
Magnetic Nature of Trust: Features That Can Break Its Magnetic Nature and Mitigation Strategies

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Abstract

This is a conceptual paper to strike theoretical thoughts on the magnetic nature of trust in leadership, eroding factors that lead to mistrust & possible mitigation strategies for the broken trust inline with the dimensions of trust. The paper followed fully a qualitative approach & it focused on secondary data with the method of content analysis, critical reflection, empirical analysis, scanning & meta-analysis in reviewing of different research findings & theories. The critical reflection & themes of this paper remind leaders to be a trustworthy where trustworthy leaders will attract more followers & clients like a magnet & have a trustworthy organization whereas untrustworthy ones will repel their followers, partners & beneficiaries. If a leader finds her/himself or followers being in shady of trust, the leader has the responsibility to treat the infected dimension of trust either of benevolence, reliability, honesty, competence, openness or both so that broken trust is recovered using wise strategies. Otherwise, the consequences are adverse that may lead to revenge and madness beyond organizational inefficiencies and ineffectiveness. Thus, the paper is an article of adding concrete understanding & knowledge to the public discourse about trust, the role it played as a magnet in leadership and mitigating strategies to broken trust. The paper strongly reminds those leaders & followers that trust can be regained if there are rigorous efforts. For these, they need to address the basic facets of trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2014) & build the trust of both the leader & the organization based on the expectation that they will not act opportunistically letting down the public.

Keywords: Trust; Broken Trust; Magnet; Leadership; Mitigation Strategies

Introduction

People can live together if there is trust among themselves that one will not take advantage over the other, otherwise they will be enemies who can't live harmoniously. If people are not in harmony, there is no mutual support, synergy & teamwork. When people become increasingly intertwined, the possibilities for each partner to demonstrate concern needs into account¹. Thus, trust is as old as human being starting from ancient people of 'Homo-habilis', the first of the 'great ape' type creatures to the recent human being (CARR, 2017). During that time, people were going for hunting in group with their leader, fighting with king of the jungle, tigers & others being in group with the trust those leaders & other members of the squad will not let them down in the battle. So, it is a prerequisite for teamwork & our coexistence as a social animal depends on the trust we have with our partners. It manifests itself in many ways in our daily lives (Smith, 2016).

Trust is also a magnet, especially for leaders where a trustworthy leaders, will attract more followers, customers, partners, clients, etc. Some businessmen may call it good will. Church (2013) reported trust being an entry level product to build trust in clients and trust builds business. Trust as a magnet or gravitational force, we can't see exactly the forces that attract but we can see the effects where the leader & followers allied together, service seekers come being relaxed to get the leaders' or organizational services. A magnet has two poles of North & South. Analogously, the two poles of trust are affixed with in the two partners or individuals as trustor & trustee. They seek least resistance between the two partners & never cross one another

¹ <http://family.jrank.org/pages/1716/Trust.html>

& have proportional strength. All these metaphorical expressions are deemed to demonstrate how trust is important in the leadership as key quality of the leader.

Trust and Leadership

The development of human being is a result of mutual support that come from different people with different ideas & skills with different leadership & roles. Thus, leader-followers are sharing their knowledge, skills, & attitudes with the assumption that others will not take advantage making them vulnerable or putting them at risk (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, Forsyth et al., 2011). At the same time, leaders -follower-leaders trust relationship revives if people trust others keeping their counterpart benefits. Therefore, their relationship, collaboration, communication & exchange of ideas & materials is based on mutual trust & benefits like mutualism or commensalism but not parasitism kind of relationship, otherwise there will be mistrust that leads to being an enemy, crises or conflict. Thus, trust is a glue (Mineo, 2014:1) that creates bondage between people & sometimes it is lubricant that hibernate & sooth differences & resistances. Trust is invisible but its effects are visible. If the two individuals or parties are not trustworthy to each other, they repel each other. This leads to mistrust, even to conflict & social crises that make its effect visible. This is more visible if the public has no trust to the organization or leadership where they are seeking basic services.

Trust has not been given much attention in leadership like styles of leadership, theories of leadership, development of leadership, qualities of leaders, etc. However, trust is a precondition that we expect from leaders especially public leaders. Hill (2005) argues that accountability in no way replaces trust because it is not possible to have any system of accountability unless there is trust in the system itself and finally remarked as trust is a prerequisite for accountability & accountability is again avenue for building trust. According to O'Neil (2005) cited in Hill (2005:428), "trust-free accountability is a mirage."

