A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON LINKING
ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AND TASK CHARACTERISTIC

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Abstract

Organizational trust and task characteristic have been widely discussed in the previous researches. However, some previous studies limited the discussion on one side or one kind of organizational trust and task demands. This study aims at developing a strategic model on the relationship between organizational trust and task characteristic in a team work formed by a qualitative verificatif approach. Qualitative verificatif approach embraces the model of inductive research. Respondents of this research were six policemen who had experienced in working as a team work and have been dealing with two different types of task. Data were collected by using in-depth interviews, observations and literature review. The data analysis was performed by content analysis. It can be concluded that the police perceive the existence of two different types of task which are high reliability task and typical task. These two different tasks bring them the way to select partner for their team work to finish each of the tasks. When typical tasks come to them, they will use an affective based trust to select their partner. However, for high reliability task, they will execute a cognitive based trust to choose a partner. Then, this model can be used as an organizational platform for creating a team work.

Keywords: organizational trust, task characteristic, team work

INTRODUCTION

The discussion of trust, as a key factor on establishing the task performance, has been widely discussed in the literature (Colquitt et al, 2011; Mayer & Gavin, 2005; Mayer & Davis 1998; Mayer et al, 1995; Mc Allister 1995; Weick et al, 1995). Generally speaking, task characteristic for certain organization is divided into two, namely routine tasks (typical task) and non-routine tasks (high reliability). Those two types of task are often identified in a service organization or service provider with service employees as a field teamwork. For example, a teamwork of firefighters, security staff, military, police, doctors, nurses, etc. In their daily basis work, they employed with two different types of task. Several researches have also argued that there are two different kinds or bases of organizational trust exist which are cognitive based trust and affective based trust (Colquitt et al, 2011; Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Two types of organizational trust were implemented on two different ways when employees have to choose their partner to finish a certain task. Moreover, variation in

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interpersonal trust and affective cognitive confidence may have important implications for the effectiveness and cohesiveness of the task performance (Weick et al, 1999).

Competence based trust or cognitive based trust is trust based on competencies of other entities to deliver a task. It bases on perception of others' competence and performance to deliver or fulfill task. (Atkinson and Butcher 2003) argue that the development and maintenance of competence based trust, which is cognitive and task-based nature, is related with the limited number of social relationship between parties. High levels of competence-based trust may lead to a minimum number of social and face-to-face relationship. The second type of organizational trust, personal motive trust, is trust that composes from close relationship between parties. One party may agree to build and maintain their trust only with another party that they can get on personally. This party may only work and build relationship with certain parties that they believe in having similar motive personally. The levels of this trust may need close, interactive and physical relationship to build and to maintain.

This study aims to build a comprehensive model of relationship between type of organizational trust and task characteristic in an effective team work. We present a model linking organizational trust and task characteristic for cross organizational boundaries team. When team members are requested to finish two different kind of task, whould they use a different base of trust to choose their partner or co-worker? Moreover, this research is as an initial respond to Colquitt research's suggestion. Colquitt (2011) carried out a research on trust examination on typical task and high reliability task among firefighters. He, then, suggested to develop another model on police group team. A team with members who trust each other will effectively collaborate in order to finish a task. In order to have team members who establish trust quickly, a high level of initial trust between members is a very significant factor. Furthermore, the model built in this research may also provide practical management model as a method to help an organization select work partner from team member. It purposes to help establish a shared identity, value, culture, trust, and knowledge sharing among team members. Share identity, trust and knowledge sharing as social capital in organization are believed to strengthen the economic competitiveness of a team.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Trust

Trust is said to be one party's expectation of the other party's competence, goodwill and behavior (Blomqvist and Ståhle 2000). However, this definition ignores the temporal and context-specific nature of trust. (Chang, Dillon et al. 2006) proposed a definition of trust which takes into account its temporal dimension. They define trust as 'the belief the trusting agent has in the trusted agent's willingness and capability to deliver a mutually agreed service in a given context and in a given time slot, as expected by the trusting agent'. In a team project, members are working within a given context, at which the task project and the expected duration of the work relationship are stated from the outset. Therefore, each member will have an expectation of the trust level of other members based on a specific task and within a given time.

In addition, there are two theoretical foundations in trust which is cognitive theory and affective theory (McAllister 1995; Noteboom 2006). McAllister is one of trust scholars that attempted to proof the different types of trust. By collecting data and make an observation of managers and professionals work behavior in his study, he argues that there are two types of

trust: cognition-based trust and affect-based trust. Cognition-based trust, is grounded in cognitive judgments of the trustor's competence or ability, and is argued as an antecedent of affect-based trust. On the other hand, affect-based trust is grounded in the affective bonds between the trustor and trustee. Based on his research, McAllister found strong support for these two different bases of trust.

