The Cross-level Relationship Between Organizational Trust in Leadership and Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

Previous research has rarely addressed trust in leadership at the organizational level. This study addresses this research gap by examining the influence of the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and consensus about this trust on job satisfaction. The magnitude refers to shared trust in leadership among organizational members, whereas consensus captures the variability in perceptions within organizations, even when overall agreement exists. Moreover, the study examines the mediating role of perceived communication quality in the relationship between the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and job satisfaction. The sample was composed of 486 employees of 34 transport organizations. Results showed that the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership influenced employees' job satisfaction through perceived communication quality, but its direct effect on job satisfaction was non-significant. Moreover, the organizational consensus on trust in leadership was also positively associated with job satisfaction. Overall, the findings contribute to better understanding trust in leadership as an organizational phenomenon.

Keywords: multilevel, trust in leadership, job satisfaction.

A Relação Transnível entre a Confiança Organizacional na Liderança e a Satisfação no Trabalho

Resumo

Pesquisas anteriores raramente abordaram a confiança na liderança no nível organizacional. Este estudo aborda essa lacuna de pesquisa examinando a influência da magnitude da confiança organizacional na liderança e o consenso sobre essa confiança na satisfação no trabalho. A magnitude refere-se à confiança compartilhada na liderança entre os membros da organização, enquanto o consenso captura a variabilidade nas percepções dentro das organizações, mesmo quando existe um acordo geral. Além disso, o estudo examina o papel mediador da percepção da qualidade da comunicação na relação entre a magnitude da confiança organizacional na liderança e a satisfação no trabalho. A amostra foi composta por 486 funcionários de 34 organizações de transporte. Os resultados mostraram que a magnitude da confiança organizacional na liderança influenciou a satisfação no trabalho dos funcionários por meio da qualidade de comunicação percebida, mas seu efeito direto na satisfação no trabalho não foi significativo. Além disso, o consenso organizacional sobre confiança na liderança também foi positivamente associado à satisfação no trabalho. No geral, as descobertas contribuem para uma melhor compreensão da confiança na liderança como um fenômeno organizacional.

Palavras-chave: multinível, confiança na liderança, satisfação no trabalho.

La Relación Transnivel entre la Confianza Organizacional en el Liderazgo y la Satisfacción Laboral

Resumen

Las investigaciones anteriores rara vez han abordado la confianza en el liderazgo a nivel organizacional. Este estudio aborda esta brecha de investigación al examinar la influencia de la magnitud de la confianza organizacional en el liderazgo y el consenso sobre esta confianza en la satisfacción laboral. La magnitud se refiere a la confianza compartida en el liderazgo entre los miembros de la organización, mientras que el consenso captura la variabilidad en las percepciones dentro de las organizaciones, incluso cuando existe un acuerdo general. Además, el estudio examina el papel mediador de la calidad de la comunicación percibida en la relación entre la magnitud de la confianza organizacional en el liderazgo y la satisfacción laboral. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 486 empleados de 34 organizaciones de transporte. Los resultados mostraron que la magnitud de la confianza organizacional en el liderazgo influyó en la satisfacción laboral de los empleados a través de la percepción de la calidad de la comunicación, pero su efecto directo sobre la satisfacción laboral no fue significativo. Además, el consenso organizacional sobre la confianza en el liderazgo también se asoció positivamente con la satisfacción laboral. En general, los hallazgos contribuyen a comprender mejor la confianza en el liderazgo como un fenómeno organizacional.

Palabras clave: multinivel, confianza en el liderazgo, satisfacción laboral.

Trust in leadership becomes critical in contemporary societies where work environments are increasingly complex, dynamic, and uncertain (Blumberg et al., 2015; Xiong, et al., 2016). Although leaders face important organizational challenges, little is known about trust in leadership at the organization level (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Fulmer & Ostroff, 2016) and how it might contribute to building a positive work environment that enhances job satisfaction. Instead, previous research has mainly focused on employees' trust in leadership at the individual level (e.g., Burke, et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Monzani et al., 2015). This study extends previous research by adopting a multilevel approach to trust in leadership.

