


Organizational trust as a success factor


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ABSTRACT

Research background: Modern organizations encounter difficulties as they experience a growing demand for trust, while simultaneously witnessing fewer chances for interpersonal trust to flourish. Consequently, these organizations cannot solely depend on interpersonal trust and must seek additional forms of organizational trust to compensate. The number of publications has been increasing for many years, that's why it is important to give organizations and researchers a more comprehensive picture of it.

Purpose of the article: The main aim of our research is to demonstrate that impersonal trust has a positive impact on satisfaction, commitment and, through these, competitiveness. We wanted to prove that in addition to personal trust, we also need to focus on impersonal trust, we need to find a balance between using these two types of trust so organizations can achieve success more effectively.

Methods: In our research we used PLS-SEM method because our structural model is complex and contains many constructs. The use of the PLS-SEM is also justified by the fact that the normality condition for the established model is not met for each construction. This analysis performs factor analysis and regression calculation simultaneously. We used a quantitative study with a sample of employees from 1572 Hungarian and 660 Slovakian organizations to explore the relationship between impersonal trust and satisfaction, commitment, and competitiveness.

Findings & Value added: The result is that impersonal trust has a positive impact on the factors we studied, so in addition to numerical ratings such as annual turnover, these soft factors also contribute to business success. All the pathway coefficients, whether direct or indirect, tested in the hypotheses presented, showed significant effects. Consequently, it can be inferred that impersonal trust has a greater impact on job satisfaction than on organizational commitment. In terms of competitiveness, impersonal trust exerts an indirect positive influence through both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. All the three hypotheses were proven. From the viewpoint of employees within Hungarian and Slovakian organizations, a notable correlation exists between impersonal trust and organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and competitiveness, irrespective of the orientation of the organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Consequently, trust between employees and managers, as well as among employees, can easily become fragile. There is a growing interest in the impersonal element of organizational trust, which we term institutional trust (Costigan et al., 1998; McKnight et al., 1998; McCauley & Kuhnert, 1992; Kramer, 1999; Tan & Tan, 2000; Atkin-

son & Butcher, 2003; Kosonen et al., 2008; Vanhala et al., 2011). We need trust now more than ever, yet there are fewer natural opportunities for developing interpersonal trust. Impersonal trust encompasses confidence in impersonal organizational factors such as vision and strategy, top management, leadership team goals and capabilities, technological and commercial competence, fairness, fair processes and structures, roles, technology,

reputation, and HRM (Human Resource Management) policies (Vanhala & Ahteela, 2011). This research has primarily focused on measuring the dimensions and factors of impersonal trust and exploring the relationship between human resource management systems and impersonal trust. The results indicate that HRM systems affect the entire organization and can positively influence organizational impersonal trust (Vanhala & Ahteela, 2011). In our literature review, we found no studies attempting to elucidate organizational success through the 'soft' factors of impersonal trust. Thus, our research in Hungary and Slovakia is the first to help us understand and identify the relationships that impact the association of organizational trust with satisfaction, commitment, and competitiveness. Our goal is to demonstrate that impersonal trust significantly influences these factors and is closely linked with competitiveness. Building on these findings, we posed our research question: what is the relationship between impersonal trust and organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and competitiveness? Until recently, organizational trust has predominantly been examined through the prism of interpersonal dynamics, encompassing lateral trust (relationships among employees) and vertical trust (relationships between employees and their immediate superiors, top management, or the organization). However, this interpersonal viewpoint on organizational trust has limitations. The centrality of knowledge as a key asset in modern organizations has underscored the importance of trust. Nevertheless, the natural development of interpersonal trust faces challenges due to globalization and virtualization (Alvesson, 2004). Increasingly, knowledge-based tasks are performed within temporary, technologically facilitated teams, projects, and virtual environments, where managers may take on dual roles: serving as subject matter experts with undivided attention and intermittently as overseers. In many cases, employees lack a shared history or common vision, hindering the organic growth of interpersonal trust in such situations (Vanhala, 2011; Axelrod, 1984; Zeffane & Connell, 2003; Schoorman et al., 2007).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Trust is a widely explored concept across various academic disciplines such as psychology, sociology, political science, and economics. However, it has also emerged as a significant area of inquiry within the realm of business and management (Bachmann, 2001; Blomqvist, 2002; O'Brien, 2001; Osterloh & Frey, 2000; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000). Notably, there has been a noticeable increase in research focusing on trust since the late 1990s, particularly evidenced by the growing number of studies published in the *Academy of Management Review* (23(3), 1998) and *Business Ethics Quarterly* (8(2), 1998). Trust is widely recognized as a crucial factor in organizational studies, with a growing body of research delving into its nuances and impact on leadership both domestically and internationally. These studies have consistently highlighted the cardinal role of trust in organizational success, emphasizing its contribution to stra-

