organizational trust is built when workers channel their personal trust towards the company, which results in the creation of bonds and, and according to the dependence and interaction developed. It can be analyzed based on the trust placed in the supervisor and the trust generated about the institution; the former refers to the trust that a subordinate has to follow instructions in the face of actions that he or she fails to control, while the latter refers to the trust in the support and fairness from the company's authorities (Mollering et al., 2004; Perilla & Gómez, 2017).

Management competencies play an important role in the development of organizations. Cardona (1999) defines them as the day-to-day, visible behaviors of a person that lead to the achievement of results in his or her managerial role, and classifies them into three groups of competencies: strategic, interpersonal, and personal effectiveness.

Strategic competencies generate economic value; interpersonal competencies enhance the capabilities of employees and strengthen their commitment to the organization; and personal effectiveness competencies help employees develop attitudes and skills that enable them to relate to each other effectively (Cardona, 1999).

As important elements in the development of any organization, trust within work teams and management competencies lead to the objective of this study: Determine the relationship that may exist between these constructs and identify the management competencies that have the greatest impact on said relationship.

Research on management competencies have been focused on determining the most important competencies for managers in different organizations (García-Lombardía, Cardona & Chinchilla, 2001; Tafur & Carrera, 2012), as well as the existing differences in the level of development of management competencies in public and private institutions (Encomenderos, 2017). Further research on management competencies aimed to identify their relationship with work or organizational climate (Angulo, 2016; Sotomayor, 2017), level of motivation (Figueroa, 2017), and management autonomy and leadership (Corona et al., 2017).

One study addressed the relationship between the teamwork behaviors of top and middle management and teamwork at other levels of the organization. Raes (2014) sought to identify the competencies that management teams need to develop to achieve the cohesion and performance necessary to favorably influence the motivation, functioning, and performance of middle and operational teams.

Some research studies, focusing on the study of teamwork, include trust among the dimensions that should be assessed, as is the case of the study by Miranda and Ortega (2016).

As for the trust variable, the research by Cardona and Wilkinson (2009) studies how trust bonds are generated in the manager-collaborator relationship and identifies the behaviors —of the manager and the coworker— that contribute to stimulate what the authors call the "virtuous circle of trust building".

There were no studies that simultaneously studied management competencies and trust in work teams, hence the importance and foundation of this research.

The main objective of this research is to identify the relationship between trust and management competencies; its specific objectives are to identify the relationship between trust and strategic competencies, interpersonal competencies and personal effectiveness competencies.

The general hypothesis is as follows:

- There is a significant and positive relationship between trust and management competencies.

The specific hypotheses are as follows:

- There is a significant and positive relationship between trust and strategic competencies.

- There is a significant and positive relationship between trust and interpersonal competencies.

- There is a significant and positive relationship between trust and personal effectiveness competencies.

This research is important as it provides information on the relationship between trust and management competencies, which in turn provides a better understanding of these aspects in the organizational context and, on this basis, can be used to formulate new strategies to improve the conditions of one or both of these variables within a company or institution. As for scientific knowledge, this study can be used as a baseline for future research on the variables studied. Needless to say, the study should be replicated at a national level, including public and private organizations.

In terms of scope, this research is limited to institutions with similar characteristics; therefore, it cannot be applied equally to all organizations, considering that public institutions have different circumstances.

Management competencies

Management competencies can be discussed based on the first contributions made by McClelland (1973), who stated that success within an organization not only depends on aspects such as personality or the aptitudes shown by the subjects, but also on a set of competencies or skills that people have for specific tasks, which are used to achieve the objectives set. This dimension of competencies allows the subject to efficiently and effectively perform a given action (Pereda et al., 2002; Cáceres & Gallegos, 2018).

According to Hellriegel et al. (2010), managerial or management competencies are a group of competencies that involve the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors required by an executive to achieve success within an organization. Properly managed, these factors, along with an adequate development of intellectual capacity, will lead to effective management and the desired performance.

Some authors describe these competencies as management skills. Riera (2005) explains that managerial skills can be learned by any individual interested and able to do so, and are based on how the individual relates to his or her environment and how he or she effectively carries out his or her activities. These skills are focused on communication, motivation, critical analysis, stress management, leadership and how individuals manage their knowledge to achieve the objectives set within the organization.

Several authors have classified management competencies, however, this research is based on the work of Cardona (1999), who includes among management competencies strategic competencies, oriented to the generation of economic value; interpersonal competencies, which enable the professional development of collaborators and the strengthening of commitment and trust in the organization; and personal effectiveness competencies, which contribute favorably to interpersonal relationships.