Moreover, following Kozlowski (2015), it adopts a comprehensive approach to organizational trust in leadership that considers both its magnitude and the degree of consensus about it. Magnitude of trust in leadership refers to the degree of trust in leadership collectively shared by individuals within an organization, whereas consensus on trust in leadership involves the degree of variation in organizational members' trust in leaders. Traditionally, trust in leadership research has focused on the magnitude of trust in leadership (e.g. Burker et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Mach & Lvina, 2017), ignoring the consensus on trust, which has commonly been used as a prerequisite for aggregation. However, according to Kozlowski et al. (2016), consensus on trust in leadership may provide unique information about organizational functioning and be valuable in predicting workplace outcomes. Thus, this study conceptualizes consensus as a focal construct.

This study examines the cross-level effect of the magnitude and consensus on organizational trust in leadership on job satisfaction. However, their mechanisms of influence are expected to be different. This study postulates that the relationship between the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and job satisfaction will be mediated by perceived communication quality (See Figure 1). The magnitude of organizational trust in leadership elicits positive expectations about the quality of communication, and it cultivates an open environment that eases communication. In turn, communication quality would increase employees' job satisfaction. To date, the mediating role of perceived communication quality in this relationship has not been explored. However, consensus on organizational trust in leadership is expected to have a direct effect on job satisfaction. High consensus will prevent dissent and cultivate a comfortable social environment that will engender job satisfaction.

Despite these limitations, the current research study provides an initial understanding of the positive effects of collaboration between professionals and service users. More specifically, we confirm the usefulness of an evidence-based intervention design that promotes the active role of family members in organizations for individuals with intellectual disability, combining rigor and social relevance. Family members are not necessarily passive people who receive a service. Based on our findings, they can actively participate in organizational life, which leads to an improvement in their service quality evaluations.

Conceptualizing Magnitude and Consensus on Organizational Trust in Leadership

Although leaders are relevant agents of social influence within their units, research on emergent properties with the leader as the target is scarce (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2016; Kukenberger & D'Innocenzo, 2020). This study addresses this research gap by focusing on the magnitude and consensus on organizational trust in immediate supervisors.

The *magnitude of organizational trust in leadership* refers to the level of shared organizational trust in leadership, and it is operationalized as the organization's average score on trust in leadership (De Jong & Elfring, 2010). Kozlowski and Klein (2000) explain how convergence, sharing, and within-organization agreement develop to yield this shared organizational property. First, immediate supervisors provide similar experiences to their followers (Jiang & Probst, 2015; Lumineau & Schilke, 2018; Mishra & Mishra, 2013) (e.g., delegate work assignments or assess performance); and they adopt behaviors that are not directed toward a given individual, but rather toward their subordinates as a group (e.g., communicating organizational goals, developing a specific climate…) (Korek, et al., 2010). Therefore, organizational members' judgments about trust in leadership will tend to converge.

Moreover, based on social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), the social context (e.g., employees' social and information networks) facilitates the emergence of shared or similar perceptions of trust (Costa et al., 2017) by constructing meanings and indirectly guiding the attention (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Finally, "trust contagion" might also account for the emergence of organizational trust (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012), due to the emotional component of trust (Jones & George, 1998; Munduate et al., 2016).

However, although employees working together come to agree on the extent to which they can trust their leader (e.g., Lumineau & Schilke, 2018), within-organization agreement varies even when evidence of overall agreement exists (González-Romá & Peiró, 2014; Lang et al., 2018). This variability in individual-level trust in leadership within the organization is called *consensus on trust in leadership*, and it is represented by within-organization variance or dispersion in trust in leadership (Bonito & Keyton, 2019; Van Knippenberg & Mell, 2016). Within-organization variability is also called strength in multilevel literature. In this study, the term "consensus" is preferred, based on recent perspectives on trust at a higher level (Fulmer, 2012; Jong et al, 2020).

In this study, we examine the impact of both the magnitude of and consensus on organizational trust. Trust refers to *"a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another"* (Rousseau, et al., 1998: p. 395). This study focuses on immediate supervisors because, first, they act as interpretative filters of organizational policies and practices related to reward systems, performance evaluation, organizational changes, or conflict management. Second, the normal chain-of-command structures provide many opportunities for interactions between immediate supervisors and employees (e.g., Detert & Treviño, 2010).

