

Investigating Organizational Trust between Employees and Managers: The Case Study of Hellenic National Sport Federations

Antonia Kalafatzi¹, M.Sc.; Dimitrios Gargalianos², Ph.D.; & Georgia Yfantidou*³, Ph.D

Abstract

The purposes of this study were to: a) investigate how Hellenic National Sport Federations' (HNSF) managers and staff members perceived trust antecedents (ability, benevolence, integrity) and b) explore how such antecedents are related to their trust attitudes. The sample consisted of twelve employees (three managers and nine staff members) of Hellenic National Sport Federations-HNSF, who were interviewed about trust antecedents and attitudes in their organisations, working at three different HNSFs. Data were analysed via thematic analysis. The results confirmed trust model in sport federations. The research adds to theory and practice by showing that factors such as years of employment and working environment are fundamental determinants of trust in organisations like sport federation. A relation was found between organisational size and trust, indicating a particular direction for future studies.

Keywords: organizational trust; ability; benevolence; integrity; sport federations

1. Introduction

Although attitudes like synergy and trust can prompt employees become more effective in sport federations (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2017; Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, & Winograd, 2000; Weerakoon, 2016), therefore deserve academic investigation, they have now received limited research attention. Organisational trust has shown significant positive impacts on effectiveness of service-based organisations (Mayer et al., 1995; Gould-Williams, 2003) and directly links with enhanced effectiveness, citizenship behaviours, organisational commitment, job satisfaction (Frazier, Johnson, & Fainshmidt, 2013), higher productivity, and innovation (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000). Moreover, current human resource management (HRM) challenges (such as diversity and cultural differences) depend on trust between supervisors and staff (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000).

Organisational trust has been defined as “the willingness of a party (trustor) to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (trustee) based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712). Mayer et al. (1995) proposed that ability, benevolence, and integrity are factors that help trustees develop trust towards their superiors. Ability is a group of skills that empowers the trustee to create a favourable environment to promote trust from trustors (Mayer et al., 1995). Benevolence represents a behaviour that puts a greater emphasis on the others' prosperity, meaning that the trustee is more willing to meet their followers' needs, wishes and aspirations than their own (Mishra, 1996). Integrity encompasses consistency of past actions, fairness, openness, and value congruence (Mayer et al., 1995; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000), depicting the anticipation for a congruent and honest behaviour from the trustee (Mishra, 1996).

We have drawn on Mayer et al.'s (1995) theoretical framework to investigate how Hellenic National Sport Federations' (HNSF) managers and staff members perceive trust antecedents. HNSFs have elements that are common to sport federations around the world. They are non-profit sport organisations, which promote specific

¹ University of Stirling, Address: Flat 2, Marina Point, 14 Lanark Square, London, E14 9QD, UK Email: antonkala46@gmail.com

² Associate Professor, Democritus University of Thrace, Department of Physical Education & Sport Science Address: University Campus, 69100, Komotini, Greece Email: dimitris_gargalianos@hotmail.com +30 6974 - 38 39 71

³ Assistant Professor, Democritus University of Thrace, Department of Physical Education & Sport Science (Corresponding author) Address: University Campus, 69100, Komotini, Greece, Email: gifantid@phyed.duth.gr +302531039709

sports in Greece. Financially they depend mainly upon the government, on fees paid by associated organisations (usually clubs) and on sponsorships. Very few survive with public funding alone (Winand, Zintz, & Scheerder, 2012). Their internal environments are very similar. Usually they function with a mix of hired staff and volunteers. HNSFs represent a case study, the results of which could be extrapolated to sport federations of other countries. The understanding and recognition of the examined elements (characteristics, dimensions, types of organizations), will help managers in the division of job responsibilities within the organization and in the division of liabilities. Furthermore, employees will be encouraged to have more harmonious cooperation. For these reasons, municipal sport organizations should be briefed and executives with strategic thinking, flexibility and continuous training should be specialized (Nikolaïdou, Yfantidou, Mavromatis & Costa, 2018).

According to the literature, in order to build trust within a sport federation, one party should be willing to be vulnerable to another party (vulnerability can be expressed by willingness to take risks in a relationship) (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Moreover, institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) proposes that trust tends to be enhanced by formal control mechanisms (e.g. internal policies). If staff members perceive managers to behave in a certain manner because of formal control mechanisms they might trust their managers, even when they do not agree with their behaviours. Willingness to take risks and perceptions of formal control mechanisms were taken into account to create the data collection mechanism in this investigation.

Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model has been tested in a variety of organisations, except for sport organisations. No studies have been found in the sport management literature describing willingness to take risks, perceptions of formal control or trust within sport federations, hence this study is filling this particular gap and functions as an initial step to understand how managers create and develop trust among staff members in sport federations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Importance of Organisational Trust

Organisational trust can develop both horizontally (between members with the same institutional power) and vertically (between members with different institutional power), the latter being the focus of this investigation. In a broader framework, trust has been characterised as an intervening variable, clarifying the way in which HRM systems influence the employee behaviours (Gould-Williams, 2003). It represents a mechanism that empowers the employee - manager relationship (Brathwaite, 2004). Wang, Fang, and Fu's (2019) study on megaprojects revealed that a trust-focused, instead of a control-focused, governance structure functions in favor of building interpersonal bonds, supports the creation of mutual aspirations and boosts collaboration between members of the same or different teams. Working environments with high organisational trust levels have enjoyed some internal (e.g. improved well-being) and external (e.g. decreased chances of legal claims) benefits, which eventually improve organisational effectiveness (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000).

In sport organisations, Dirks (2000) found that basketball players who trust their coaches have positive impacts on the general performance of the team. Trust and performance's relation, though, cause an impact on the administrative framework as well. Social exchange theory suggests that fair treatment of the employees and trust in their working attitudes leads to an improved organisational performance (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002). Al Halbusi, Tehseen, Hamid, and Afthanorhan's (2018) study on organisational justice and trust enhances this study's main theoretical framework, supporting the claim that the feeling of equality in the workplace constitutes an imperative of trust. When investigating this dynamic relationship more aspects of fair treatment should be taken into account. For example, taking the risk to admit a mistake to managers and trusting that they will have a reasonable reaction to it, will lead to quicker mistake identification and more precise correction (Aryee et al., 2002).

2.2 Mistrust and Psychological Contract Breach

Mistrust has serious negative impacts on employees' attitudes because it induces bitterness and decreases devotion to their organisation (Gould-Williams, 2003). According to Mishra (1996) mistrust leads to a sense closer to treachery, which may trigger negative attitudes such as demotivation, lack of commitment, and low levels of loyalty. It represents a situation where the trustor is confident about the trustee, but the trustee behaves in a wrong or dishonest way, causing a breach in the confidence between them (Marsh & Dibben, 2005).

A similar situation is obvious in Wang et al.'s (2019) study, which supports that strict control mechanisms could easily cause mistrust, resulting in uncertain interests for the individuals. Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model is reinforced again, this time by elements deriving from the opposite side.

Psychological contract has been defined as “an individual's beliefs about terms and conditions involved in a personal relationship in an organisation” (Robinson, 1996, p. 575). It refers to the employees' perceptions concerning the bilateral responsibilities and assurances made upon particular terms and conditions between themselves and their organisation (Brathwaite, 2004; Suazo, Martínez, & Sandoval, 2009; Wang & Hsieh, 2014). All psychological contracts involve trust in their structures, while both transactional and relational responsibilities are present (Middlemiss, 2011). They summarize the idea of staff members' expectations that their organisation or, more accurately, their first contact within it, their line manager, will keep his or her promises. When this fails, a breach occurs and mistrust appears (Brathwaite, 2004; Wang & Hsieh, 2014).

Managers should be aware of the consequences of the messages transmitted by the fundamental components of human resource systems, as well as that these systems are capable of inadvertently establishing not only legal, but psychological contracts as well (Suazo et al., 2009). For this reason, Naidoo, Abarantyne, and Rugimbana (2019) suggest that changes in the organisation's processes and policies should be efficiently communicated to employees to avoid potential breaches. At this point, managers play a crucial role as their commitment to encourage and provide constructive feedback would define the employees' perceptions about their position and their contribution to the business. Human resource practices make clear indications for the employees about the level of trust between them and the organisation (Gould-Williams, 2003), confirming their professional presence either as being a ‘valued member’, creating a powerful bond between them (Taylor & McGraw, 2006) or just a ‘chattel labourer’, creating a reduced sense of indebtedness (Brathwaite, 2004; Gould-Williams, 2003). Schoorman et al. (2007) confirmed that “if trust in the general manager could be developed and sustained, it would be a significant competitive advantage to the firm” (p. 347).