tegies and performance outcomes. Notably, scholars such as Barney and Hansen (1994) and Fukuyama (1995) view trust as a significant source of competitive advantage, a sentiment echoed by Dirks & Ferrin (2001). Trust is conceptualized as a belief in the reliability, integrity, and sincerity of others, with employees often developing trust in individuals or the organization itself. This trust can manifest in two dimensions: personal trust, directed towards specific individuals, and impersonal trust, directed towards organizations or systems. Trust in organizational factors, known as impersonal trust, encompasses confidence in various aspects such as vision and strategy, organizational technology, business goals, fairness, rules and regulations, reputation, and human resource policies (Vanhala & Ahteela, 2011; Brockner et al., 1997; Costigan et al., 1998; Vanhala et al., 2011; Atkinson & Butcher, 2003; Kim & Mauborgne, 2003; McCuley & Kuhnert, 1992; Safari et al., 2020).

Vanhala & Ahteela (2011) highlight that impersonal trust can confer competitive advantages for organizations, aiding them in adapting to market changes and navigating complex environments. They note that employees who possess high levels of impersonal trust tend to remain loyal to their organization, even in the absence of strong interpersonal trust. The presence of trust within an organization yields various benefits, including enhanced organizational commitment, streamlined decision-making processes, improved financial performance, and increased job satisfaction and performance (Tax et al., 1998; Barney & Hansen, 1994; Bozic et al., 2018; Safari et al., 2020).

HRM practices, which aim to enhance employee competence, motivation, and engagement, as well as to manage and develop individual talents and skills within an organization, are emphasized by human resources (Elrehail et al., 2019; Ana et al., 2019; Uma et al., 2017; Ong & Koh, 2018; Ong et al.). These practices not only have a positive impact on job satisfaction but also influence organizational performance by improving employee attitudes and performance (Cai et al., 2019). Job satisfaction, defined as an individual's emotional attachment to their current job and its correlation with workplace behavior, plays a crucial role in organizational commitment (Devananda & Onahring, 2019). Organizational commitment, seen as the connection between an employee and the organization, reduces turnover rates; thus, managers should focus on incentivizing and motivating employees to enhance commitment and satisfaction (Murat et al., 2014; Mehwish et al., 2019; Mizanur et al., 2013; Alima & Faizuniah, 2018). Studies have also highlighted the significant relationship between HRM practices, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, particularly in sectors like banking in Bangladesh (Abubakar et al., 2019; Albrecht et al., 2015; Ukil, 2016; Cherif, 2020).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