Cognitive trust is 'beliefs about others' competence and reliability whereas affective trust arises from emotional ties among group members and reflects belief about reciprocated and concern' (McAllister 1995). (Noteboom 2006) argues competence based trust in interpersonal relationship is a belief of trusting parties to trusted parties that refers to their technical, cognitive and communicative competencies whereas for inter-organization relationship refers to technological, innovative, commercial, organizational and managerial competence. Therefore, cognitive trust or competence trust focuses on assessment perceived of others' competence and ability to finish a task. Some questions such as "can trusted party finish a task? Will the task performance be on high quality? Will the task be finished on time?" comprise the cognitive based trust.

Affective component of trust is signified to the emotional or psychological state of trust. Affective based trust derived on interpersonal bonds among individuals and institutions, including perceptions of other parties' motivation, intentions, ethics and citizenship behavior. Affective trust usually arises from repeated face-to-face or physical meeting among parties, and experiences of common interpersonal care and concern (Rousseau, Sitkin et al. 1998). It is also regarded to as emotional trust or motive trust (Atkinson and Butcher 2003) and relational trust (Rousseau, Sitkin et al. 1998). Belief as a component of cognitive trust can be judged by 'reasonable' reasons while affect refers more to feeling of emotion as well as physical security. Affect based trust is more practical than cognitive based. Fairness and honesty are assumed to join together as an expectation from the other parties will act honestly and responsibly. However, there is little empirical research that discusses the significant influence of affective based trust toward task performance.

Trust in any relationship that comprises lateral, vertical and horizontal either internally or externally is one type of interpersonal relationship and work relationship as well (Gabarro 1990). However, accomplishment of tasks, task achievement, task instrumentality and task-specific competence are essentially in work based relationship, while affect and self-disclosure are less important. Therefore, trust in work relationship generally based on cognitive or competence while however; affective based trust generally exists in social relationship. (Butler 1991) and (Cook and Wall 1980) suggest that competence to finish task and task responsibility are central elements for measuring trust in work setting. Moreover, working relationships are usually personal and running over time. The level of trust may increase or decrease relatively to initial trust by considering the track record of partners on how they have delivered out the task performance in the past.

Previous measurement of trust in work context suggest that competence and ability are central elements (Cook and Wall 1980; Butler 1991). However, trust is not static rather than dynamic. Trust changes over time supporting the argument for incorporating a temporal dimension into theories of relational development in virtual environments (Chang, Dillon et al. 2006; Wilson, Straus et al. 2006; Fachrunnisa, Hussain et al. 2009, 2010). In the context of dynamic nature of trust, trust will evolve and change over time in relationships as knowledge and information about other parties' willingness that the capability to deliver task will also evolve in those relationships.

Partner Selection in Subgroup

The success of a team is determined by the compatibility of work and the level of trust among team members, in terms of its leadership, its members, and also the type of the task itself. Moreover, team performance is a major determining factor and is often used as an indicator of the success of an organization. In order to be effective, each member of the working group should have the knowledge about each task description and its characteristic. The task role is a prescribing effort made by each member of the group in order to properly facilitate coordination toward activities need accomplishment. In addition, through clear task characteristic, they will obtain several new ideas to solve the problem (Chong, 2007). An effective team consists of people who have skills that are different and coordinated to work together to finish a task. A strong interdependence among members to achieve a goal or complete a task, will result in an expected results or may exceed the standard.

Forming an effective teamwork will result in team success to achieve desired objectives. Therefore, team members must be managed properly in order to work effectively. A solid team will make it easier for management to delegate organizational tasks. However, to form a solid team, it needs a high commitment from the management. The most important thing is that the performance of the team should be considered as a resource to br developed and nurtured just like other resources that exist in the company. The process of establishment, maintenance and fostering team performance should be made on the basis of full knowledge of the team so that they can perform effectively, although in certain circumstances the management can not intervene.

There are two issues if an employee works in a group (team). Firstly, there is a variation in the characteristics of the task and the problems associated with how to finish the task. This is often a major topic or concern to the team. Secondly, the process that occurs in the performance of the team itself, for example, about the mechanism of action to finish a task, in this case, when they have to efficiently finish several tasks in one time, it is necessarily needed for them to disperse temporarely. In other words, the process refers to how motivation, coordination and procedures are complied and agreed by all members and to some other useful things to maintain harmonious relationships among individuals in a group. Regardless to the process on how to finish a task, a team work will not have any value for the organization and will only be a source of problems if they cannot meet the performance standard.

