

Trust as a Personal Characteristic for Lebanese C-level Executives

By

Wael Zaraket, D. B. A.

Abstract

This paper examines the idea of trust as an individual trademark for Lebanese C-level executives in social communication at the organizational level; the connection is considerably more relevant when it deals with high managerial positions. Trust is an independently distinct build that is perceived by every individual at the personal and at the managerial level. Trust is an imperative leadership trait to gain employee fidelity and loyalty. This paper inspects the fidelity and loyalty of Lebanese C-level executives by concentrating on the views of middle and top managers. The objective of this paper is to determine whether Lebanese C-level managers are trusted by their middle and top managers. Quantitative analysis was utilized to identify the level of trust through the Machiavellianism scale. The paper finds that middle and top managers highly trust their C-level supervisors.

Introduction

Research is still concentrated on studies of leadership behavior, qualities, and situational factors (Den Hartog & Verburg, 2004). Trust is a value which ought to be acknowledged in leadership (Lyman & Adler, 2011). Trust has to be an integral part of leadership and should function as one of the basic skills needed in leaders. Trust should be considered an essential part of leadership and one of the necessary skills of leaders (Van den Akker, Heres, Lasthuizen & Six, 2009).

Implementing this value in leadership requires that every member of the organization be a trustworthy individual (Alhabshi & Ghazali, 1994). Trust is defined as the reliability of the leader to match followers' prospects (Phillips, 1992). Trust illustrates the ability of the leader to deliver essential benefits to followers (Fry, 2003). Trust in organizational relationships has a powerful theoretical basis. In this paper, the researcher will discuss the connotation of trust, and what formulates a trustworthy behavior (Caldwell & Hayes, 2010). According to Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995), individuals who are found to be most trustworthy have a high score on the three-factor model of trustworthiness (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007).

This three-factor model of trust is increasingly considered a mean of trust and is commonly used in the theoretical literature (Caldwell & Hayes, 2010). Referring to Mayer et al., (1995), being trustworthy means first, to have the capacity, talents, capabilities, and features to inspire other individuals or parties within a particular field; second, to have a genuine desire to do what's best in the interest of others, aside from egocentric personal gain motives; and third, to have the honesty to abide by a set of values and codes that are trusted or found acceptable. Scholars have started to study trust as a crucial component for leadership effectiveness (Ciulla, 2004). This paper plans to further add to this body of research by investigating trust as one of the personal characteristics of the C-level executives through the medium of Lebanese middle and top managers.

Understanding Trust

Trust is an independently distinct concept that is understood by each individual at the personal level and at the managerial level (Caldwell & Clapham, 2003; McLain & Hackman, 1995).

Trust at the individual level has broadly been recognized as comprising aptitude, compassion, and honesty (Savolainen & Häkkinen, 2011). Trust is related to actual leader-member symmetrical relationships and is concentrated on Brower, Lester, Korsgaard and Dineen's (2009) argument regarding the tendency of people to trust. The author supports the idea that trust is not a tendency, an approach, or an aim, but a behavior requiring the surrendering of authority (Hinchman, 2009). Additionally, the author also supports the perspective that interpersonal trustworthiness is based on the ability, compassion, and honesty of the individual to be trusted and is thoroughly linked to the behavior of a leader (Savolainen & Häkkinen, 2011).

The link between a leader's comportment and trust is fraught with personal insightful subjects (Hollander, 1995), such as a follower's understanding of the implicit and explicit components of the social contract and the values that social contracts include (Caldwell & Dixon, 2010). Barnett and Schubert (2002) acknowledged a functional relationship which borders the leader-follower relationship as a sequence of psychological contracts that escalate to the extent of a "covenantal relationship" (Hernandez, 2012). Rousseau (1995) established the compound moral insinuations of social contracts in organizational relationships and illustrated that these social contracts are perceptively observed and individually understood (McInnis, 2012).