The Cross-Level Relationship Between the Magnitude of Organizational Trust in Leadership and Job Satisfaction

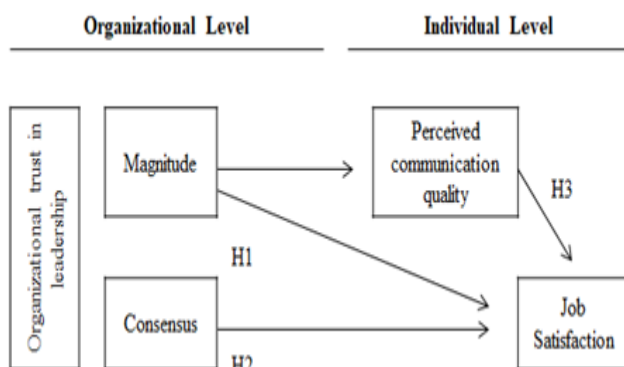Several theoretical arguments support the cross-level

Figure 1. Conceptual Model.

relationship between the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and job satisfaction. Based on social information processing (SIP) theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), Jiang and Probst (2015) argued that the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership influences employees' attitudes. They postulate that the immediate social environment is a relevant source of information that allows employees to interpret events and gauge what attitudes are appropriate. For instance, a lack of trust in leadership among fellow employees might influence individuals' judgments and interpretation of events, which would erode job satisfaction.

Moreover, the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership will be accompanied by certain expectations. For instance, a high level of organizational trust in leadership might lead to employees' positive expectations about their leaders and the way they perform their duties, which would influence job satisfaction. This is a critical issue due to the vulnerability inherent in hierarchical relationships established between leaders and subordinates. Leaders perform tasks that might have a strong influence on employees' job satisfaction (e.g., performance evaluations, work assignments, conflict resolution…) (Asencio, 2016; Jiang & Probst, 2015; Silla et al., 2020).

Finally, high levels of organizational trust in leadership would create a positive environment, which is a relevant predictor of individuals' job satisfaction (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). High levels of trust in leadership might prevent conflicts within the organization, promote cooperation, create harmonious relationships, or cultivate acceptance of organizational goals and norms. Employees will also experience care and consideration (Jiang & Probst, 2015), which is likely to increase job satisfaction.

Although several theoretical arguments support the positive relationship between organizational trust in leadership and employees' job satisfaction, this relationship has mainly been addressed at the individual level of analysis (Asencio, 2016; Chan & Mak, 2016; Kelly et al., 2015; Nienaber, et al., 2015). To our knowledge, only Jiang and Probst (2015) have examined the cross-level relationship between trust in leadership and employees' job satisfaction. Results showed that the magnitude of trust at the department level was positively associated with employees' job satisfaction, after controlling for the individual level of trust. The targets of trust were the university administrators because the university was going through a series of budget cuts at the time as a result of the 2007 economic recession.

In sum, to our knowledge, only one study (Jiang & Probst, 2015) has examined the cross-level relationship between trust in leadership (magnitude) and individuals' job satisfaction. However, trust was operationalized at the department level, and its correlates cannot be extrapolated to the organizational level. Additionally, the study was carried out during an organizational economic crisis. Thus, its results are not generalizable, and further research is needed. This study addresses this research gap in a sample of professional drivers.

Hypothesis 1. The magnitude of organizational trust in leadership will be positively associated with employees' job satisfaction.

Consensus on Trust in Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Traditionally, multilevel research has focused almost exclusively on the magnitude of trust in leadership while ignoring consensus on trust. However, recent studies (John, et al., 2020) in the field of trust encourage consensus research. Following this new research avenue, the present study attempts to contribute to multilevel research in organizations, specifically in the field of trust in leadership. Along these lines, this study considers consensus on

trust in leadership as an organizational construct with theoretical and empirical interest in itself, rather than as a mere prerequisite for aggregation. To our knowledge, only one study in the field of trust in leadership has addressed the role of consensus (Fulmer, 2012).

Organizational consensus on trust, in the case of leadership, could be beneficial for organizational results (Cole et al., 2011) for several reasons. Social Influence Theory (Festinger, 1950) postulates that individuals attempt to reduce discrepancies between organizational members and prevent dissent. Thus, a high consensus on trust in leadership is likely to contribute to a comfortable social environment (Cole et al., 2011) because it means that members share their perceptions of social reality, whether positive or negative. It also means that they do not need to challenge each other. In contrast, a lack of consensus would create discomfort due to discrepancies. Moreover, consensus on trust in leadership, whether organizational trust in leadership is high or low, indicates that organizational members are likely to rely on each other to better understand their social environment and adjust their perceptions (Sanders et al., 2011).