2.3 Theoretical Trust Models

The review of literature reveals a number of trust models. Shockley-Zalabak et al. (2000) defined organisational trust as “the positive expectation individuals have about the intent and behaviours of multiple organisational members based on organisational roles, relationships, experiences and interdependencies” (p. 35). This definition comprises a trust model with five core elements: a) competence, b) openness and honesty, c) concern for employees, d) reliability, and e) identification, which does not include the vulnerability factor of Mayer et al.'s (1995) model.

Mishra (1996) defined organisational trust as “one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party, based on the belief that the latter party is: a) competent, b) open, c) concerned, and d) reliable” (p. 5). This model expresses the same meanings as the model of Mayer et al. (1995) with different words (competence for ability, concern for benevolence, reliability for integrity, and openness could be described by both benevolence and integrity), but considers vulnerability as an important part of the trust process.

Other scholars defined trust, but they did not explore the process by which trust is formed within organisations. Fukuyama (1995) proposed that trust is “the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community” (p. 26). Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies (1998) suggested that “trust is the confident positive expectations regarding another's conduct” (p. 439), while Bhattacharya, Devinney, and Pillutla (1998) defined trust as “an expectancy of positive (or nonnegative) outcomes that one can receive based on the expected action of another party in an interaction characterised by uncertainty” (p. 462).

McKnight and Chervany (2001) reviewed the existed literature on trust and identified it through different spectrums, such as trusting intentions, trust-related behaviour, trusting beliefs, institution-based trust, and disposition to trust. Although different aspects of trust were identified the researchers concluded that the dominant features affecting each aspect are: a) benevolence, b) integrity, c) competence, and d) predictability, which are also presented in Mayer et al.'s (1995) original model for organisational trust.

2.4 Organisational Size as a Factor of Differentiation

Literature suggests that HRM systems implementation varies depending on the size of the organisation. That is, small organizations tend to adopt more adaptable, simple, non-structured, and underdeveloped programmes, while their large counterparts base their operations mostly on official procedures (Taylor & McGraw, 2006).

Arguments have been expressed regarding organisational size and employees' commitment. Gould-Williams (2003) mentioned both sides of the coin: a) employees of large organisations face difficulties in

cultivating attachment with their organisation, and therefore, they are less committed to them, or b) large organisations offer their employees more chances for promotion and interpersonal communication thus make them more committed to them. Gray, Densten, and Sarros (2003) outlined a number of characteristics of small organisations in comparison with medium and large ones. Specifically, they found that small organisations show increased prominence in innovation, stress out the importance of rewards, and are more stable and supportive than large or medium organisations.

Taking all the above into consideration, it is easy to observe that organisational size has significant implications in many aspects of an organisation's HRM environment. So far, scholars have not investigated if the pattern observed in other attitudes (e.g. commitment) also applies to organisational trust. Because of such evidence, while describing perceptions of employees and managers on antecedents of trust, this investigation observes whether the size of the investigated federations influences such perceptions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

The sample consisted of twelve employees from Hellenic National Sport Federations (three managers and nine staff members). One manager and three employees from each HNSF, seven females and five males ($n = 12$), with an average age of approximately 53 years, with average time of employment within the federation of approximately 22 years, all of Greek nationality participated in the study (Table 1). Five of them were high school graduates, six had a bachelor's degree, and one had a master's degree. In order to be considered appropriate to participate in this study they had to be employed by the federation for at least one year, as such length of employment would allow them to develop some sort of relationship with their manager and adjust in the general working environment (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants' demographic characteristics and propensity to trust scores.