Therefore, the social contract is a personalized understanding of the obligations owed by each leader – observed inside a symmetrical connection including the leader and every follower separately – and this will identify whether the leader is considered trustworthy (Hernandez, 2012). Pava (2003) proposed that the covenantal leader is a moral agent who is observed as seeking the best welfare of each stakeholder while matching this requirement within a wider organizational framework as well. Caldwell, Truong, Linh and Tuan (2011) proposed that the equilibrium of managerial and personal urgencies needed the insight and conscious prudence of a moral agent who is intensely dedicated to every stakeholder (de Plessis, Conely, & Hlongwane, 2007). Even

though in the theoretical literature trust is often interchangeable with trustworthiness (Corritore, Kracher, & Wiedenbeck, 2003), one individual trusts another when the second individual is trustworthy (Gerson & Gerson, 2006). In a leadership framework, organizations require that employees trust their leaders and conform to anticipated comportments (Van den Akker, et al., 2009).

This trust is comprehensive when leaders are considered trustworthy; Yukl (1989) realized that "trust may be measured at the strategic level when leaders do the correct behavior, at the organizational level when processes and decisions lead to correct results, and at the individual level when leaders create connections based upon an established commitment to each person's well-being" (p. 269).

Mayer et al. (1995) considered aptitude as "that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain" (p.717). Other researchers propose that aptitude is a measure of "competence" (Kee & Knox, 1970), and "expertness" (Giffin, 1967). Compassion is considered "the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trust aside from an egocentric profit motive" (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 718). Butler and Cantrell (1984) described trust as comprising a loyalty to the interests and well-being of another person. Mayer et al. (1995) acknowledged honesty as "the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable" (p. 719). Hosmer (1995) focused on the notion that trust was fundamentally morally based, and recognized ten distinct moral perspectives for evaluating trustworthy conduct and the implementation of duties required by those who pursue trust – it is an acute mission for leaders in a world where mistrust is progressively arising.

Mayer et al. (1995) highlighted that the tendency to trust differs among individuals and is dependent on the conduct of the individual to be trusted. Gill, Boies, Finegan and McNally (2005) directed two research projects to establish the significance of aptitude, compassion, and honesty as antecedents of trust, and consequently

discovered that personal view, the simplicity or vagueness of information, and the framework of a position affect the trust decision.

Das and Teng (2004) realized that the tendency to trust is not simply individually defined, but is a function of how a person recognizes the threats related to the associations between parties, and is a function of the conduct of persons who pursue trustworthiness. In accordance with the description of interpersonal trust explained by Mayer et al. (1995) and the developing research about the antecedents of trust associated with leadership effectiveness, it was found that the relationships between the conduct of leaders and the influence of conduct on insights about leaders' trustworthiness can enable clarification regarding how the leaders' conduct can cause increased interpersonal commitment, which is an essential key to wealth creation (Caldwell, Hayes, Bernal & Karri, 2008).

Organizational performance management in an institutional context is therefore the activities of C-level executives in planning, applying, revising, assessing and recording the success of its procedures, platforms, and missions for its leadership trustworthiness (Green & Howe, 2011). To comprehend thoroughly the leadership improvement tasks confronted by organizations, Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) directed research using its Benchmarks competency framework (Petrie, 2011). Center for Creative Leadership emphasized two significant lines of inquiry:

First, which leadership aptitudes are considered most imperative for accomplishment in an organization?

CCL Standards database identifies 16 key leadership abilities, as well as five derailment elements that can specify whether a manager's career is suffering. While each of these abilities is imperative to total leader effectiveness, some are considered more acute than others in various businesses or divisions (Rude, 2013). Knowing which proficiencies are more relevant in the organization can assist agencies to create a leadership improvement policy that forms the capabilities required for better usefulness (Petrie, 2011).

Second, how efficiently do the organizational leaders perform in competency areas, which are the pillars of accomplishment?

It is imperative to recognize how leadership skills in an organization coincide with the skills acknowledged as most significant for leaders in successful organizations (Rude, 2013). Detecting leadership strengths and weaknesses allows an organization to define how well individual competences coincide with organizational requirements. In addition, it helps the organization to classify substantial differences which have to be tackled through dedicated expansion and knowledge.

Organizational Leaders have Significant Strengths

The organizational leaders' capability to make employees feel comfortable is the most appreciated ability appraised by coworkers the researcher had studied. Considering differences such as gender, race, and ethnicity is an additional solid facet of an organizational leader (Petrie, 2011). Those leaders are perceived as quick to obtain new information; they are creative and ready to do whatever is needed to accomplish organizational goals. These results demonstrate that organizations have a set of interpersonally expert, smart, and dedicated leaders as an influential asset on which to build loyalty and trust (Hanson, 2013).