As leaders become trustworthy, there comes transparency & accountability in governance. Leaders with trust of their followers, clients, partners & beneficiaries can act with increased self- awareness, self-control, self-confidence & self-realization as leaders (Peck & Dickinson, 2009). These help them to act as true self as authentic leaders (Robbins et al, 2009). These are not leaders who are heavily constrained to act opportunistically, but they believe in shared deeds, commitment, mutual support, confrontation of those outside authority & being charismatic with personal demonstration of marginally greater commitment to shared principles (ibid). It will create a climate of free, open & two-way communication among members based on equal responsibilities to the growth & development of their organization. They will be more worried about their effectiveness & efficiency to meet the needs & expectations of their clients.

Conference Board of Canada (2005:7) viewed trust as, "a psychological threshold within a particular individual, willing to engage in co-operative behaviour entailing risk & uncertainty." Thus, it is a subjective feeling that depends on the perception & expectations of the partners. That is why Robbins et al (2009: 464), expressed it as "a positive expectation that others will not act either through words, actions, or decisions opportunistically". It is both a positive attitude, willingness to accept vulnerability by relying on the other party & taking risk & making oneself vulnerable to another with the confidence we have to the partner (Todd, 2007; Ezekiel, 2005 & Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

Raynor (2004) explained that trusting one self-means feeling secure in her/his identity, mix of purpose, beliefs, values & responsibilities. One is confident in her/his self-trustworthiness. On the contrary, if mistrust predominates, children will view the world as unfriendly & unpredictable & will have trouble in forming relationships (ibid). In this time (Papalia et al, 2004) the child must not only learn to trust in mother, caregivers & itself but also the environment. Sociologists & economists view trust in different ways as a phenomenon that individuals place on institutions. For sociologists, trust is a means of stability & certainty in changing contexts & society (Dominelli, 2004) where as economists view it as "business combination that assign control to a single decisions group." (McConnell & Brue, 2005:598). Social psychologists focus on transactions between individuals that create or destroy trust at the interpersonal or group level.

Leaders as service providers to the public demand them to develop trust & be trustworthy to the public. A leader who has developed trust has a trustworthy organization. This is an organization where the public is coming to get the services with courage, happiness & being optimistic to ask the why & how of the matter starting from the very gate. Thus, it changes the whole climate of the organization that can be observed with

in members of the organization & clients as well. Without trust, it may be difficult to communicate a vision to subordinates or to maintain cohesion when vision, objectives, threats & opportunities are unclear. A leader who is toxic miss communication and destroys a basic human sense of trust that is critical for working relationships & effective leadership in an organization (Mahlangu, 2014).

Trust Bases on Ex Post Facto Law

Trust is for the future deeds in line with the experience we have about the previous events (Uslaner, 2002). Thus, past events being inner psyches determine our appraisal of trust & risks in the future. Trust is built based on experiences. The previous deeds are mirror for the coming trust. It bases itself in the retrospective force that we call it ex post facto law. This is with the notion that trust retroactively changes the consequences of action of the present based on the activities that were done before the current situation.

Whatever leaders are doing today, they are determining their future being trustworthy, collaborative or untrustworthy for their followers or clients (Tschannen-Moran, 2014 and Forsyth et al., 2011). This is the view of interferences of the previous bad or good experiences as proactive interferences again. The earlier experiences negatively or positively influence present level of trust. In this case, trust depends on the subsequent events & deeds that occurred in the relationship between the two parties. If one has acted opportunistically in the previous relationships, the current relationship will be full of doubt & suspicion that puts the current relationship in danger. If the previous relationship was based on mutualism & symbiosis, the relationship flourishes & grows in breadth & width. However, if employees, clients & partners have bad image on the trustworthiness of their leader & organization in general, it has a negative & challenging effect for the new coming leaders. Thus, the leader needs to develop her/his skills in managing & building trust. Hence, the leader can use possible strategies at individual level in addressing the facets of trust that is more vulnerable & at high risk in rebuilding the trust as indicated in this paper.

Dimensions of Trust

Hoy & Tschannen-Moran (2003) defined five elements or facets of trust on which people base their judgments about trust & used as indicators of trust for its measurement (Hallam, et al 2009). When these indicators are combined, they produce a definition of trust as one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party. These basic components are called facets (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003), elements or dimensions (Robbins et al, 2009) of trust which include:

a. Benevolence

This is an act of fairness & equity, good will towards the other person, use of discretion, getting to know people on a personal level, being human, acting with empathy, caring & reducing vulnerabilities (Hallam, 2006 cited in Hallam et al 2009 & Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). It is the assurance that others will not exploit one's vulnerability or take advantage even when the opportunity is available (Cummings & Bromily, 1996). Employees' moral & trust will only exist (Lamberton & Minor-Evans, 2002) if there is a sense of benevolence that employers will not exploit them & fairness is shared in the organization.

