

## Study of the Relationship Between the Rate of Trust and Collaboration of Teachers in the High Schools

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was the investigation of the relationship between the rate of trust and collaboration of teachers in the high schools of Sari city in 2006-2007. The method of the study was descriptive-correlation. All of the principals and teachers of Sari governmental high schools were considered as population of this research. The sample included 44 principals and 306 teachers were selected by using Kerejcie and Morgan's table. The research instruments were two questionnaires which targeted trust and collaboration: As for the validity of the instruments, Cronbach-Alpha coefficients were calculated 0.869 for the trust and 0.904 for collaboration questionnaires respectively. The scores obtained from both questionnaires were subjected to a number of descriptive and inferential statistics. Results of research showed that: 1) There is a significant relationship between the teachers trust in the principals and teachers collaboration in the school ( $r = 0.33, p > 0.05$ ) 0.2) There is a significant relationship between the principals trust in the teachers and teachers collaboration in the school ( $r = 0.54, p > 0.05$ ) 0.3) There is a significant relationship between the teachers trust in the teachers and collaboration of teachers with their colleagues in the school ( $r = 0.30, p > 0.05$ ) 0.4) There is differences between the trust of teachers with principals based on sexes ( $t = 1.984, p < 0.05$ ) 0.5) There isn't differences between the collaboration of teachers with principals based on sexes ( $t = 1.241, p < 0.05$ ). Comparison of means showed that teachers' trusts in the principal between females were more than males.

**Key words:** Trust . collaboration . high school . school effectiveness

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### INTRODUCTION

Trust is a complex concept. It has been difficult to pin down because it is based on many factors, varies with the expectations held in different kinds of relationships and changes over the course of a relationship [1]. Researchers have varied in the dimensions of trust they have emphasized or included in their definitions. Over the past four decades a variety of definitions of trust have been put forth and there is still little clarity about the exact meaning of trust. The empirical study of trust began in the late 1950s with an eye toward resolving the escalating suspicions of the Cold War and the costly arms race that had resulted from those tensions. Baier [1] studied trust using mixed-motive games in laboratory experiments with participants who were strangers to one another. He defined trust in behavioral terms, inferring trust when a player made a cooperative move where there was the risk of greater potential loss if one's co-operative behavior was exploited by an opponent than the

potential gain if both players cooperated. Elaborating on Deutsch's work, but examining trust in the context of organizations, Black [2] also defined trust as a behavior. For Black, trust consisted of actions that increased one's vulnerability to another whose behavior was not under one's control in a situation in which the penalty (disutility) one suffered if the other abused that vulnerability was greater than the benefit (utility) one gained if the other did not abuse that vulnerability. Blasé and Blase [3] became concerned with the disillusionment of young adults with what they called "The establishment" and the apparent suspicion with which they regarded the institutions and authorities of society. Blasé and Blase [3] defined trust in the context of communication, describing it as an expectancy that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group could be relied upon. They developed an instrument that asked participants to make judgments about the trustworthiness of various societal actors such as politicians, doctors, the media and parents. These judgments were then combined into an

overall interpersonal trust score. They were interested in the extent to which the capacity to trust was a generalized trait, resulting from one's past experiences with important others (although they also recognized that factors related to a specific individual or situation would play a role in a person's level of trust or suspicion in a particular context). While they examined attitudes of trust in a generalized sense, Bryk and Schneider [4] defined trust as a specific judgment about the character of a trusted person. Trust, in their view, was expectancy held by an individual that the behavior of another person or a group would be altruistic and personally beneficial. Building on this definition they claimed that an individual was more likely to trust another (a) if he believed the other person had nothing to gain from the untrustworthy behavior, (b) if he perceived that he was able to exert some control over the other person's outcome and (c) if there was a degree of confidence in the altruism of the trusted person. These researchers joined Blasé and Blase [3] in defining trust as an attitude or judgment rather than as a behavior. Growing out of the philosophical tradition, Fox [5] added several new dimensions to an understanding of trust.

