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TRUST IN LEADERS - VITAL FOR EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION AND COMMITMENT: A CASE STUDY IN SELECTED CIVIL SERVICE BUREAUS IN AMHARA REGION, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to assess the level of trust employees and subordinates have on their superiors in particular and the management team in general in selected civil service Bureaus in Amhara region, Ethiopia. Among 13 civil service bureaus in the region a total number of 150 employees from three selected bureaus (Amhara Education Bureau, Amhara Regional Bureau of Justice and Amhara Regional Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development) were included in the study which were selected randomly. Subordinates' and employees' level of trust in their superiors and management team of their respective organization was measured via a trust measurement questionnaire. Trust as construct was measured using six dimensions namely competence, integrity, dependability/reliability, openness / honesty, concern for employees and identification. The result of the study showed that most often the trust of employees and subordinates on their superiors and management team of their organization varies from "sometimes" to "fairly often" in the scale. Hence even if the level of trust of employees and subordinates in their superiors in particular and management team of their organization in particular is encouraging there is a need for more effort to scale up it.

KEYWORDS

competence, concern for employees, dependability, identification, integrity, openness, trust.

INTRODUCTION

How much do you trust others? How much do you trust your spouse, friends and relatives, public policy makers', managers, preachers, the media etc? The level of trust that one has on spouse, friends and relatives, policy makers etc have a crucial impact on how the respective institutions /individuals involved in a particular relationship function and perform (Putnam, R. D., 1993). Trust has been the basic concern of researchers in public administration, management; development and governance for long. For example, in public administration the trust of citizens on government and its role for civic engagement; in corporate management the trust of stockholders in corporate managers and leaders have been concerns of research for long. Trust plays a make or break role in any situations that involves the interaction of two or more people/organizations. The level of trust one have on the other and vice versa directly affects how effectively and efficiently the parties function and perform.

Trust as a value has a central place in our society. The following quotations from Ethiopian oral literature show how trust as a value is embedded in our social system.

Once upon a time a given rain feed agricultural society faced a challenge of drought and famine since the rain was not coming on time as expected. Elders of the generation arranged a prayer whereby any part of the society should participate to ask God to bring the rain for them. On the date of the prayer any one was going to the prayer area. There was only one child who had an umbrella among the large number of people who are going to the prayer. The child was surprised why the other people do not have umbrella but still other people were surprised with the child for the fact that the child is with an umbrella. Fortunately one of the adults who are going to the prayer asked the child why he carried an umbrella. The child responded that "we are going to pray to God to give us the rain, for sure our God will give us the rain hence I came up with an umbrella to protect my self from the rain".

There has been a media known for undependable news and the majority of people do not trust the news from that media. One day in the weather forecast program of the media it was announced that a strong storm is going to come in a given part of that constitute and the media advised the people to leave their area. However the people assume that it is business as usual that they do not trust the media. Unfortunately the storm happened that day and the people were seriously damaged.

There was a person who shots loud for calling help of his neighbors .When the neighbors come out to help him he is making it for joke that there was no any problem. After the person repeatedly makes such a joke once a day he faced a real danger and he shot for help of his neighbors. Unfortunately no one come out to help the guy since the people assumed that he is making the usual joke. They never trusted him.

All the above situations show the importance and value of trust in different contexts. The child trusted in God that the rain will come; the people do not trust the media and they were destroyed; the neighbors don't lend their hand to the guy who shots for help since they do not trust him. In line with the above analogy one can imagine what could happen if leaders, administrators, policy makers, and development planners' effort if they do not get the trust of people/clients whom they lead and/or serve. By the same token one can easily imagine how it will be difficult to get employees committed, motivated and engaged to achieve organizational objectives if the employees do not trust the leaders and management teams of their respective organization. Trust occupies a pivotal position in leadership and management literatures (Knack, S. and P. Kiefer, 1997). Particularly the level of trust that subordinates and employees have on the management team and their superiors is highly correlated with subordinates commitment, motivation and hence achievement of organizational objectives (Korsgaard, M.A., Schweiger, D.M., & Sapienza, H.J., 1995).