A Zaraket and Halawi (2015) study delineates the interrelated relation between organizational commitment and organizational goals supported with the leader's visions and objectives. The primary focus points for leadership improvement in an organization is to enhance the capability to lead workers, to cope with change, and to involve people in participative management. Leading workers successfully is seen as the supreme significant proficiency for organizational leaders, even though it is ranked 15 amid the 16 proficiencies related to leader success. Change management and participative management are similarly considered significant by more than half of the respondents, but are in the lowest half of the leadership proficiencies related to effectiveness (Petrie, 2011).

Organizations similarly require strategies for presenting wide, cross-structural practices and prospects for knowledge.

Weak functional (or departmental) orientation is the most common cause for derailing managers in organizations. Executives can inspire improvement in leaders' proficiency by creating chances for their subordinates and prospective leaders to stretch beyond their own current capabilities (Bleak & Fulmer, 2009). A variety of practices (diverse tasks, progressive interactions, classical teaching) can organize talents and perceptions, and diminish the opportunity for derailment (Petrie, 2011). Followers were asked to offer their perceptions regarding their leaders' trustworthiness (the Machiavellian scale seems to be a fragile measure for any facet of trust).

C-level executives from various Lebanese banks were chosen for this study, as the Lebanese banking sector has a clear and well-established hierarchy. Those executives were chosen because there has been no applied proper model of trust in Lebanon except in the banking sector, in order to provide a framework for leadership succession that can improve the performance and survival of organizations and to offer additional justifications for leadership succession procedure and an efficient management mechanism. Contextually, leadership is influenced by culture, structure, society, and policies as well as by established leadership (Korbonski, 1976). Therefore, the choice of banking executives is based on culture, structure, collectiveness, and the policies which are characterized by the absence of established leadership and managerial structure.

Measurement

Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970) is a scale that asks participants to state their level of agreement or disagreement to 20 statements on a seven-point scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." In this paper, five questions regarding trustworthiness were found to be relevant to the paper's objectives. In order to determine internal consistency of the items, five items were loaded. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient shows a moderately high reliability of .862. For the current paper, the Machiavellianism has an overall

reliability of .905 that was achieved for the scale. The scale inter-correlations ranged from .873 to .898. All the inter-item inter-correlations were highly significant ($p < .001$), except for the inter-correlation of items 1 and 7, which was at $p = .05$. The high positive inter-correlations also suggests that all the items in this scale had done what they were intended to do, that is, to measure leadership trustworthiness consistently.

Participants

Participants were middle and top level managers from the Lebanese banking sector, who are referred to as managers throughout this paper, while C-level executives are referred to as leaders. At the time of the research, the researcher had 500 managers from various Lebanese banks. Some of these managers were positioned at branches outside Lebanon, while others were either unavailable or unwilling to participate, and thus, 400 were nominated bearing in mind the dispersed location of the chosen samples and the time frame allocated for data collection.

The questionnaires, together with a list of selected participants, were given to the HR departments to distribute, and a total of 304 questionnaires were returned. The survey suggested a response rate of 68%, which is an acceptable return for a survey in Lebanon.

Results and Discussion

The following descriptive statistical analysis was used to determine frequencies and percentages of the respondents. This study used 400 questionnaires, targeting 400 participants, but only 304 (68%) participants returned the questionnaires within the given time; consisting of 46 Branch managers, 8 Department managers, and 250 Regional managers. Only these 304 surveys were valid for analysis. This set of data was intended to identify demographic variables of the sample and examine the research results. Table 1 delineates the demographical outline of the sample.

Table 1. Gender Frequency and Percentage.

Demographic Information of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	261	86
Female	43	14
Not reported	-	0.0
Total	304	100.0

Table 1 shows that 86% of the respondents were males while 14% were females. This implies that C-level executive positions among Lebanese are dominated by males. Most respondents fall within the age group 32 to 41 years (34.9%); for the 42 to 51 and 52 to 61 years age groups, the percentage is 31.9%. The 62 to 68 years age group is 0.32%, and three respondents (0.98%) did not report their age. Table 2 demonstrates age group frequency and percentage.

Table 2. Age Group Frequency and Percentage.