What we care about may be things tangible, such as our children or our money, or it may be something intangible such as the ideals of democracy, or norms of respect and tolerance. Schools look after all of these for our society and consequently the issue of trust is a vital one in the study of schools. Changed economic realities resulting in changed expectations of what companies owe their employees, as well as other changes in society; have led to a renewed interest in trust in the 1990s. Most contemporary definitions of trust attempt to capture the complexity of trust with explicitly multidimensional definitions, highlighting the many facets of a trusting relationship. Bryk and Schneider [6] defined trust as "an individual's belief or a common belief among a group of individuals that another individual or group (a) makes good faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit and implicit, (b) is honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments and (c) does not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available". Fuller [7] definition of trust is multidimensional with respect to the qualities possessed by the trusted person. "Trust is one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is (a) competent, (b) reliable, (c) open and (d) concerned." What is common across these definitions of trust, either explicitly or implicitly, is vulnerability. "Trust by its very nature provides opportunities for malfeasance on the part of those being trusted" [6, 7]. Gambetta [8] describes trust as

"accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will". Where there is no vulnerability there is no need for trust. Where consensus is lacking concerns what is required in order to be able to cope with this vulnerability and the degree of optimism or positive expectation one must hold in order to describe an action or attitude as trusting. For example, if a parent leaves his or her child with a child care provider with significant misgivings, but out of a perception of having no other alternatives, can the parent be said to have trusted the provider (action) or not to have trusted the provider (attitude)? What is the threshold beyond which an attitude or action can no longer be considered trust? Do those thresholds vary across the various dimensions of trust? What is the consequence of feeling confident in another person along certain dimensions, but not along others? Clearly, much remains to be explored in our understanding of trust.

Trust, then, involves placing something one cares about in the care or control of another, with some level of assurance confidence. But what if one's expectations are not met? What if the one who is trusted acts opportunistically, taking advantage of the confidence placed in him or her? Or what if the trusted person proves not to be competent to fulfill the obligation? Although trust tends to be extended bit by bit, building incrementally, when a violation occurs trust is shattered, often falling off catastrophically, leaving distrust in its place [9, 10]. Trust is a dynamic phenomenon that takes on different characteristics at different stages of a relationship. Henderson and Hoy [11] describe three levels or bases of trust that may emerge at different stages in a relationship. At the start of a relationship the trust that exists is a provisional trust resting on the assumption that the other party desires to maintain the relationship and that a breach of expectations will result in a severing of that tie. As a relationship matures further the possibility for a deep identification between partners emerges. Identity-based trust exists when there is complete empathy with the other party's desires and intentions. Each of the parties understands and appreciates the other's desires to such an extent that each can effectively act in the other's stead. Trust is a dynamic phenomenon that takes on different characteristics at different stages of a relationship [11, 12].

At the start of a relationship the trust that exists is a provisional trust resting on the assumption that the other party desires to maintain the relationship and that a breach of expectations will result in a severing of that tie. This "deterrence based trust" is strengthened when the deterrent or punishment available if either party breaks trust is clear, possible and likely to occur [11]. If continued contact and communication do not result in

increased trust, then the relationship may remain at this level. “Knowledge-based trust” takes root as actors get to know one another and come to feel able to predict how the other is likely to behave in a given situation. Communication and courtship are key processes in the development of knowledge-based trust [11-13]. As a relationship matures further the possibility for a deep identification between partners emerges. Identity-based trust exists when there is complete empathy with the other party’s desires and intentions. Each of the parties understands and appreciates the other’s desires to such an extent that each can effectively act in the other’s stead. The trust between two individuals is significantly influenced by the social context in which it is embedded. In this study the relationship between the rate of trust and Collaboration of teachers in the high schools was studied.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The method of the study was descriptive-correlation. All of the principals and teachers of Sari governmental high schools were considered as population of this research. The sample included 44 principals and 306 teachers were selected by using Kerejcie and Morgan's table. The research instruments were two questionnaires which targeted trust and collaboration: As for the validity of the instruments, Cronbach-Alpha coefficients were calculated 0.869 for the trust and 0.904 for collaboration questionnaires respectively. The scores obtained from both questionnaires were subjected to a number of descriptive and inferential statistics.

**RESULTS**

**Hypothesis number one:** In this study, the correlation ( $r = 0.33$ ,  $df = 304$ ) between the teachers trust in the principals and teachers collaboration in the school proved significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). Such that the teachers trust in the principals revealed more teachers collaboration in the school.

**Hypothesis number two:** In this study, the correlation ( $r = 0.54$ ,  $df = 302$ ) between the principals trust in the teachers and teachers collaboration in the school proved significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). Such that the principals trust in the teachers revealed more teachers collaboration in the school.