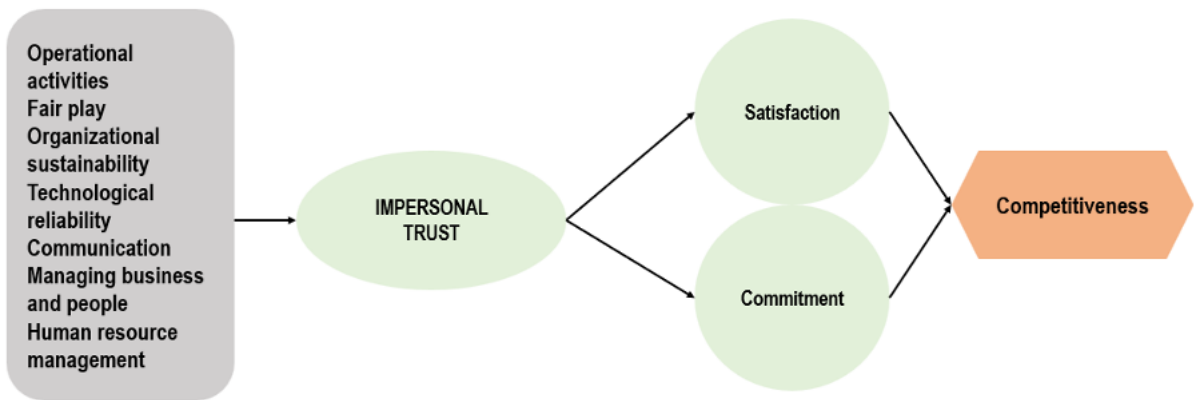
This part of the paper states its aim, detailed methodology and data used. The title of the paper must be compatible with its aim and its content. Using of sophisticated statistic methods is needed. Authors can use descriptive statistics as well.

After the literature review, the question of the impact of impersonal trust on business success was raised. In our research we explain business success in terms of the soft factors of impersonal trust, satisfaction, and commitment. This is the basis for our hypotheses:

- H1: Impersonal trust has a positive impact on organizational commitment.
- H2: Impersonal trust has a positive impact on job satisfaction.
- H3: Impersonal trust has a positive impact on competitiveness.

To test the hypotheses, we set up our research model, which is illustrated in the following figure No. 1.

Figure 1: Research model



Source: own editing

To explore the relationships and impacts, path analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted. This method is increasingly employed across various management domains, inclu-

ding organizational management, human resource management, marketing, and strategic management (Hair et al., 2012; Ringle et al., 2020; Hargitai & Bencsik, 2023). Its popularity stems in part from its capability to estimate complex models with small sample sizes without imposing distributional constraints on the data. PLS-SEM estimates parameters based on the total variance and structural shapes of models, achieved through a combination of principal component analysis and least squares regressions (Mateos-Aparicio, 2011; Hargitai & Bencsik, 2023).

A list of participants was obtained by filtering the Orbis database (containing global financial information, financial data, news, ownership structures, mergers, acquisitions, etc.), the criteria for which are summarized in table 1.

The survey was filled out by employees at all management levels, including both intellectual and physical workers, across various organizations, with no limitations based on gender or age. Additionally, participants were drawn from organizations of all sizes, ranging from micro-enterprises to large corporations. Furthermore,

respondents were asked to provide the location of their respective organizations, specifying the county in Hungary or the district in Slovakia. Table No. 2 shows the sample size.

Table 1: Filtering the sample

	Hungary	Nr. of organizations
Status	Active organization / unknown status	76 704 609
Country / region in the country	Hungary	1 366 114
Size classification	Large, medium, small, and micro companies	1 365 051
	Complete	1 365 051
	Usable addresses	474 219
	Slovakia	Nr. of organizations
Status	Active organization / unknown status	77 442 738
Country / region in the country	Slovakia	1 057 558
Size classification	Large, medium, small and micro companies	1 057 017
	Complete	1 057 017
	Usable addresses	155 523

Source: own editing

Table 2: Sending out the questionnaire

	Employees of HU organizations		Employees of SK organizations	
	Person	Percent	Person	Percent
Sent	219 881	100	155 523	100
Partial fillings	2 560	1.16	1 108	0.71
Complete fillings	1 572	0.71	660	0.42