Strategic competencies include business vision, problem solving, resource management, customer orientation, effective relationship networking and negotiation; interpersonal competencies include communication, organization, empathy, delegation, coaching and teamwork; and personal effectiveness competencies include proactivity, self-governance, personal management and personal development (Cardona, 1999).

Trust

The term "trust", from an organizational perspective, has a variety of definitions according to the studies that have been conducted following different approaches, among which Gilbert (1998, as cited in Salinas, 2012), who defines trust as a belief held by a person within the organization, where such belief is recognized and honored, so that the subject has a high commitment to the organization, stands out. In addition, Maguire and Phillips (2008) include the term "expectation" within the definition of trust, understanding it as a factor that generates expectation in the subject within the institution and, as a result, develops predictable behaviors and a sense of goodwill towards their work center, thus obtaining better results (Rodriguez, 2018; Olvera et al., 2017).

Albrecht and Wackernagel (as cited in Santiago, 2001) define trust as the way in which an individual views other individuals within an organization, which is a dependent and consistent behavior for the structure of that person's judgments and the way he or she acts. In the opinion of Lara-Rosano (2011), trust consists of a set of formal and informal mechanisms that are developed as a result of the interaction between people in an organization through various hierarchical means, and influences the organization's strategic processes. Trust has certain characteristics that provoke values in people and generate new ways of relating, working and organizing themselves, which largely defines organizational behavior within a company.

On this basis, it can be considered that trust is of utmost importance in any organization, since it involves a series of processes that determine success within the organization. Furthermore, it can be stated that trust is a vital social capital for any organization as it is the product of a continuous and dynamic process of interpersonal relationships within organizations, which develops when individuals manage to transfer their personal trust to the organization itself (Mollering et al., 2004). Such bonds will foster a pleasant environment during the development of activities, so that any activity undertaken may contribute to a subject achieving an adequate level of confidence; thus, a person within a company can develop in a better way, enhancing his or her strengths and promoting conditions to achieve the company's objectives more effectively.

By contrast, Castaingts (2008) mentions that each of the workers within the organization requires a

guide that orients their feelings and emotions when performing any action; these people are generally guided by beliefs that depend on the perspective of the person regarding how one relates to and understands the world.

Another important aspect regarding trust is that which defines it as the primary source of cooperation; however, it may not always be given in the best way, since a person does not necessarily receive what he or she gives to others; therefore, granting trust to a person does not necessarily mean that he or she will respond in the same or in a good way. This is a very frequent situation and is related to the personality of each individual (Acedo & Gomila, 2013). In this regard, Alter (2002) points out the existence of selfish behavior among coworkers, an issue that should be addressed if it occurs, as trusting relationships promote cooperation, and cooperation can provide the best results regarding the performance of workers. Addressing this is a complex process that involves a series of variables and even the personality of each member of the organization.

METHODOLOGY

This is an empirical study that identifies a measurable quantity through traditional statistical tests, which allows it to be quantitative (Alfaro, 2012). It is also a descriptive study, since it analyzes events, contexts and phenomena, specifying and describing facts and characteristics of what happens (Hernández et al., 2014). In addition, it is a correlational study, as it aims to identify whether or not there is a relationship between the existing trust in the work teams and the management competencies of the immediate bosses of the employees tested. The research has a non-experimental design, avoiding the manipulation of the variables under investigation, and therefore it does not attempt to analyze the influence of one variable on another using intentional methods (Hernández et al., 2014).

The population consisted of all the employees of a private service company located in the city of Lima, with a total of 40 male and female employees over 25 years of age. A census-type sampling technique was used for this study. Out of the total sample, 2 people did not attend the day of the application of the instruments and 8 did not give their consent, therefore, the scale for measuring management competencies and the scale for measuring trust in work teams were applied to a total of 30 employees.

This study was planned in a systematic and organized manner, resulting in the achievement of the research objectives. One of the first actions taken was to hold a meeting with the organization's managers to arrange for the collection of data. Thereafter, the application of the measurement scales was scheduled. The instruments used for the development of the study were the "Management Competencies Questionnaire" by García-Lombardía, Cardona and Chinchilla (2001) and the "Team Assessment Scale" by Lencioni (2003), from which only the items corresponding to the dimension of trust were used. The first instrument has a reliability of 0.76 (Cronbach's alpha) and validity of 0.76 (Kaiser Olkin) with a variance of 55.11%, and the second has a reliability of 0.95 and validity of 0.93 with a variance of 59.33%. These instruments were chosen because they were better adjusted to the population studied and because there is a lack of instruments that measure the components proposed in this research. Thus, it is important to conduct more studies on instruments based on this theory or to better adapt the existing instruments to the current reality.