Trust, the basic glue between the superiors and subordinates can be a basic source of competitive advantage for organizations since it cannot be imitated or replicated easily by competitors (Jones & George, 1998). According to scholars in organization behavior (Jones & George, 1998) commitment and motivation of employees to their organization and hence their corresponding performance is a function of two major factors: ability and willingness. Though these two factors are crucial for scaling up employees performance, willingness is much more crucial since employees could not make use of their ability at full capacity in the absence of willingness to perform. Sadly employees may use their ability adversely if they do not have the necessary level of trust in their superiors. Willingness much of the time is a matter of motivation. Many factors mainly monetary and non monetary come into play in this regard. Trust, a non monetary factor is an important ingredient in this regard .The level of trust that subordinates has on the management team in general and their superiors in particular directly affect their productivity and efficiency (Cummings, L.L. & Bromiley, P., 1996).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term trust belongs to the domain of the concept social capital. Though the definition of trust varies from context to context, recently many trust researchers have reached broad agreement on a definition of trust in the management and leadership context: trust is the willingness to be vulnerable based upon positive expectations of the intention or behavior of another, under conditions of risk and interdependence (Mayer et al., 61995).

The role of social capital in general and trust in particular is well documented theoretically and empirically. Social capital influences directly a wide range of economical, political, social and organizational phenomena. Trust occupies a central place in this regard (Fairholm, G., 1994).

A growing body of empirical and theoretical literature suggests that "social capital" in general and trust in particular influences a wide range of significant economic, political, social and organizational phenomena. For example, Arrow (1972) and Fukuyama (1995) believe that the level of trust in a society strongly predicts its economic achievement. Putnam (1930) using a cross-sectional dataset from Italy indicated that local governments and governmental institutions are

more efficient and effective where there is greater civic engagement and public trust. Knack and Keefer (1997) also showed that an increase of one standard deviation in country-level of trust predicts an increase in economic growth of more than one-half of a standard deviation. Besides La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, and Vishny (1997) claimed that a standard deviation increase in trust increases judicial efficiency by 0.7 and reduces government corruption by 0.3. All the above empirical and theoretical literature is sufficient evidence about the role of social capital in general and trusts in particular in different economical, political, social and legal contexts. Like the above political economical and legal cases the link between leadership and trust is also well documented in management and leadership literature. Research in this regard shows that while the loss of trust between superiors and subordinates is the cause of much conflict, increased cost, decreased profitability, staff turnover, loss of morale, stress and anxiety etc its presence will result in the opposite (Fairholm, G. (1994) Hence organizations public or private, profit or non profit should be concerned about the level of trust subordinates and employee's have in their superiors and management team of their organization. This research is an attempt towards this end in selected civil service bureaus in Amhara region, Ethiopia.

NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

As noted above trust occupies a central place in management and leadership literature. It directly affects employees' motivation and commitment and consequently their productivity and efficiency. Theoretical and empirical evidences are abundant about the role of trust in organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Despite this fact many of the researches in organizational leadership and management focused on of leadership traits of effective leaders and leadership styles. Hence there is a paramount of importance for research on the level of trust employees have on leaders. In addition the research out put will have a vital importance for researchers, academics and practioniers in the area of leadership and management.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Existing knowledge base (both theoretical and empirical discourse) in leadership and management is highly skewed to the discussions of leadership traits and different theories of leadership. Researchers and scholars have much focused on how to identify leadership traits that characterize a "good" leader and on synthesizing different theories of leadership. Researchers have given much emphasis in assessing if leaders in different capacities have the required leadership traits and which leadership theory(s) and trait(s) are suitable for a particular situation. Issues on leadership in most cases were addressed in line with this approach. For example organizations in their attempt to recruit and select leaders and managers showed keen interest to see if the candidates have the so called "leadership traits". Educators were much concerned on how to instill leadership traits to leadership and management students and trainees. The basic rationale behind such doctrine is that individuals who have the leadership traits will be successful leaders.

However successful leadership today demands more than leadership traits. Today leaders and managers operate within a competitive and dynamic leadership environment. Leadership theory nowadays should stress on authenticity and relationships among employees and leaders; superiors and subordinates; public policy makers and the public. In this regard there is a valid reason to put trust at the center of leadership and management research. Today since superior-subordinate relationships are changing the management doctrine of vertical and hierarchical relationships should be revisited.