Note: HU - Hungary, SK - Slovakia

Source: own editing

The number of organizations available in the database, the usable email addresses to which we sent the questionnaires and the number of responses received were proportionally similar. The responses from the two nations could thus be compared without bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reflective constructs of the measurement model set up need to be checked for both validity and reliability. The reliability of latent variables can be determined by Cronbach's alpha ($0.7 <$) (Hayduk & Littvay, 2012; Hargitai & Bencsik, 2023). Convergent validity and reliability can be measured by the average variance extracted ($AVE < 0.5$) and the composite reliability ($CR < 0.7$). These conditions are met for the variables included in the model. To review the results of the structural model, it is necessary to test the significance (hypotheses) of the path coefficients set up, which can be tested by t-tests using bootstrapping sampling. The idea is to estimate the distribution by back sampling the sample. For the results to be robust, the number of subsamples must be large, at least 5,000 according to Hair et al. (2021). The p-values in table No. 3. indicate which explanatory variables have a significant effect at the five percent significance level ($p < 0.05$), while the β -values indicate the closeness of the direct or indirect relationship.

All the direct and indirect pathway coefficients tested under the hypotheses put forward had a significant effect (table 3). It can be concluded that impersonal trust has a greater effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.446$) than on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.248$). Regarding the effects on competitiveness, impersonal trust has an indirect positive effect through job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.173$) and through organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.030$).

Hypothesis H1 examines the link between impersonal trust and organizational commitment, which previous studies have suggested exists. Our study, unique to Hungary and Slovakia, confirms this relationship, albeit weaker than expected. We found this connection by surveying employees across different job roles, although senior managers had a significant influence. Impersonal trust seems especially important for lower-level staff who

lack direct interaction with higher-ups, but further analysis is needed to fully understand this link.

Table 3: t-tests

Hypothesis	Path	Original sample (O) path coef. (β)	p value
H1	Impersonal trust → Organizational commitment	0.248	<0.0001
H2	Impersonal trust → Job satisfaction	0.446	<0.0001
H3	Impersonal trust → Job satisfaction → Competitiveness	0.173	<0.0001
	Impersonal trust → Organizational commitment → Competitiveness	0.030	<0.0001

Source: own editing

Hypothesis H2 delves into how impersonal trust affects job satisfaction for workers in Hungary and Slovakia. Building on previous research, we found a moderate positive relationship between impersonal trust and job satisfaction. Interestingly, this relationship appears stronger than that between impersonal trust and organizational commitment.

Hypothesis H3 explores the connection between impersonal trust and organizational competitiveness. While existing studies have linked competitiveness to personal trust and human capital, our study is among the first to investigate the role of impersonal trust. We found a weak positive relationship between impersonal trust and competitiveness, suggesting that while trust may play a role, it's not a significant factor in organizational competitiveness.

All the three hypotheses were proven.

In summary, our findings highlight a significant relationship between impersonal organizational trust and organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and competitiveness, regardless of the organization's orientation. While impersonal trust may contribute to these factors, it's just one piece of the puzzle. Managing various aspects like organizational operations, sustainability, and communication collectively can provide a competitive edge in terms of employee satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and ultimately, low turnover.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the research was to demonstrate the relationship between impersonal trust, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and competitiveness. It was found that from the perspective of employees in Hungarian and Slovakian organizations, a significant relationship between impersonal trust and engagement, job satisfaction and competitiveness can be demonstrated regardless of the orientation of the organizations, so that impersonal trust should be emphasized as much as personal trust. We were able to reach more Hungarian employees (1572) than Slovak employees (660). If we had been able to work with nearly the same sample numbers from both countries, the Slovak and possibly the overall survey results might have been modified.

Hungarian workers filled in the questionnaire faster and in greater numbers than Slovaks, so the Hungarian willingness to respond is higher than that of Slovaks.

Our research was carried out in Hungary and Slovakia, which allowed us to delimit the research area, but also

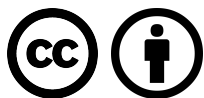
imposed limitations on the study. Cultural differences were not investigated, which may lead to further research in the future. To explore significant cultural differences, it would be necessary to include more countries in the research, which would give a more comprehensive picture of the topic.

It may be worth examining the responses by separating the organizational workers (top, middle and bottom managers, intellectual and physical workers), because in our survey there is a higher proportion of responses from top managers - 70% of Hungarian respondents are top managers, compared to 51% of Slovak respondents.

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