Subsequently, an explanation of the objectives of the study and how to respond to the instruments was given to the participants who were informed that participation was voluntary and that the questionnaires were anonymous. Upon collecting the information, a database was assembled, taking into account the pertinent values, and the statistical analysis was performed once the data had been compiled and filtered. The first step was to analyze the levels of each of the studied variables using measures of central tendency; then, the distribution of the sample was calculated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, which determined the goodness of fit between two probability distributions, allowing the identification of the most suitable statistics to achieve the proposed objectives; and, finally, the Spearman's correlation was used to calculate the correlation coefficients, with which the relationship between the studied variables was determined.

RESULTS

Demographics collected from the evaluated collaborators (N = 30) indicate that 35.7% (N = 11) are male, while 63.3% (N = 19) are female, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Number of Employees Tested According to Sex.*

	Number	Percentage
Male	11	36.7
Female	19	63.3
Total	30	100.0

Source: Prepared by the author.

A mean of 11.4 with a standard deviation of 0.49 was obtained for trust, and a mean of 94.5 with a standard deviation of 3.28 was obtained for all management competencies. Personal effectiveness competencies obtained the highest score with a mean of 34.90 and a standard deviation of 1.32; then followed strategic competencies with a mean of 30.06 and a standard deviation of 1.82; and interpersonal competencies obtained a mean of 29.57 and a standard deviation of 1.43 (see Table 2). On the basis of the results obtained, it is observed that the scores obtained for each of the dimensions and variables studied in this research are high.

Table 2. *General Statistics on Trust and Competencies*.

	N	Mean	SD
Trust	30	11.4	0.49
Strategic Competencies	30	30.06	1.82
Interpersonal Competencies	30	29.57	1.43
Personal Effectiveness Competencies	30	34.90	1.32
Total of Management Competencies	30	94.53	3.28

Source: Prepared by the author.

A normality analysis of the sample distribution was performed (see Table 3), and it was observed that the values are significant with a confidence level of 99% ($p = 0.00$; $p < 0.01$), suggesting that the distribution is not normal. Consequently, an analysis with non-parametric statistics was performed. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to analyze the correlations between trust and management competencies.

Table 3. *Sample Distribution*.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Total of Management Competencies	0.31	30	0.00
Trust	0.39	30	0.00
Strategic Competencies	0.30	30	0.00
Interpersonal Competencies	0.19	30	0.00
Personal Effectiveness Competencies	0.30	30	0.00

Source: Prepared by the author.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4 shows the Spearman correlation between trust and the total score of management competencies and their respective dimensions, i.e., strategic, interpersonal and personal effectiveness competencies. The results yield values with significance equivalent to $p = 0.00$ ($p < 0.01$) and reach a 99% level of probability that there is a significant relationship between confidence and management competencies. Additionally, on the basis of the value obtained (rho = 0.72) and the classification by Martínez and Campos (2015) of the range of correlation coefficients, the relationship is highly positive. Therefore, it can be said that the greater the development of management competencies, the greater the trust within the work teams, while the opposite is also true: the lower the development of the first variable, the lower the values of the second variable. As for the management competencies dimensions, a 95% level of probability ($p = 0.03$; $p < 0.05$) indicates that there is a significant relationship between trust and strategic competencies, and based on the value obtained (rho = 0.40), the relationship is moderately positive (Martínez & Campos, 2015). Hence, it can be stated that the relationship between trust and competencies aimed at generating results or economic value (strategic) is similar to the relationship between trust and all management competencies; however, their relationship is not as strong as the one cited above.

Table 4. *Correlation Between Trust and Management Competencies*.

	Trust	
	rho	p
Strategic Competencies	0.40[*]	0.03
Interpersonal Competencies	0.72[**]	0.00
Personal Effectiveness Competencies	0.59[**]	0.00
Total of Management Competencies	0.72[**]	0.00

*Correlation is significant at the level 0.05 (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (2-tailed).

Source: Prepared by the author.