ID	Participant	Federation's size	Participant's code	Gender	Age	Education	Years of Employment
1	Employee 1	Large	LE1	Female	52	Senior HS	34
2	Employee 2	Large	LE2	Female	52	Bachelor	27
3	Employee 3	Large	LE3	Female	50	Senior HS	30
4	Manager 1	Large	LM	Male	53	Bachelor	4
5	Employee 4	Medium	ME1	Male	59	Senior HS	38
6	Employee 5	Medium	ME2	Female	61	Senior HS	39
7	Employee 6	Medium	ME3	Female	53	Senior HS	26
8	Manager 2	Medium	MM	Male	61	Bachelor	27
9	Employee 7	Small	SE1	Female	52	Bachelor	7
10	Employee 8	Small	SE2	Female	40	Bachelor	1
11	Employee 9	Small	SE3	Male	42	Master	17
12	Manager 3	Small	SM	Male	66	Bachelor	15

^a Propensity to trust scores were based on a questionnaire proposed by Frazier et al. (2013)

3.2 Measures

The data were collected with the use of semi-structured interviews, which included questions derived from the review of relevant literature. The script for the interview (Appendix A) was created in English and then translated to Greek. To check the accuracy of the script, a back-to-back translation was performed by people fluent both in English and in Greek (Wang & Hsieh, 2014). No inconsistencies were found between the translated versions.

3.3 Procedure

Invitation letters were sent to all 41 HNSFs, explaining the purpose of the study. Initially seven of them agreed to participate, later two withdrew because of intense sport schedule and finally, due to time and budgetary constraints, data was collected from only three HNSFs.

The level of the annual governmental funding (AGF) provided by the General Secretariat of Sports (GSS), the government body for sports in Greece, was used as the criterion to select the HNSFs that would participate in this study. According to Karastathis, Afthinos, Gargalianos, and Theodorakis (2014) small HNSFs receive $\leq \text{€}75.000$, medium HNSFs receive $\text{€}75.000 < \text{AGF} \leq \text{€}770.000$, and large HNSFs receive $> \text{€}770.000$. The 2018 HNSF classification was used to select one small, one medium and one large HNSF. The participants were interviewed in their workplace during April 2018. People working in the same federation were interviewed the same day, each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was conducted in an office where they could be neither interrupted nor listened by other employees.

3.4 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the present study are the following: a) the participating HNSFs were the ones that accepted the invitation (ideally, HNSFs should have been randomly selected to participate in the study), b) the selection of the employees was also based on the convenience of the interviewer and the organisation, that is, the federation selected three employees who could be away from their duties for 30 minutes, without adversely affecting the regular activities of the organisation (ideally, all employees within a federation should have had the same chance to participate in the study), c) all interviewed managers were male – previous research (e.g. Pedersen & Stritch, 2018) suggested that the gender of the manager might affect perceptions of trust, and d) only Greek sport federations were studied. Even though most sport federations around the world tend to follow similar patterns of management, facing similar challenges (Babiak, 2007; Bayle, 2017; Bayle & Robinson, 2007; Rocha, 2016), cultural background may have some influence on how trust is constructed within federations.

3.5 Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and then fully transcribed; common themes and differences were identified between the HNSF employees and their managers. The data were analysed by two different coders to ensure trustworthiness of the qualitative process. Thematic analysis was considered the most appropriate for the present study (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013), hence a number of decisions had to be made. First, the deductive approach (theoretical thematic analysis), instead of the inductive, was selected (Braun and Clarke, 2006) because it provides the opportunity to assess an existing theoretical model in a disparate environment. This decision was made aimed at investigating whether Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model applies to a sport environment. Moreover, this approach does not limit the research to stay within a particular theoretical framework, but new pathways could be discovered. Second, semantic, instead of latent, themes were selected to be created. This means that efforts were oriented in interpreting the data directly from description without searching for hidden meanings, but only by investigating the participants' words and nods. To that extent, the data were managed in a way that provided patterns in semantic essence and could be easily located within the existing literature. Lastly, an essentialist/realist, instead of constructionist, thematic analysis was applied, because the researchers were looking for theorizing motivations, experience, and meanings in a straightforward way (Braun & Clark, 2006). Efforts were oriented to the direction of investigating the existence of a theoretical context of organisational trust.

To analyse the data, six phases of thematic analysis were followed (Braun & Clarke, 2006): 1) familiarising with the data (started when the transcription process began and it was reinforced by repeatedly reading them and noting down initial ideas for potential codes), 2) generating codes (guided by Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model), 3) searching for themes (the coded data were reviewed and the first efforts began in searching for themes; every code was written down in a different piece of paper; codes considered to match under the same theme were put together; theme-stacks were created), 4) reviewing themes (two stages of analysis were applied: a) reviewing at the stage of the coded data extracts, where all the adduced extracts were scanned for evaluating their appropriateness for a specific theme and b) validating every theme in relation to the entire data set to observe if they were pertinent representatives of the data array as a whole), 5) defining and naming themes (accurate and dynamic titles were given to every theme, leading the reader immediately to realise their content in a distinctive way) and 6) the production of the report.