Moreover, organizations where levels of consensus are high are expected to be cohesive (e.g., Cole, et al., 2011; Korek et al., 2010). High consensus on trust in leadership implies that leaders develop similar relationships with fellow employees, thus supporting the sense of being integrated in the organization, as well as feelings of attachment to and identification with it.

Along these lines, a high consensus is also likely to strengthen within-organization relations and prevent interpersonal conflicts (Cole, et al., 2011). In contrast, low consensus implies that leaders have developed different relationships with organizational members in terms of trust. This inconsistency might produce friction and tension among organizational members, intragroup conflicts, and negative feelings such as jealousy or an increased likelihood of misunderstandings between members.

Although several theoretical arguments support the positive relationship between consensus on trust in leadership and employees' job satisfaction, this relationship remains unexplored. To our knowledge, only one study has addressed consensus on trust in leadership, and it focused on the team level of consensus rather than the organizational level (Fulmer, 2012). The results showed that consensus on trust in leadership at the team level predicted team performance and team voice behavior (Fulmer, 2012).

Therefore, this study extends previous multilevel research in organizations by considering consensus on trust in leadership as a focal construct. It examines the unique contribution of consensus on trust in leadership to employees' job satisfaction while controlling for the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership. To date, this relationship remains unexplored, even though theoretical arguments and some empirical evidence support the positive influence of consensus on job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. The organizational consensus on trust in leadership will be positively associated with employees' job satisfaction.

Perceived Communication Quality as a Mediator in the Cross-Level Relationship Between the Magnitude of Organizational Trust in Leadership and Job Satisfaction

To our knowledge, few or no studies have addressed the mechanisms that explain the cross-level relationship between the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and job satisfaction. This study extends previous research by testing the potential mediating role of perceived communication quality for

several reasons.

Organizational trust in leadership (*magnitude*) is likely to engender perceived communication quality. When immediate supervisors are judged to be trustworthy, employees will hold positive expectations about them (Rousseau et al., 1998), and they will probably judge the communication as clear, sufficient, and timely. This is especially true because immediate supervisors play a relevant role in top-down communication. Moreover, the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership itself might stimulate communication quality. It will create a safe environment for open communication that involves sharing confidential information, asking for feedback, openly discussing conflicts and mistakes (Burke, et al., 2007; Breuer et al., 2016; Martinez-Tur & Peiró, 2009; Mishra, 1996), or having stimulating interactions with leaders (Silla et al, 2020). By contrast, in the absence of trust, communication may be limited, and personally risky information might be avoided (Burke, et al., 2007). Despite theoretical arguments supporting the relationship between organizational trust in leadership and communication quality, this relationship has not been examined.

Moreover, communication quality is likely to elicit job satisfaction. Clear, sufficient, and timely communication allows employees to understand the nature of their tasks and perform them adequately (De Nobile & McCormick, 2008), in addition to establishing adequate directions at work. Moreover, communication quality makes employees feel involved (Men, 2014), which would also increase job satisfaction. Empirical evidence has consistently shown that perceived communication quality enhances employees' job satisfaction (Men, 2014; De Nobile & McCormick, 2008; Raina & Roebuck, 2016).

In sum, although several theoretical arguments support the potential mediating role of perceived communication quality, this relationship remains unexplored. This study postulates that the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership will lead to perceived communication quality, which, in turn, will increase job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3. Perceived communication quality will mediate the relationship between the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and employees' job satisfaction.

Method

Participants

The study sample was composed of 486 employees of 34 transport organizations. Fifty-nine percent of the organizations were dedicated to the transportation of goods and 41% to passenger transportation. The average organizational size ranged between 25 and 50 members. Most of the organizations were categorized as small (less than 25 employees) (41.4%) or medium (less than 250 employees) (44.8%), and only 13.8% were large (more than 250 employees).

Regarding the employees, 87.1% were male. Sixty-five percent of the employees were between 26 and 45 years old, 30.5% were less than 26 years old, and 4.5% were 46 years old or more. Twelve percent did not hold any academic title, 43% had completed primary education, 34.3% had secondary education, and 10.7% were university graduates. Employees' organizational tenure in the organization was: 13.4% of employees had less than one year, 21.6% had between 1 and 5 years, 26.7% had between 5 and 10 years, and 38.3% had more than 10 years tenure. Seventy-five percent of employees were drivers. Most of the drivers had exclusively national routes (national routes: 71.2%; international routes: 8.7%; national and international routes: 20.1%). Sixteen

percent of employees worked in the administration department, 3% worked in the storage department, 2% worked in the human resources and risk prevention departments, and 4% worked in other functions (mechanical, commercial, traffic manager, etc.).