**Hypothesis number three:** In this study, the correlation ( $r = 0.30$ ,  $df = 40$ ) between the teachers trust in the teachers and collaboration of teachers with their colleagues in the school ( $P < 0.05$ ). Such that the

Table 1: Brief coefficients of correlation

Number of hypotheses	$r_{ob}$	N	P values	Results of hypotheses testing
One	0.33	306	$P < 0.05$	Accept
Two	0.54	42	$P < 0.05$	Accept
Three	0.30	304	$P < 0.05$	Accept

Table 2: Brief results of t-test, hypothesis 4

Groups	N	M	SD	DF	t	P-Value
Male	154	3.44	0.539	304	1.984	$P < 0.05$
Female	152	3.56	0.427			

Table 3: Brief results of t-test, hypothesis 5

Groups	N	M	SD	DF	t	P-Value
Male	154	2.85	1.007	304	1.241	$P > 0.05$
Female	152	2.72	0.881			

teachers trust in the teachers revealed collaboration of teachers with their colleagues in the school.

**Hypothesis number four:** In this study, the t-test ( $t = 1.984$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) showed that there is differences between the trust of teachers with principals based on sexes.

**Hypothesis number five:** In this study, the t-test ( $t = 1.241$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) showed that there is differences between the collaboration of teachers with principals based on sexes.

**DISCUSSION**

Trust is a general confidence and overall optimism in occurring events; it is believing in others in the absence of compelling reasons to disbelieve. In the context of organizations, trust is a work group’s generalized expectancy that the words, actions and promises of another individual, group, or organization can be relied on [1-3]. In schools trust can be viewed in relation to a variety of reference groups – students, teachers, administrators, the organization. One trusts others, not to simply be consistent in action, but also to act in one’s best interest. In this research on middle schools, we were concerned with faculty trust as it was expressed toward the principal and toward fellow teachers. In particular, two aspects of faculty trust are defined as follows: Trust in the principal. The faculty has confidence that the principal will keep his or her word and act in the best interest of the teachers. Trust in colleagues. The faculty believes that teachers can depend on each other in difficult situations and that teachers can rely on the integrity of their colleagues.

Trust has been called the “foundation of school effectiveness” [5] and yet studies of trust in schools are scarce. Trust allows individuals to focus on the task at hand and therefore, to work and learn more effectively. Productive relationships build effective schools.

Supportive leadership on the part of the principal influenced the degree of trust teachers felt for the principal but did not engender trust among the faculty for one another. At the same time, both collegial and engaged behavior of the teachers helped create trust in colleagues, but did not make a significant contribution to trust in the principal [5-9]. The authenticity of the principal’s behavior has been positively correlated with both aspects of faculty trust [10], however, the authenticity of teacher behavior and trust have not been examined. These studies have provided some intriguing evidence of the significance of trust in the interpersonal dynamics of schools.

Probably one of the most serious issues that most schools face is the problem of broken trust. When trust is broken between the teacher and student, suspicion and punishment are the likely consequences, factors that are dysfunctional to cognitive and social-emotional development. Likewise, when trust is broken between the principal and teacher, the probable consequences are hyper vigilance, punishment and getting even, typically destructive forces that undermine the effectiveness of the school. Revenge does have a way of equalizing power differentials in the school, but it also can lead to escalation of the conflict and produce harm and violations that may be irreversible. Both administrators and teachers need to be aware of the dramatic costs of broken trust and use that knowledge to prevent abuse of power and to encourage openness and cooperation [12-17]. Organizations must continually manage extending trust to employees at various levels of the organization with the creation of safeguards against the possibility of opportunistic behavior on the part of participants. Organizations adopt rules and regulations to act as substitutes for interpersonal trust and to restore damaged trust within the organization [17]. Legalistic mechanisms are likely to be effective only when the task requirements are understood well enough to be specified clearly and concisely and may engender distrust and resentment in situations where workers need a certain amount of discretion in order to function effectively [13]. Trust violations were likely to “loom larger” than confirmations of trustworthiness for subordinates. Trust in the principal is determined primarily by the behavior of the principal. In other words, the principal controls his or her own destiny by acting in ways that engender trust or distrust. Moreover, faculty trust in colleagues is basically determined by the behavior of teachers in relation to one another. The principal’s impact in

generating trust in colleagues seems quite limited; that is, principal behavior has little influence on the trust that teachers have with each other. Teacher and leader authenticity are concepts that capture the openness in interpersonal relations. It is not surprising that leader authenticity is highly correlated with trust in the principal and teacher authenticity is substantially correlated with trust in colleagues. Teacher authenticity has virtually nothing to do with trusting the principal and likewise, leader authenticity is unrelated to teachers trusting each other [14].

The empirical results of this study of middle schools are not surprising; they support existing findings that underscore the pivotal nature of faculty trust in school organizations. Much remains to be done, however. Our review of the literature suggests many avenues of research about trust in schools have been neglected and need attention. We sketch only a few of those areas to demonstrate the importance and significance of trust in schools.

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