In the existing literature, there are many discussions about selection design for cross-functional and cross-departmental teams. Individual performance and collaborative performance amongst members are often used as a basis for the selection of team members (Wi, Mun et al. 2009; Feng, Jiang et al. 2010). Moreover, (Wi, Mun et al. 2009) argue that the selection of partners will influence mutual trust, knowledge sharing and performance. In their study, they propose a method of partner selection for creating a project-oriented virtual organization. Knowledge and collaboration are used as criteria to find a mutual partner to complete a research project task as ordered. Knowledge requirements of a partner candidate are measured by the level know-what, know-how and know-who. Social network analysis by measuring centrality, density and closeness centrality is used to measure the degree of collaboration capability of partner.

Task Characteristics

Task characteristic is defined as a combination elements of physical, social, and organizational work activities that affect the psychological health of employees. The characteristic of task will be shaped by the character of the relevant tasks such as: difficulty levels, working conditions, task requirements, and skill levels. The relationship between task demands and organizational trust have been studied by several previous researches (Colquitt, 2011). When several different task come into a team and they have to be finished in one time, a task which has high risk and threat need a subgroup of a team with high confidence and reliable member. In forming a subgroup within a team, a consideration of task characteristics and choosing a partner is important (Bigley & Roberts, 2001; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). In general, in order to finish a service work, team members are required to be able to autory out all types of work assigned to them.

The existing literature divides two different kinds of task characteristics into typical task and high reliability task (Colquitt, 2011). Typical task or routine task includes the administrative work performed daily. It is usually more to normal work than temporary work. This kind of task type normally brings the team member convenience and compatibility to work with other team members with affective believes. This is as a result of routine tasks associated with familiar, and predictable routine stimulation that this is based on the current process. According Chryshnanda (2008), a servant of the people such as the police are in charge of organizing the elements executing police duties include guarding, regulation, escort and patrol, the identification of the driver / vehicle, traffic accident investigation and enforcement in the areas of traffic, in order to maintain security, order and smooth traffic. Chryshnanda added services to the community in the field of traffic as another routine task as police. It has been implemented to improve the quality of life, this is due to the fact that in a modern society, traffic becomes a major factor supporting productivity. Traffic problems such as accidents, congestion and crime can disturb the productivity of the community.

Meanwhile, in every workplace, there is a situation where routine tasks are disturbed by the unusual or unexpected events (High Reliability). A high reliability task occurs when they are faced with unfamiliar and unexpected tasks or stimuli. On those occasions, the process of obtaining information would be more thoughtful and restrained, more types of signals to look for and work completion weighting scheme becomes more complicated (Kahne-man & Tversky, 1973). Co-workers with high integrity should have dispositional consistency which is valuable in the context of high reliability. The reliability of co-workers cognitive basis of trust is often used as the basis for selecting peers on the unexpected task or special task (Mayer et al, 1995). Of course, there may be circumstances where the level of reliability of the task set by the rules, procedures, checklists, and redundancy systems that generate a routine atmosphere to team members. However, due to the nature of the work that requires a higher skill (more risky), the organizational trust used in heavy duty should be able to create a good proximity between team members so that the heavy work tasks can be resolved properly and can be better controlled.

METHODS

Research Design

The design of this research is a verificative qualitative or comparative qualitative approach. In this study, we used existing theories or models for reference, then the theory will be compared with data obtained from the field. The research was conducted at the office of trafic police in an urban city of Indonesia. The traffic policeman is identified as having two different tasks in their daily activity which are routine task (typical task) and non routine task

(high reliability). The typical task includes their role as public servant in such as keeping the traffic smoothly on specific road. On the other hand, they have to be ready if there is a duty call (non routine task), for example to solve a traffic accidents, heavy congestion, or high disturbance in the road. Hence, the non-routine tasks (high reliability) task are part of rhythm work that sometimes punctuated by dangerous tasks related to the technical core that occur in the text command. This task is more complex and unpredictable than routine task. Moreover, they have to be divided into subgroup if several certain high reliability tasks have to be finished in the same time as typical task. Hence, they experienced in a way of choosing a subgroup partner when they deliver a task.