Demographic Information of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group		
32 to 41 years	106	34.9
42 to 51 years	97	31.9
52 to 61 years	97	31.9
62 to 68 years	1	.32
Not reported	3	.98
Total	304	100

Regarding location, the majority of the respondents were in Beirut (93.75%), followed by Mount Lebanon (5.6%), and Saida (0.65%). Table 3 shows location frequency and percentage.

Table 3. Location Frequency and Percentage.

Demographic Information of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Location		
Beirut	285	93.75
Mount Lebanon	17	5.6
Saida	2	.65
Not reported	-	-
Total	304	100

Concerning education level, most of the respondents had a Bachelor degree (63.49%), followed by a Master's degree (31.25%), Baccalaureate (3.62%), Doctorate (3.32%), and one person did not report education level. Table 4 shows education level frequency and percentage.

Table 4. Education Level Frequency and Percentage of the Respondents.

Demographic Information of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Education Level		
Bachelor	193	63.49
Master	95	31.25
Baccalaureate	11	3.62
Doctorate	4	1.32
Not reported	1	.32
Total	304	100

Regarding field of interest, the majority of the respondents were Business (55.6%), followed by Economics (29.27%), Law (7.56%), Other (6.9%), and two respondents did not state their field of interest. Table 5 shows field of interest frequency and percentage.

Table 5. Field of Interest Frequency and Percentage.

Demographic Information of the respondents		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Field of Interest			
	Business	169	55.6
	Economics	89	29.27
	Law	23	7.56
	Other	21	6.92
	Not reported	2	65
	Total	304	100

The majority of the respondents (85%) were in the middle level, and almost one-third (31.25%) were members of the organization for more than 8 years. Table 6 shows position in the organization frequency and percentage.

Table 6. Frequency and Percentage of Position in the Organization.

Demographic Information of the respondents		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Position in the Organization			
	Top level	22	7.2
	Middle level	258	85
	Not reported	24	7.8
	Total	304	100

Concerning years of service in the organization, there are three clusters. Most of the respondents have 8 years service and above (31.25%), while other respondents have 4 to 7 years service (30.6%). The third group of respondents has spent 1 to 3 years (28.29%) in the organization, and three respondents (9.86%) did not report their service in the organization. Table 7 shows years of service in the organization frequency and percentage.

Table 7. Frequency and Percentage of Years of Service in the Organization.

Demographic Information of the respondents		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Years in the Organization			
	1-3 years	86	28.29
	4-7 years	93	30.6
	8 years and above	95	31.25
	Not reported	30	9.86
	Total	304	100

The measures of central tendency and dispersion in frequency distribution, in various realistic conditions, is useful to identify data by a single number, which is most illustrative of the whole collection of numbers (i.e., a measure of central tendency by the mean and standard deviation). This section describes, among other items, the skewness and kurtosis of the distribution of the analyses. Table 8 shows mean, standard deviation and variability of the relevant dimensions.

Table 8. Mean, standard deviation, and variability of dimensions.

No.	Dimensions	N	Mean	Std.D	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Trust	404	5.62	1.15	- 1.09	1.18

Table 8 shows that the Trust dimension of the paper has a mean value with variety (5.62) on a 7-point scale. This result shows that the leader gives the impression of having their own personal characteristics and being faithful in achieving the organization's goals. The result confirms that the leader has a reasonable aptitude to recommend and alter their personal characteristics when the individual cooperates with followers.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The main goal of factor analysis is to distinguish simple items (loadings > 0.30 on only one factor) that are explainable, supposing that those items are factorable. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy examines whether the partial correlations between variables are minor. The current paper demonstrates that the value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) for Trust was (0.949), which means that the value is high-quality. Bartlett's test of sphericity and KMO were used to define the appropriateness of factor analysis. If Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant and if KMO demonstrates high value, that is between 0.5 and 1.0, then, factor analysis is suitable for the study (Malhotra, Agarwal & Peterson, 1996). Statistically, the model is assessed by comparing two variance/covariance matrices.

To continue with measuring the fit, taking into consideration the Independent and Dependent Variables, this segment acknowledges the reliability scores for the construct measures followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The reliability tests inspect the internal reliability of the item in a measure to define whether each observed variable should be retained and whether something should be omitted.