Leaders, managers, and administrators may be visionary, experienced, talented, motivated and committed to achieve organizational goals and objectives. They may be endowed with a full range of leadership traits required for effective and efficient leadership; however their effort will be futile if they do not get the trust of employees and subordinates. The missions and objectives of the organization must be shared among their subordinates and the whole community of the organization. Therefore leaders must get the trust of their subordinates in particular and employees in general for organizational goals to be achieved. Organizational goals and mission should be equally shared and valued by the management and employees of an organization.

The fact that trust has a direct effect on employees' motivation, commitment and productivity is sufficiently documented both theoretically and empirically (Cummings, L.L. & Bromiley, P., 1996). Organizations should understand the level of trust that employees have in the management group. Trust directly affects performance profitability and other organizational performance (Creed, W.E. & Miles, R.E. (1996). Before leaders and managers think of participation, motivation, achieving or excelling targets they should know to what level they are trusted by the employees in general and subordinates in particular. In line with this the basic research question here is: to what extent do employees in Amhara region civil service organizations trust the management team in general and their superiors in particular.

OBJECTIVES

The prime objective of this study is to examine the level of trust the employees have in their leaders in general and management team in particular in selected civil service bureaus of Amhara Region, Ethiopia.

HYPOTHESIS

In line with the above broad objective the following specific hypotheses are made for the research

- Ho 1: The level of competence of leaders (superiors in particular and management team in general) is low as perceived by subordinates and employees.
- Ho 2: The level of Integrity of leaders (superiors in particular and management team in general) is low as perceived by subordinates and employees.
- Ho 3: The level of dependability of leaders (superiors in particular and management team in general) is low as perceived by subordinates and employees.
- Ho 4: The level of honesty exhibited by leaders (superiors in particular and management team in general) is low as perceived by subordinates and employees.
- Ho 5: The level of concern for employees exhibited by leaders (superiors in particular and management team in general) is low as perceived by subordinates and employees.
- Ho 6: Identification to the organization exhibited by leaders (superiors in particular and management team in general) is low as perceived by subordinates and employees.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

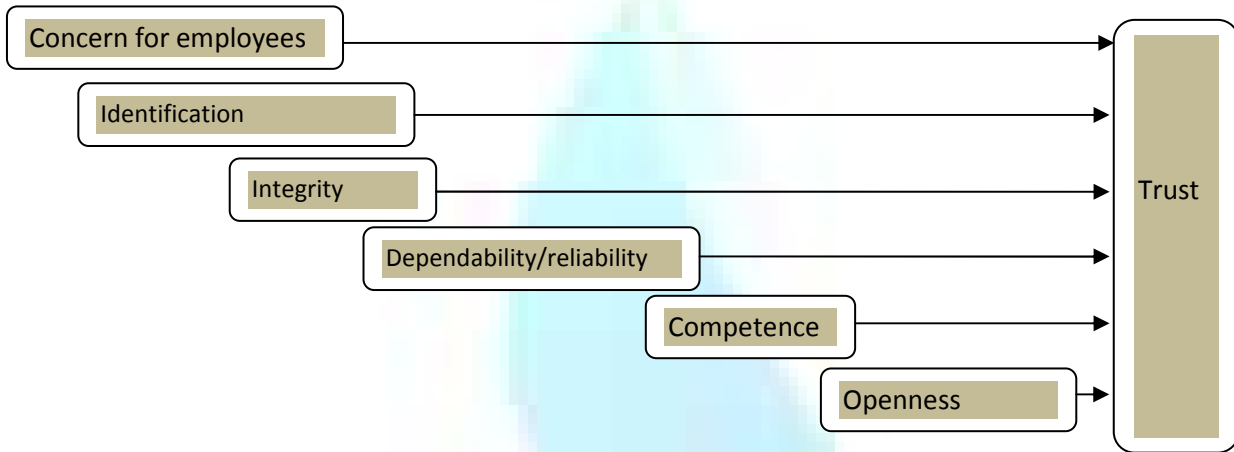
This research was a descriptive cross sectional survey research. Data was collected from a sample of employees selected from different line bureaus of Amhara region. A questioner with five point scale (not at all, once in a while, sometimes, fairly often, frequently) was administered to this end. The purpose was to examine the level of trust employees of the selected bureaus have on their superiors in particular and the management team in general. As far as sampling is concerned a two stage random sampling was applied. In the first stage from 13 line bureaus in Amhara region three of them (Amhara Educational Bureau, Amhara Regional Bureau of Justice and Amhara Regional Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development) were selected randomly. At the second stage from each selected bureau 50 research subjects/employees were selected randomly from the payroll sheet of the organizations under consideration.

CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT

Measurement of trust has been a controversial issue. Different people approached the concept in different ways. Some scholars prefer the use of survey instruments while others prefer for games and experiments (Rotter, J. B. (1967)) to measure trust of employees in their superiors in general and the management team in particular. For the sake of this research I subscribed to survey methods with a likert scale that contains different attributes of trust measured in a five point scale (not at all, once in a while, sometimes, fairly often, and frequently). For The sake of this paper I have defined six trust dimensions (competence, integrity, dependability/reliability, openness/honesty, concern for employ and identification) and I used different attributes to measure each trust dimensions. The constructs and attributes used to measure trust are modified and adopted from the work of Katie Delahaye Paine- (Katie Delahaye Paine 2003). For the sake of this research the dimensions used to measure trust and their working definition is given below.

Competence: The belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do. It includes the extent to which we see an organization as being effective; that it has the ability to achieve it's the objectives
Integrity: The belief that an organization is fair and just
Dependability/Reliability: The belief that an organization will do what it says it will do; that it acts consistently and dependably.
Openness and Honesty: This dimension involves not only the amount and accuracy of information that is shared, but also how sincerely and appropriately it is communicated.
Concern for Employees: Concern for employees includes the feelings of caring, empathy, tolerance and safety that are exhibited when we are vulnerable in business activities. Sincere efforts to understand contribute to high levels in any relationships.
Identification: Identification measures the extent, to which we hold common goals, norms, values and beliefs associated with our organization's culture. This dimension indicates how connected we feel to management and to co-workers.

based the on the above definition of trust dimensions the research is conceptualized in the following way.



RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Trust for the purpose of this paper is measured as a function five constructs namely competence, openness/honesty, and concern for employees, reliability/dependability, identification and integrity. Data collected on these basic attributes is summarized and interpreted as follows.

TABLE 1: SUMMERY OF TRUST ATTRIBUTES

	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Competence				
I am highly satisfied with the organization’s overall efficiency of operation.	1	5	3.38	1.137
I am highly satisfied with the overall quality of the products and/or services of the organization.	1	5	2.83	1.202
I am highly satisfied with the capacity of the organization to achieve its objectives.	1	5	3.44	.996
I am highly satisfied with the capability of the organization’s employee and management team	1	5	3.64	.889
Over all competence mean			3.32	
2.Opens /honesty				
I can tell my immediate supervisor when things are going wrong.	1	5	3.38	1.102
I am free to disagree with my immediate supervisor.	1	5	3.15	1.169
I have a say in decisions that affect my job.	1	5	3.25	.997
My immediate supervisor keeps confidences.	1	5	3.29	1.144
I receive adequate information regarding how well I am doing in my job.	1	5	3.45	1.100
I receive adequate information regarding how I am being evaluated.	1	5	3.02	1.194
I receive adequate information regarding how my job-related problems are handled.	1	5	3.48	1.087
I receive adequate information regarding how organizational decisions are made that affect my job	1	5	3.08	1.165
Overall openness/honesty mean			3.26	
3.Concern for Employees				
My immediate supervisor listens to me	1	5	3.25	.997
Top management is sincere in their efforts to communicate with employees.	1	5	3.29	1.144
Top management listens to employees’ concerns.	1	5	3.45	1.100
My immediate supervisor is concerned about my personal well being.	1	5	3.02	1.194
Top management is concerned about employees’ well being.	1	5	3.48	1.087
My immediate supervisor is sincere in his/her efforts to communicate with team members.	1	5	3.08	1.165
My immediate supervisor speaks positively about subordinates in front of other	1	5	3.25	.997
Over all concern for the public mean	1	5	3.26	1.144
4.Reliability/Dependability				
My immediate supervisor follows through with what he/she says.	1	5	3.28	1.027
My immediate supervisor behaves in a consistent manner from day to data	1	5	3.43	.996
Top management keeps their commitments to employees.	1	5	3.42	1.098
My immediate supervisor keeps his/her commitments to team members.	1	5	3.63	1.108
I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.	1	5	3.38	1.102
This organization can be relied on to keep its promises	1	5	3.15	1.169
I am very willing to let this organization make decisions for people like me.	1	5	3.25	.997
Overall reliability/dependability mean	1	5	3.36	1.027
5.Identification				
I feel connected to my peers.	1	5	3.68	.989
I feel connected to my organization	1	5	3.44	.996
I feel connected to my immediate supervisor.	1	5	3.64	.889
My values are similar to the values of my peers.	1	5	3.42	1.018
My values are similar to the values of my immediate supervisor.	1	5	3.72	1.071
Overall identification mean			3.58	
Integrity				
This organization treats people like me fairly and justly	1	5	3.31	1.055
Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.	1	5	3.18	1.160
Sound principles seem to guide this organization’s behavior.	1	5	3.34	1.053
This organization does not mislead people like me	1	5	3.47	1.129
Overall integrity mean	1	5	3.32	1.062