Data Collection

We used a structure interview and field observation as the techniques for data collection. We have asked to the policeman questions designed to elicit answers that are relevant to the research problem. We have interviewed 6 traffic policemans who stayed in road offices regarding how they perceived about task characteristic and how they divide the team member to be a subgroup to finish different tasks at the same time. In a structured interviews, we have designed to deliver a question on how and what basis of organizational trust that they used to select a member of subgroup. The interviews were recorded so that the researchers can listen again and then summarize the results of the interview.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed by using content analysis method for verificative qualitative approach. Content Analysis is a data analysis technique commonly used in qualitative research, especially qualitative verification as suggested by Bungin (2008). According to Bungin (2008), content theory is a technique for making inferences that can be replicated (replicable). Content analysis related to communications or content of communications. It emphasizes on how researchers view the content of communications stability. Researchers explain how the content of the communication, reading the symbols, explain the contents of symbolic interaction that occurs in communication. Content analysis was preceded by coding the terms or the use of words and phrases that are relevant, the most widely appearing in media communications. In the case of coding, it should also note the context in which the term appears. Then, the classification of the coding has been done. Classification is done by looking at the extent to which the meanings are related with the purpose of research. This classification is intended to establish categories of each classification. Then, the meaning units and categories are analyzed in relation with each other in order to find meaning. The results of the analysis are then described in the form of the draft report of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the results in depth interviews with six respondents. Of the six policmen, five of them are members of the traffic policeman that their main duty are on the road office while one policeman is on duty in the main office. He is responsible for monitoring the performance of the team work in the road and its subgroup when a temporary work occurs. In Indonesia, traffic policemen are in charge of organizing the elements executing police duties include guarding, regulating, escorting and patroling the road and its traffic. Any other duties such as vehicle / driver identification, traffic accident investigation and enforcement in the areas of traffic, in order to maintain security, order and smooth traffic. Services to the community in the areas of traffic are also assigned to them in order to improve the quality of life, this is due to the fact that in a modern society, traffic is a major factor supporting the productivity.

Task Characteristics, Trust and Subgroup Forming

Basically, the results of interviews showed that the characteristics of the task is divided into two types; routine tasks and non-routine tasks. The routine tasks include: guarding the road traffic by standing in the office road or police post, keeping an eye on the traffic situation and equipments and managing the traffic that it is an attempt minimize the problem of congestion and disturbance. The secondary task which is identified as a high reliability task is events of traffic accident and massive traffic jams. It can be concluded that the work, they delivered are divided into two, namely routine tasks such as maintaining outposts traffic and non-routine tasks that are temporary such as when it comes down to the scene of an accident, fight and so on. The statement was confirmed by the results of a questionnaire on the following questions : "How do you identify the different types of task in your job?" The results show that the demands of the typical task at traffic policeman are more focused on their day-to-day running, working in the road office and monitoring the traffic road. Road office is the guard posts traffic which is available in every certain distance of road. For non-routine tasks such as when there is an accident or other sudden duties, they assumed that it was only a temporary assignment. At anytime, the members of the traffic policeman should also be ready to autory out their duties, as agreed in their work vision and mission. They work to nurture and protect the safety of the public community, especially it is because traffic policeman is one part of the government agencies that are closer and often deals directly with the public.

Organizational trust is the capital and the guarantee of a relationship between two or more people while working in a team work. As explained by the respondents on the following question: "Is there any specific skill needed to deliver the two kinds of job characteristic?" The results show that basically, the basic skill is the same, however, the high risk and heavy duty are classified as temporary task or in this research we termed it as a high reliability task. They need a high cognitive skill as police such as ability to reduce the disturbance or congestion caused by a heavy auto accident. Another task is giving a first help to the victims such as coordinating an ambulance, nurse hospital, and auto removal. Since completing tasks with their specific characteristics is treated as common tasks, a mismatch partnership potentially causes chaos and unfinished tasks.

When they asked about how to divided the team into subgroup if several tasks had to be performed at the same time, especially to the high reliability task such as heavy congestion or heavy auto accident in some points of places, the result showed different pattern. An interviewee stated that a team would be divided into subgroup with the different number of persons. It depended on the work load or problems that had to be finished. Regarding to the concept of organizational trust as a basis for choosing a colleague to finish the task, an interviewee stated that the base level of confidence in colleagues was skills and know-how. They usually observe from the way the colleague responded on handling certain tasks previously. For example, an interviewee gave an explanation, if a auto accident happened near to their baseman road office, they would discuss shortly who would be assigned to the place of accident and who would stay in the post. Supposed that there were two policemen needed to be in the place of accident, they would share the tasks by themselves. When we asked, how they divided the subgroup member? The head of the police post concluded that a junior member would stay in the post while senior member who was believed to be more skillful and well experienced to handle the situation would go to the place of accident.