4. Results

The results were produced in relation to Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model antecedents of trust (ability, benevolence, integrity) separately. After each quote, the respondent was identified by their code (Table 1).

4.1 Ability

An important feature that characterises one's ability is their level of expertise on the task in hand, as it enables them to have a strong presence in professional human relations (Mayer et al., 1995; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000). This was highlighted in an employee's opinion when she was asked what features of her manager made her trust him "[...] he has expert knowledge of the job's objectives [...]" (SE1). Her manager's perception was congruent, as he implied his expert skills when asked the same question "[...] and I used to be part of the administration and of... other departments, such as the finance one, but also I used to have a more active role in the [name of the sport] reality [...]" (SM).

Additionally, task realisation seemed to have a major role to boost employees' confidence to trust their managers. This finding is in line with Shockley-Zalabak et al. (2000) who showed that making the right decisions and fulfilling the required tasks push trusting bonds to be created; not only towards the highest administrative level, but also towards the managerial and co-worker levels. Specifically, one of the employees, when asked which of his manager's characteristics made him trust him, said "[Trust] means to... based on trust, we know our job because we have been here for many years and... we communicate and we move on to do our job. We do not have any problem." (ME1). When his manager was asked to define trust in their sport-working environment, he replied "Trust means that someone can... or maybe, trust for me is to know that someone can get things done or will get things done for a specific task." (MM).

In this case, both the interviewees see a positive relationship between task realization and trust. Previous research has shown that trust can provide support for work accomplishment (e.g. Carter & Mossholder, 2015). In the context of sport federations, it was found that work accomplishment can be an important antecedent for expressing ability and creating trust. Other employees and managers pointed out different aspects related to someone's ability, such as direct responsiveness to a problem, reasonable thinking route, correct decisions, and the ability to memorise things.

4.2 Benevolence

The second antecedent of Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model describes a behaviour that focuses on the others' prosperity (Mishra, 1996). The definition of benevolence matches an employee's example about her manager's attitudes, which seemed to have enhanced her trust levels towards him. She told that "In an incident with a club... This club ..., how can I say this now, it doubted me... Mr. [name of the manager] took a stand for me and... without even thinking it. So, I think this speaks by itself." (LE3). At the same time, her manager knew the role of benevolent support, when asked to provide an example showing that the staff members should trust him.

[...] at the beginning of last year, when a big financial gap was created by the side of the state, that is, it very much delayed to give us the first instalment of our regular budget, [...] we supported our... our employees, [...] and we found a way to accelerate the process, and eventually, give people their money [...]. (LM)

Benevolence from the manager was exemplified in a different way. While, the employee took a more personal perspective, the manager used an example on how his concern about employees' payment generated the feeling of trust.

Understanding and fulfilling employees' expectations (Wang & Hsieh, 2014) and requirements (Brathwaite, 2004), providing engaging services and motives in order to establish suitable strategies in alignment with internal demands (Maier, Woratschek, Ströbel, & Popp, 2016) could create a feeling of benevolence. Employee's words about his manager's features boosted his trust levels towards him "[...] if you say something to him and he replies that 'I am going to say that in the board meeting and I will try to make it happen', he will do it." (SE3).

Other employees and managers stressed the importance of different elements related to benevolence, such as humour, kindness, equal treatment, and mutual appreciation (Maier et al., 2016). Indicatively, an employee described how her manager reinforced her level of trust towards him "I would say he treats us equally. Although he is the general manager and we are just administrative employees, he treats us very equally and as the years go by ... this increases the trust levels." (LE2).

4.3 Integrity

The third element of Mayer et al.'s (1995) model, integrity, constitutes the most popular antecedent of trust, mentioned by the majority of the participants in the present study. Literature suggests that a durable ethical climate can minimise negative consequences of breach in psychological contracts, reinforce working relationships,

And eventually, boost organisational effectiveness (Wang & Hsieh, 2014). Three employees from three different organisations confirmed this statement by indicating justice and compliance with the rules as critical features enhance their trust in their managers. Referring to his direct manger, one employee said, "He has the sense of justice [...]" (LE3). Another one mentioned that:

The federation is legal. It's something that I seek to do, I , personally in my life and also, the federation does it and the people who form the current board do it and the past ones, too... and I think that this... brings us closer. (SE3)

A third one still suggested that "Usually... they comply ... with the federation's rules based on which the athletes' identity cards come out, of course, most of the times." (ME3). Employees and managers tend to agree that integrity, represented by rule compliance and notions of justice, leads to trust. This supports the usefulness of Mayer et al.'s (1995) original theoretical framework and the application of this model to sport federations.