Source: own survey 2013

COMPETENCE

the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do was the first dimension used to measure trust of employees on their superiors and management team in selected line bureaus of Amhara region, Ethiopia. Employees of organizations should develop the confidence that the management team in general and their superiors in particular in the organization are competent enough to meet the objectives of the organization. Employees by and large should have the confidence that their organization is effective and efficient that it have the ability to achieve organizational objectives. As in can be noted from table 1 above the mean value of items used to measure competence of superiors and management team as perceived by employees varies from a maximum of 3.38 to a minimum of 2.83 while the over all mean value of the items used to measure competence is 3.32. This implies that employees’ perception of the competence of their superiors to achieve organizational objectives varies from “once in a while” to “some times” in the scale while the overall mean of competence implies “some times”. Hence the hypothesis that the level of trust employees have on the competence of their superiors and management team is negligible is rejected since the result of the study reveals that employees in the case organizations have a reasonable level of trust on the competence level of their superiors and management team which varies from “once in a while” to “some times” in the five point scale used to measure trust.

OPENNESS /HONESTY

The second dimension used to measure trust of employees in their superiors in particular and the management team in general was openness /honesty. Openness/honesty refers to not only the amount and accuracy of information that is shared, but also how sincerely and appropriately it is communicated. As it can be noted from table 1 above the mean value of items used to measure honesty/ openness varies from a minimum of 3.02 to a maximum 3.38 while the mean value for the overall honesty /openness amounts to 3.26. Consequently both the individual values and mean values of items used to measure honesty of superiors and management team of the case organizations as perceived by employees varies from ‘some times’ to ‘fairly often’ in the scale. Consequently the hypothesis that states that the level of honesty exhibited by leaders as perceived by subordinates and employees is negligible is rejected as the result of the

study confirms that openness /honesty of superiors and management team varies 'some times' to 'fairly often' which shows that leaders have a reasonable level honesty as perceived by their subordinates.

CONCERN FOR EMPLOYEES

The third component used to measure trust of employees on leaders and superiors was concern of management team for employees which refers to feelings of caring, empathy, tolerance and safety that are exhibited by superiors and the management team. The degree to which employees feel that they are valued by their leaders in particular and the management team of their organization in particular plays a make or break role in their commitment, motivation and productivity. Employees should feel that they are valued and cared by their superiors. As it can be noted from table 1 above the mean of items used to measure concern of officials (superiors and management team) to the employees varies from a minimum of 3.02 to a maximum of 3.48 while the overall mean equal to 3.26. Once again as per the scale used in this paper the mean values varies between "some times" to 'fairly often'. Consequently the hypothesis that states that the level of concern of superiors and management team for employees as perceived by employees is negligible is rejected since the result of the study affirms that superiors and management team of the organization gives a considerable level of attention and concern for employees of the organization.