b. Reliability

Reliability (in some researches called consistency) is expressed in terms of walking of talks, reducing anxiety in the face of change, being loyal & sharing accountability for trust (Hallam et al., 2009). It is related to the person's predictability & good judgment in handling situations (Robbins et al (2009). If there are inconsistencies between words & actions, trust will be in danger & create automatically a room for mistrust. Without a sense of a leader's reliability, people spend their energy worrying about whether they will be supported or not.

c. Competence

Authors & researchers viewed competence as the ability to perform as expected & according to standards appropriate to the task. More specifically, competence is "the extent to which the trusted party has knowledge & skills" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003:186). As per Robbins et al (2009), competence encompasses an individual's technical & interpersonal knowledge & skills.

Leaders are expected to have the basic competencies in the managerial skills that involve technical, interpersonal & conceptual skills. Likewise in schools, headmasters & teachers are competent (Jangaiah & Sabu, 2011), if they have a concern for school community, knowledge of the subject matter, encouragement of discussion, ability to explain clearly, enthusiasm, preparation & commitment to the profession, & the management in general.

d. Honesty

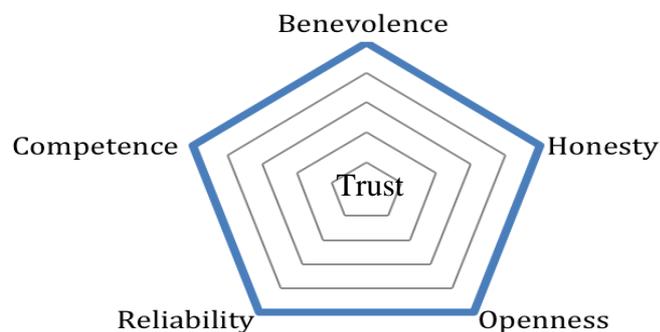
Honesty includes the trusted person's integrity, authenticity, & acceptance of responsibility (Hallam, 2006 cited in Hallam et al, 2009). It is a way of not distorting the truth in order to shift blame to another. It is believed that dishonesty infringes trust & breeds further distrust (ibid).

Honesty was defined by Hoy & Tschannen-Moran (2003:186) as the "character, integrity, & authenticity of the trusted party". Robbins et al (2009) used the term loyalty that is meant for willingness to protect & save face for another person. This clearly addresses the key bondage that someone is not acting opportunistically.

e. Openness

This is the extent to which relevant information is shared, assessed through communicating freely & regularly, makes close personal connections, be approachable & accessible (Hallam, 2006 cited in Hallam et al, 2009). If leaders are not open, followers will start to be suspicious & wonders what is being hidden & leads again to rumours, gossips & drive people's actions in a negative way (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). According to them, openness is "the extent to which there is no withholding of information from others" (p.186).

Dimensions of Trust



The above five dimensions of trust are interrelated where one influences the other positively or negatively in establishing trust between the two parties. Trust is thus the cumulative effect of the five dimensions. In our real life situation & working environment, these domains of trust are important. However, according to Goddard et al (2001) & Robbins (1998), the need of honesty is more than the remaining others & competency being the second important, then benevolence, reliability & finally openness. Based on their findings, honesty & competency have been found as the most critical facets that an individual looks for in determining others' trustworthiness.

Recovering Mistrust / Broken Trust/

Trust is flimsy which needs curious attention & takes long time to build but can be destroyed easily & hard to regain it. Even a trust that has reached to the level of identification-based trust may get broken. Building trust is time consuming whereas breaking it is a task to be done in seconds. Again rebuilding a broken trust is tougher than & not as fast as the first establishment of trust.

Trust evolves over time & it moves from deterrence based trust or calculus based trust to knowledge based trust & finally to identification based trust (Robbins et al, 2009). The expected high trust is not a one time & immediate but gradual process & confidentiality is needed to be kept to develop trust. If parties are successful at deterrence trust where one party is consistent & doesn't push the other for punishment, then trust is validated & proceeds to the next type of trust that is knowledge based trust (ibid).