Mishra (1996) supported that integrity is apparent when real interactions or vivid examples are taken into account. This has apparently happened in all three federations, as all interviewees had an example to give as an evidence of the presence of integrity in their working environment. Some employees and managers focused on different aspects of integrity, such as being credible (SM: "[...] it is always important to show them [the staff members] that they should trust me carrying through some of their requests, [...]"), serious, responsible (LE2: "He doesn't prevaricate, he doesn't avoid responsibilities."), offering the sense of safety to his employees, and acknowledging their efforts by rewarding them (SE3: "[...] I think he said nice words on the board council regarding accounting which I'm responsible for. He supported that I'm well-versed on the subject."). Considering the aforementioned quotes and examples, the first research question was confirmed and, therefore, Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model is in effect in a sport federation environment for the employee-manager relationship.

4.4 Other Factors Influencing Organisational Trust in a Sport Environment

Thematic analysis makes possible not only to check the validity of a theory in a different context, but also to discover new elements/themes derived from the data analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). We found two new elements that seem to have influences on trust development in internal environments of sport federations in Greece: a) years of employment and b) healthy workplace.

All managers mentioned years of employment as an important factor to gain their employees' trust or to trust them. Talking about special characteristics that made his employees trust him, a manager mentioned that "My experience, very important, [...] results in having me as their [the employees'] point of reference [...]" (MM). Another manager suggested that low turnover has an importance to create trust:

The federation's staff is many years the same, which means it has great experience [...] and a general knowledge from all the federation's departments [...] You know, trust and respect are gained. They are not self-evident. So, they are being cultivated as the years go by [...] (LM).

As the manager of the medium federation, the manager of the small one also preferred to highlight his personal experience

I have a very big working experience and... you can see that, of course, on the job... And I was a member of the board and... and I have got experience in other topics as well, such as the financial ones, but also, I have generally engaged in the [name of sport] world for forty-five years, [...] and I have great experience in that, hence there were always trust signs from the employees to me (SM).

The same perception seems to be dominant when the employees' interview transcripts were analysed. When asked about reasons why trust elements exist in their federations, one said "Probably because we are many years together and this might play a crucial role." (LE2). A member of another federation had a similar impression and said "In this particular federation, we are a few people who work together for many years, more than twenty-five. There is absolute trust between us. [...] We do not have any problem between us. We are many years together." (ME1).

These findings support the existing literature related to organisational tenure and working attitudes deriving from it. For example, Gyekye (2006) supported that organisational tenure constitutes a crucial factor predicting job satisfaction. He specifically mentioned that endurance in one job position creates a bond between

the employee and their company leading to more favourable feelings than the ones a short-tenured employee might have.

Similarly, Dockel, Basson, and Coetzee (2006) proposed that tenure makes internal systems more fluent and helps organisations become more effective. Commitment and loyalty are in direct relation with the statement (Gyekye, 2006). Interestingly, Gyekye (2006) supports that organisational tenure's outcomes derive from social exchange theory. That is, job endurance is rewarded with external perks, such as promotions, salary increases, and pension plans (Dockel et al., 2006). In turn, the long-tenured employees tend to cultivate the feeling of indebtedness making them willing to be positively active (or pro-active) in their working tasks, such as complying with the regulations in advance without a manager's indication (Gyekye, 2006).

A healthy working environment was the second new element that seems to have influenced perceptions of trust in internal environments of sport federations in Greece. Many articles describe how different aspects of a healthy workplace can influence and benefit organisational performance (Boon, Den Hartog, Boselie, & Paauwe, 2011; Brathwaite, 2004; Maier et al., 2016; Weerakoon, 2016). This research revealed the relation of trust and organisational performance, which was mentioned in many answers, where the interviewees defined organisational trust using various aspects that can illustrate a healthy working environment. The key element for the team and teamwork within the development-oriented organisation culture is the egalitarian structure. The absence of a hierarchy and the flat structure provides all team members with the opportunity to speak up, thereby enabling a continuous dialogue. In addition, the relationships between the sport directors and the coaches are loaded with values such as equity, inter-humanity and trust (Skille & Chroni, 2018).