RELIABILITY/DEPENDABILITY

Reliability/Dependability refers to the belief that an organization leaders and management team will do what they say they will do; that it acts consistently and dependably. As it can be noted from table 1 above reliability/dependability mean scores on items used to measure it vary from a minimum of 3.15 to a maximum of 3.68 with a mean value of 3.26. As per the scale used one can reasonably conclude that reliability/dependability of leaders and management team as perceived by employees varies from "some times" to "fairly often". Consequently the hypothesis that states the level of dependability of leaders (superiors in particular and management team in general) is low as perceived by subordinates and employees is rejected since result of the study confirms that employees have a considerable level of trust on the reliability of their superiors and management team of their organization.

IDENTIFICATION

Identification measures the extent, to which employees of an organization hold common goals, norms, values and beliefs associated with the organization's culture. This dimension of trust indicates how connected employees feel to management team and other co-workers. It measures the level of belongingness employees have to their organization. Mean scores of items used to measure identification of employees to their organization varies from a minimum of 3.42 to a maximum of 3.72 with an aggregate mean value of 3.58 which leads to a conclusion that identification of employees to their organization as per the scale used in this paper varies from "some times" to "fairly often". Hence the hypothesis that states employees have no at all identification to their organization is rejected for good as the research out put confirms that employees have a reasonable level of identification to their organization that varies from "some times" to "fairly often".

INTEGRITY

Integrity in the context of this paper refers the belief that organizational leaders and management team actions and practices are fair and just in the eyes of the employees. Fairness and justice have a far reaching impact on employees' commitment, motivation and productivity. Measure of items used to measure integrity of leaders as perceived by employees varies from a minimum of 3.18 to a maximum of 3.47 with a mean value of 3.32. Once again according to the scale used to measure trust in terms of integrity of leaders as perceived by subordinates is with in the scale "some times" to "fairly often". Hence the hypothesis that states leaders' level of integrity as perceived by employees is low is rejected for good since data confirms that leaders have a reasonable level of integrity as perceived by employees though more effort is needed to boost it up.

FINDINGS

The basic motive of this research was to measure the level of trust employees in the case organization have on the leaders (superiors and management team) of the organization. The premise for this research was that trust on leaders will boost up the commitment and motivation of employees their by increasing their productivity. Hence organizations should understand the level of trust employees have on the management team and device appropriate strategies. Concern for employees, identification, integrity, dependability/reliability, competence, and openness were used as major indicators to measure trust of employees in their superiors in general and management team of their organizations in particular. A five point scale (not at all, once in a while, sometimes, fairly often, frequently) was used to measure each indicator. Findings of the study confirm that trust of employees of the case organizations on their leaders as measured by the above proxies (Employees, identification, integrity, dependability/reliability, competence, and openness in most cases vary from 'some times' to 'fairly often'.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

In general terms existing literature tells us that the level trust employees have on the management team of their organization directly affects commitment and motivation of employees to their organization and hence their productivity. Hence organizations should measure the level of trust employees have on the management team and device appropriate strategies. As far as civil service organization in Amhara region, Ethiopia is concerned this research shows that employees have a reasonably encouraging level of trust on the management team. Hence the future actions should take two possible actions. Firstly leaders should capitalize on existing level of trust and make all efforts to maintain this level .second more effort is expected to scale up the trust to higher level by analyzing the areas where in gaps do exist.

CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this research, what one learns is the role of trust of employees on the management team of their respective organizations on employees' commitment, motivation and associated productivity. Then after organizations should measure the level of employees trust in their management team for any possible action. As far as civil service organization in Amhara region, Ethiopia is concerned this research shows that employees have a reasonably encouraging level of trust on the management team. Hence, the future actions should take two possible actions. Firstly leaders should capitalize on existing level of trust and make all efforts to maintain this level .second more effort is expected to scale up the trust to higher level by analyzing the areas where in gaps do exist.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The prime purpose of this study was on measuring the level of trust that subordinates and employees have on superiors in particular and the management team in general in selected civil service institutions in Ethiopia, Amhara region. Based on this research should focus in two major area of researchers .first as this research primarily focused in measuring the level of trust employees have on leaders in general and management team of their organization in particular understanding the level is part of the game hence future researches should focused on the causes for the present level and think of methods to scale it up. Second since trust is a complicated issue to measure in this research six proxies are used to measure it. More rigorous analysis of trust using more proxies could be another important future research direction.

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