Measurement Model Fit and Modifications

This segment stresses all key results in relation to initial measurement model fit along with CFA. Among its strengths, CFA includes the testing of unidimensionality and assesses a data set by approving the fundamental structure on the basis of theoretical grounds (Malhotra, et al., 1996). Consequently, taking these dilemmas into consideration, the measurement model

for Trust was examined using five items. The basic inspection of the inter-item correlation matrix discovered that trust was correlated with every other element in the scale. These items were subjected to a CFA, the results of initial measurement model of trust which are provided in Figure 1. The fit indices suggest a mixed picture with regards to the adequacy of the fit elevated χ^2 and RMSEA. Examination of the loadings indicates that the standardized regression weight was very high, for the five items showed an acceptable loading. Table 9 shows the Summary of Measurement Findings (CFA) of Trust.

No.	Items	Stand .Lod					
1-	My leader reacts only when it is ethically correct.	.73					
2-	My leader is a dependable individual.	.82					
3-	My leader is a direct individual.	.81					
4-	My leader is a truthful individual.	.88					
5-	My leader believes in the respect for rule of law.	.82					
Achieved Fit Indices							
Chi-square		Absolute fit index	Incremental fit index	Parsimony fit index			
	Chi-square(χ^2)	p-value	DF	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI
Initial	20.634	.001	5	.088	.979	.937	.988
Composite Construct Reliability .91							

Table 9. Summary of Measurement Findings (CFA) Trust

The composite construct reliability for this five-item measure is .905, which is well above the acceptable level as indicated in the literature. This specifies that the retained four items are deemed consistent, as well as effective for this construct measure.

Figure 1. The results of initial measurement model and modifications of trust

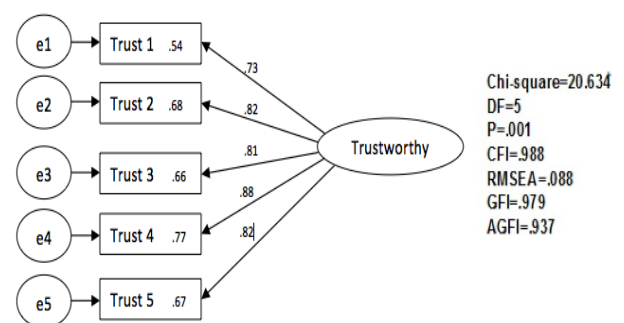


Figure 1 shows that leaders in organizations are thoughtful when communicating with their followers. Followers feel that their leaders pay attention to what they have to say and respond

accordingly (e.g., my superior listens to what other individuals say to him/her, and the leader usually responds rapidly to messages like memos, phone calls, and reports). This behavior is important in building relationships between leaders and followers. In fact, one of the most significant skills to gain trust is the listening skill, as it appears that followers acknowledge their leaders' good listening skills. The followers strongly believe that their leaders have the required technical skills, as well as the ability to convey information clearly and effectively. Winning the hearts and minds of followers validates that organizational leaders indeed build relationships, demonstrate care and concern for employees' well-being, and share information (Abdullah, 1996).

Given that they are in a leadership position, organizational leaders appear to have the skills needed to get the work done through their followers. With a high capability to create ideas and state their opinion in an acceptable manner, such leaders are more likely to be respected.

Conclusion

This paper has examined how managers perceive C-level executives in organizations. Those executives revealed a relatively high competence score in regards to leadership Trust. The results show that the leadership styles tend to have positive influences on how top Lebanese leaders in organizations feel, how followers perceive their leaders' trustworthiness, and how much they trust their leaders. For instance, a leader is more accepted and valued by organizational members when he or she shows the competence to resolve the organization's outer and inner encounters and when the leader is acknowledged as responsible and dedicated (Wright, Moynihan, & Pandey, 2012). Leaders demonstrate caring and sharing behaviors to make their organizations a productive working place for everyone. It is imperative that organizations continue supporting those in leadership positions, to maximize privileges and potentials.

Finally, this paper has demonstrated that Trust as an essential personal characteristic of the C-level executives, appears to bear a similar perception of leaders' trustworthiness by their followers, but for different reasons.

The Author

Wael Zaraket, D.B.A.

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Business & Economics

American University of Science & Technology

Ashrafieh, Alfred Naccach Avenue

P.O. Box: 16-6452 Beirut 1100-2130, Lebanon

wzaraket@aust.edu.lb

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