A 99% level of probability ($p = 0.00$; $p < 0.01$) shows that there is a significant relationship between confidence and interpersonal competencies, and confidence and personal efficacy competencies; however, a difference in the interpretation of these significant relationships exists because of the rho values obtained. Regarding interpersonal competencies, a rho = 0.72 was found, thus it can be stated that there is a high positive relationship between trust and these competencies related to knowing how to develop the competencies and skills of employees (Martínez & Campos, 2015). Regarding personal effectiveness competencies, the value found is rho = 0.59, so it can be said that there is a moderate positive relationship between trust and these competencies that allow middle managers to adequately manage interpersonal relationships and encourage their teams to be receptive and identify with the organization (Martínez & Campos, 2015).

DISCUSSION

Research results show that there is a significant and positive relationship between management competencies and trust within work teams, i.e., the higher the development of management competencies, the higher the trust within work teams; and conversely, the lower the development of management competencies, the lower the level of trust among work team members.

As demonstrated by Angulo (2016) and Sotomayor (2017), the level of development of the management competencies of team leaders in an organization is directly and positively related to work climate. Their research focuses on the development of communication, teamwork, leadership, etc. One of these studies recommends that managers build trusting relationships with other members of the organization to foster a better work climate (Angulo, 2016). Meanwhile, the other study recommends that managers demonstrate ethical and transparent behavior to foster a climate of trust within the organization (Sotomayor, 2017).

The development of management competencies leads to changes and/or improvements in the personal dispositions of the members of the organization; an example of this is the increase in employees' motivation levels, as shown by the results of Figueroa's study (2017). Another example is the development of competencies of top management members to improve work among peers, as a united management team; these behaviors are transferred to middle management and the rest of the organization, thereby influencing the level of trust, improving interpersonal relationships, collaborative attitude and joint performance, as shown in the study by Raes (2014).

Managers value certain management competencies over others. According to the results of the studies by Tafur and Carrera (2012) and García-Lombardía, Cardona and Chinchilla (2001), communication, teamwork and leadership, in addition to customer orientation, integrity or ethical commitment, and coaching, among others, are the competencies regarded as more valuable. The result of the latter research was that companies want their managers to have similar levels of development of the three types of management competencies —strategic, interpersonal and personal effectiveness— with an emphasis on interpersonal competencies. Such a result may complement, in terms of knowledge, the result of this study, where a high and positive relationship between interpersonal competencies and trust within work teams is observed.

Similarly, in their study for the development of a model of management competencies for management and leadership autonomy in supervisors, Corona et al. (2017) found that interpersonal competencies were the most valued competencies. Such research can also contribute to the results obtained in this research.

On the other hand, trust together with productive conflict are the dimensions of teamwork that influence organizational change processes the most, as shown in the study by Miranda and Ortega (2016).

Likewise, the bond of trust between manager and employee has a dynamic that is based on the behaviors of those who lead the teams in the organizations; if these behaviors generate trust in the employee, the latter "*tiende a corresponder con conductas también positivas*" [tends to behave positively as well], as indicated in the study by Cardona and Wilkinson (p. 23, 2009). In organizational behavior, employee behavior can be predicted from observing the behavior of the leaders.

From the analysis, it can be said that, if there is greater trust in a work environment within a work team, it is likely that the direct manager of that team has a higher level of development of management competencies; thus, according to this research, interpersonal competencies are the most important, followed by strategic competencies and personal effectiveness competencies. As this relationship is direct and positive, it can be deduced that, within an organization in which a manager lacks management competencies, it is likely that there is little trust among the members of the work team under his or her responsibility. It should be noted that the achievement of higher levels in one of the variables is not based solely on the development of the other variable; although a relationship between trust and management competencies has been found, it is not possible to state a single cause for any of them.

If an organization needs to improve the performance of its employees, it should focus on developing the management competencies of the people in charge of them and thus increase the level of trust within their teams to improve employees' performance and increase their ability to achieve the company's objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

1. A significant and positive relationship exists between trust and management competencies, thus it can be concluded that the higher

the levels of management competencies, the higher the levels of trust among employees.

2. A significant and positive relationship exists between trust and strategic competencies, thus it can be concluded that the higher the levels of strategic competencies, the higher the levels of trust within the work teams.

3. A significant and positive relationship exists between trust and interpersonal competencies, thus it can be concluded that the higher the levels of interpersonal competencies, the higher the levels of trust within the work teams.

4. A significant and positive relationship exists between trust and personal efficacy competencies, thus it can be determined that the higher the levels of personal effectiveness competencies, the higher the levels of trust among the members of the work teams.

5. The results can be applied to organizations with similar characteristics to the company where this study was conducted.

6. These findings are relevant since, in order to increase workers' trust, the management competencies of their leaders will have to be strengthened, thereby leading to a series of benefits in the development of the organization

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