Another interviewee also made a clear statement that the policeman had to be ready to be divided into several subgroup units while the guardian task or routine task was already

scheduled. Hence, the basis of organizational trust that leaders used to assign a task into team member is cognitive trust and affective trust.

Theoretical and Practical Contribution

Policemen may face duality of task in workplace: routine works are typically shared with another important and sudden task usually unpredictable. Our results suggest that policemen make it different from their level of trust in their coworkers based on the different kind of task. Our research brings several important contributions into literature. First, the distinction between trust basis to select coworker when perform routine work and non routine work bring a new dynamic literature on trust building. In routine work, a personal motive trust is more important than a cognitive trust. While in non-routine task or high reliability task, both affective trust and cognitive trust contribute in equal level. It may be because, in the police environment, long time relationship in daily hours work makes them have better personal based trust than cognitive based trust. However, to deliver a high reliability task, it is explained that they prefer to have a more cognitive based trust than affective based trust when traffic jam calls and auto accidents. Results of this study also offer several practical implications. Head of unit who creates a team work may consider close relationship among members in a team or its subgroup. Moreover, the head should allow the team members to choose their co-partner by themselves while facing a requirement to create subgroup between team. Our study also suggests that an organization should take a kind of program in which organization members build sense of affective feeling. For example, job rotation or socialization believed to benefit organizational member to know each other personally, hence it will also increase the level of cognitive trust since they share their knowledge.

From the results of the qualitative data above, it can be concluded that task demands will affect the basic organizational trust used by team members to select subgroup members in completing the work. The level of trust and the source of this trust will affect the level of completion of a task by subgroup. The pattern of the data from interview and field observation suggested that trust level and trust type will affect how to deliver two different types of trust. An affective based trust will be used to choose partner in subgroup team to complete typical task while a cognitive based trust will be used to select subgroup members for delivering high reliable task.

This model is reasonable since previous research models that describe the source of organizational trust will affect the task demands of work which will then contribute to the performance of the team. When members rely their beliefs on affective colleagues they would choose them to perform routine tasks, and they will base their cognitive trust when they perform a non-routine tasks or high reliability task. Therefore, when they do work that is unexpected and temporary (high reliability) they tend to use a type of cognitive beliefs. Furthermore, only based on cognitive-based trust they found their subgroup performance can be maximized. The result of this study can be depicted in Figure 1.
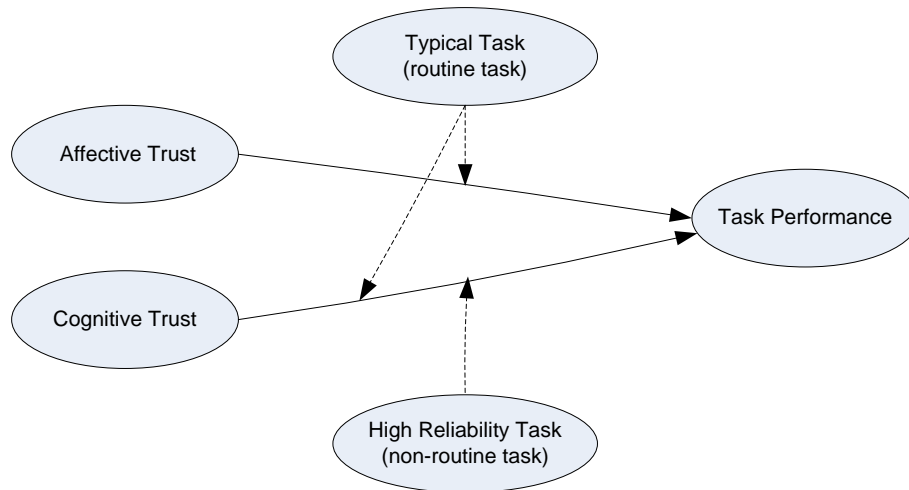
Figure 1. A Theoretical Model on Linking Organizational Trust and Task Characteristic

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research is an initial step to differentiate the two types of trust: cognitive trust and affective trust and two types of task characteristics: typical task and high reliability task. Therefore, this research has some limitations that should be noted. For example, we did interviews with only 6 policemen which may be a limited number. Secondly, they may have similar demography background although it may cover a general characteristic of his professional. Hence, for future research, an extension on number of people who will be interviewed or a heterogeneity of sample may be needed to provide another justification. Obtaining data from policemen in other cities would allow us to proof our proposed model, potentially to support the model. Finally, the theme or concepts and items that we used for interview guidance are generated from existing theories. It is used to build a general model on linking organizational trust and task characteristics. As this is a conceptual model developed from qualitative research, an examination based on quantitative approach may be needed.

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