Co-operation, ease (ME2: "You can work more easily, far better when trust exists between colleagues and the management in general."), frankness, freedom of expression and initiative (LE1: "Generally, Mr. [name of the manager] is this type of person that gives us leeway to work based on our instinct, based on our experience."), responsiveness, and mutual diligence (ME1: "[...] Trust between my manager and me is mutual. Whenever he is absent, he knows that I will do what I have to.") were some of the elements derived from the participants' answers. Additionally, congruence in employees' and manager's perceptions seem also to be important to foster this relationship between healthy environment and trust. One member mentioned that trust in the workplace meant "That my words, actions, and activities are those which have to be done both from me to others and from the others to me." (LE2). Her manager's statement fits closely her idea. When the manager was asked to explain how trust is developed and maintained in their federation, he said:

If something happens, you are transformed into a security umbrella. Even if they make a mistake, they know you will cover them. Why? Because that is how good teams function. So, we receive this back multiplied as a return both quantitatively and qualitatively from the work they eventually deliver. (LM)

We have controlled for organisation size, based on the findings of previous studies (e.g. Karastathis et al., 2014). Overall, we did not observe critical differences in trust indicators among the three federations (small, medium, and large) investigated in this study. The only tendency was found when employees were asked to express their opinion about their managers' behaviours based on influences from higher levels of administration. The same question was addressed to the managers, asking them if they believe that their behaviour has been influenced by higher levels of administration. Interestingly, for the large federation two of the three employees and their manager replied negatively, while the third employee supported a minor influence of her manager's behaviour from higher administrative levels. For the medium federation, one employee answered negatively, one positively, and both the third employee and their manager indicated a minor influence because of political extensions. Lastly, for the small federation, all three employees supported that their manager's behaviour is influenced by higher levels of administration, while their manager had a negative answer indicating just some adjustments that had to be done under specific circumstances.

From the employees' perspective, a specific relation seems to exist: the larger the federation, the lowest the influence in the manager's behaviour from higher administrative levels. Small organisations tend to adopt more adaptable, simple, and non-structured programmes, while their large counterparts base their operations mostly on official procedures (Taylor & McGraw, 2006). Small organisations tend to implement more informal procedures, which are usually led by the line manager, with little influences from above. Therefore, their employees would develop trust in their line manager, with little consideration on whether they suffer top pressure to behave in certain ways. On larger federations, employees might be more flexible in their attitudes towards trusting their managers, as they perceive that some of their actions may be influenced by higher administration. From the perspective of the managers, none of them sees influence from higher levels of administration on their

behaviours. For them, trust should be based on their own behaviours, disregarding the pressure they might suffer from the top.

5. Discussion

The results show that trust's antecedents (ability, benevolence, integrity) are the main contributors that form trust attitudes between managers and staff members in sport federations confirming the validity of Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model in this field. While exploring the sectors on which their theoretical concept was implemented, the authors (Mayer et al., 1995) found a well-diversified range of fields (Schoorman et al., 2007), but sport ones. The present study covers this particular gap, while simultaneously contributes to the existing literature with two more elements (years of employment and healthy workplace), that seemed to be responsible for creating trustful bonds between managers and staff members in sport federations. Lastly, valuable practical implications are presented below.

Ability's practical implications indicate that HNSF's managers should always seek to be on the top of their knowledge regarding their sport. This can be achieved, for example, by participating in sport conferences and/or educational seminars and maintain or even expand oneself's professional network. Most importantly, they need to show their expertise to their employees by dealing effectively with the federation's daily issues. This way, the employees would have a vivid example of how things should work, something that might enhance their trust levels towards their managers.

The findings also offer a number of practical implications for the second antecedent of Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model, benevolence. The HNSF's managers should maintain or adopt benevolent behaviours if they want to create a trustful environment. The HRM procedures they apply should be human-oriented instead of solely, caring about the results. It is reasonable they cover their employees' needs and expectations, as a supportive working environment can create people willing to make that extra effort for their organisation going beyond their call of duty. Previous studies have shown that benevolence is important to create a positive relationship between ability and performance (Dirks & Skarlicki, 2009; Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Dirks and Skarlicki (2009) found that actual relationship is more pronounced when benevolence is high than when it is low.