Mitigation Strategies for Recovering Broken Trust

Dimensions of Trust	Trust Breaking Features	Possible Mitigation Strategies
Benevolence	When followers, employees, friends, colleagues, partners, etc. feel that they are being treated unfairly, with lack of equity, care & irrational decisions, no good-will towards the other person, being inhuman, acting with apathy, putting them vulnerable & lack of protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat employees fairly, • Discipline everyone by the same standards in constructive manner not as a punishment, • Use organizational policies in constructive manner, • Discourage turf protection, • Avoid finger pointing & buck-passing, • Help people to feel safe, at ease & comment on behaviours not people.
Competence	When followers, employees, friends, colleagues, partners etc. feel that they are dealing with incompetent ones who have no ability to perform as expected & according to standards appropriate to the task, lack of technical & interpersonal knowledge, skills & lack of preparation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to develop competence & be to the expected level, • Learn what your subordinates do if you don't already know, • Try not to make fake skills, knowledge & showy, • Avoid micro & macro management rather keep the walking line in balancing micro & macro management.
Honesty	When employees, friends, colleagues, partners etc. feel that there is lack of integrity, authenticity, & acceptance of responsibility, distorting the truth in order to shift blame to another, lack of willingness to protect & save face for another person, acting opportunistically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect each other, • Promote mutual respect, • Acknowledge a work done well & be ready to share failures /blames, • Communicate with others from a win-win position, • Actively listen to others when they express themselves, • Promote interdependence & cultivate positive & healthy team climate, • Acknowledge the contributions of others without discounting them, • Avoid finger pointing & backbites.
Reliability	When employees, colleagues, friends, partners, etc. are inconsistent in honouring their commitments, different in walking of talks, rising anxiety in the face of change, being disloyal & not sharing accountability, being unpredictable & weak judgment in handling situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your words, • Walk you talks, • Honour commitments consistently, • Consider inputs, feedbacks, suggestions genuinely, • Do not make promises that you can't keep.
Openness	When employees, friends, colleagues, partners etc. are not fully informed, there is gap in sharing relevant information, absence of free & regular communication, lack of close personal connections, being not approachable & accessible, not open, withholding of information from others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counter rumours before they spread, • Keep employees informed, • Be communicative & transparent, • Consider them as stakeholders who have a concern.

A leader should never let his followers down when they trust her/him; a leader must trust them by building a two-way trust or relationships ; stand up for the belief she/he considers important & do not act in any way that contradicts them (Lamberton & Minor-Evans, 2002). If it happens, the leader needs to rebuild it ; otherwise; organizational efficiency & effectiveness will be in danger. Similarly, Tschannen-Moran (2014) has amplified the need for building trust to school improvement where principals or headmasters need to be intentional & strategic about building trust among teachers, students, & families. In the same token, Tschannen-Moran (2014) has stressed that schools with high levels of trust have motivated & willing teachers to try new strategies because they trust headmaster to support them. Students are motivated & connected to the school because they trust their teachers & families as supportive & the headmaster & teachers have built trusting relationships with them as well. The same is true in other leadership areas of an organization. Trust is built if each member of the organization commits her/ himself to actions at team meetings & carries them out as promised (Osborne, 2008).

Trust of leaders or followers may be broken due to several personal, economic, political, social or environmental reasons. A broken trust can be rebuilt though it is hard to gain the first trust. Thus, leaders need to be wise enough to rebuild it, taking initiatives, mobilizing their followers to acknowledge the gaps & collaborate in filling this gap, which is a deterring factor of the leader's development. Nevertheless, there are possible strategies to rebuild & restore it (Dahlke , 2007) as being at colleague level, supervisor or managerial level or at schools level of principals & teachers (Hallam, 2009).

The mitigating strategies in rebuilding a broken trust of leaders in this paper are proposed in line with each facets of trust so that an individual especially a leader can address each facet based on the identified gaps. Thus, it has been summarized in the following table.

Conclusion

Trust being amorphous & fragile (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Tschannen-Moran 2014; Bauer, 2015 & Todd, 2007 & Robbins, 1999), it needs care so that it can grow between leaders, followers & beneficiaries of an organization who are in a social co-existence. It is the spice for an organization when leaders & followers are living as a human being in an organization & it is a prerequisite for the life of the organization since organizations exists with the support of all members. Thus, we need to build trust among partners & beneficiaries. Trust building as a process starts from deterrence based trust & based on its validation, it grows to knowledge based & identification based trust as a pyramid where emotional attachment is reached with fully internalizing desires & intentions of each other. However, there are still potential sources for breaking the trust where leaders violate or decline their commitments or act opportunistically putting their followers, partners, clients or beneficiaries at risk. This leads to rotting of trust or incubation of mistrust. When ever trust is broken, each dimension of trust are eroded or some of the dimensions in the polygon may be severely affected that needs serious treatment to recover. However, if leaders, followers, beneficiaries or partners came to know that their relationship is affected & need to rebuild it, they can rebuild it. For these, dimensions of trust, features of broken trust & possible strategies for healing the rotten dimension of trust are proposed for leaders & followers. Thus, they need to work & treat the facets of trust that gets ill. This may help them to treat the rotten facets of trust but needs patience, time & energy to come to the previous level of trust, as there may be still threats that demand the skills & patience of leaders.

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