Moreover, more practical implications derive from the trust model's third element, integrity, focusing on the behavioural aspect of a manager's position and their realisation of the power their position holds. Someone could support that having a credible character is innate, but techniques are able to help a manager form the right personality traits to behave with integrity in situations that require it (Simons, 2002). Therefore, HNSF managers should not only focus on achieving technical excellence, but also on HRM processes capable of teaching them the art of reliable behaviour.

The additional findings contributed to the literature by indicating that trust can be added to the list of positive attitudinal outcomes that come from retention of employees and managers. The relationship between tenure and trust can also be understood the other way around. That is, employees' retention is more easily achievable if their manager has the expertise, is benevolent, and behaves with integrity, hence being trusted. Either way, the positive relationship between tenure and trust development was established in this investigation.

The second extra element found in the present study, a healthy working environment, could have great practical implications in the employee-manager relationship and the federation's effectiveness. A healthy environment can create employees who are not afraid to tell their opinion and pitch their ideas to their managers. It also supports managers who do not shy away from their responsibilities. This scenario was reported in the answers of Greek federations' employees and managers as positive to create trust.

6. Conclusions

Mayer et al.'s (1995) trust model was confirmed in the context of HNSF. All three antecedents of trust (ability, benevolence, integrity) were mentioned by employees and managers, confirming their importance to develop trust in internal environments of such organisations. Thematic analysis pointed out other factors that could influence the employee-manager relationship in terms of trust (years of employment and a healthy working environment). This is a unique contribution of the current study to the literature.

Mayer and Gavin (2005) and Schoorman et al. (2007) indicated multiple contexts on which the initial model (of Mayer et al., 1995) could be implemented. They pointed the importance of empirically testing in different contexts in order to discover particular relations in the employee-manager trust development. Their perception was that the relationship might be context dependent. What works in a type of organisation might not

necessarily work in other types. Wang and Hsieh (2014) suggested that the implementation of a specific model on other sectors and countries is a means for increasing the external validity of the findings.

The present study showed that Mayer et al.'s (1995) antecedents should apply to the context of HNSF. Considering similarities among sport federations around the world (with some few exceptions, for example, the United States), we believe that the results reported here should repeat in other countries. Future studies may replicate the current study in order to verify possible cultural influences.

7. Future Research

The concept of organisational trust has been extensively investigated in multiple contexts applying different theoretical models, but sport federations have attracted limited attention. Therefore, except for considering investigating trust in sport federations in other countries, efforts should be focused on the implementation of other theoretical models of trust, such as the Initial Trust Model (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998), within sport organisations. This model eliminates processes deriving from past experiences between the trustor and trustee and it only encompasses propensity to trust together with cognitive procedures and fundamental factors resulting in initial trust.

Another suggestion would include the correlation of trust perceptions to organisational outcomes (e.g., commitment, employees' retention, etc.) in sport federations. An understanding of the dynamic between the two concepts would offer a substantial scale up in the employees-managers relationship as well as tangible results on the organisation's operations.

8. References

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Appendix

Interview scripts for managers

1. What type of working pattern does your federation implement?
2. What does trust in the workplace mean for you?
3. How is trust maintained and developed in your federation?
4. Describe an incident or behaviour with which you showed to your staff members that you can be trusted.
5. What special characteristics do you think you have that make your staff members feel they can trust you?
6. Do you think that your practices lead your staff members to be more willing to take a risk for you? Why?
7. Do you think that your staff members are willing to take a risk for you? Why?
8. How often do you feel controlled by superior levels of administration?

Interview scripts for staff members

1. What type of working pattern does your federation implement?
2. What does trust in the workplace mean for you?
3. Describe an incident or behaviour that fostered your level of trust towards your manager.
4. What special characteristics does your direct manager have that make you feel that you can trust him?
5. Would you be willing to take a risk for your manager? Why?
6. How would you describe the relationship between your personal goals and values and the goals, values, culture of your federation?
7. Previously, you said that your manager behaves in a specific way. To what extent do you think that their behaviour is controlled by superior levels of administration?