Instruments

Magnitude of organizational trust in leadership. It was measured using the question "Please, indicate to what degree your immediate supervisor inspires your trust". Employees answered using a 5-point scale (1 = Never, 5 = Almost always). Individual scores were aggregated at the organizational level (O´Neill, 2017). Prior to aggregation, we assessed within-team agreement through the Average Deviation index (*AD*; Burke et al., 1999). The average *AD* value was .66 (*SD* = .27). The agreement indices indicated a fairly good level of agreement. *AD* values were all lower than the suggested cutoff criterion of $c/6 = .83$ (where c, the number of response options, is 5 in this case) (Burke & Dunlap, 2002), thus supporting aggregation to the organizational level. One-way ANOVAs were carried out to assess whether there were sufficient differences in the level of organizational trust in leadership among the transport organizations. The observed *F* value was $F_{(32, 421)} = 2.54$ ($p < .01$). These results showed adequate between-organization discrimination in the level of average organizational trust in leadership, and they support the validity of the aggregate organizational measure (Chan, 1998).

Consensus on trust in leadership. It was conceptualized as the degree of within-organization homogeneity in members' trust in leadership, operationalized using the *AD* index (Burke et al., 1999). Because this index is a measure of within-organization variability, the values provided by this measure were multiplied by –1, so that higher scores represented higher organizational homogeneity in trust in leadership.

Perceived communication quality. It was measured with a three-item scale ("To what extent is the communication among the members of your organization clear/complete/on time?") (González-Romá & Hernández, 2014). Items were responded to using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .92.

Job satisfaction. It was assessed using a 9-item scale adapted from González-Romá and Peiró (2004). Participants were asked to assess their degree of satisfaction with relevant work aspects (e.g., decision-making participation, workmate relationships, working conditions, salary). The response scale ranged from 1 (Nothing) to 5 (Very much). Cronbach's alpha was .87.

Control variables. We also controlled for individual perceptions of trust in leadership, given their influence on individuals' job satisfaction (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

Data Collection Procedures and Ethical Considerations

The human resources managers in all the organizations were contacted to request their collaboration in the study. Once they had agreed to collaborate, research team members contacted the organizations' managers to arrange the administration of the questionnaire. Generally, the questionnaire was completed during working hours and supervised by members of the research team. Questionnaires were completed anonymously and directly collected by members of the research team. Respondents were guaranteed absolute confidentiality before the data were processed for organization-level analyses. Although this was the preferred data collection procedure, in some organizations, surveys were sent by post along with stamped addressed envelopes. The survey was accompanied by an instruction letter describing the purpose

of the research project and giving the main researcher's contact information. Participation was voluntary.

Data Analyses Procedures

Our dataset comprised data at the organizational level (Level 2; magnitude and consensus on organizational trust in leadership) and the individual level (Level 1; individual trust in leadership, perceived quality of communication, and individual job satisfaction). We followed a hierarchical data strategy and examined several nested models using Hierarchical Linear Modelling (HLM) to test our hypotheses. To test the mediation effect, we used bootstrapping (Montoya & Hayes, 2017). Repeating a resampling process with replacement thousands of times (5.000 in the present study), bootstrapped standard errors and bootstrap confidence intervals were obtained and used to make inferences about the significance of the mediated effect.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate zero-order correlations are presented in Table 1. Individual job satisfaction was positively related to the predictor (magnitude of organizational trust in leadership: $r = .34$, $p < .01$; and consensus on trust in leadership: $r = .31$, $p < .01$) and mediator variables (perceived communication quality: $r = 71$, $p < .01$). Individual job satisfaction was significantly related to individual trust in leadership ($r = .63$, $p < .01$), supporting the need to control this individual-level variable. Magnitude of organizational trust in leadership was positively related to perceived communication quality ($r = .37$, $p < .01$).

First, as preliminary analyses, we tested a null model, including the intercept as the only predictor. In the null model, we assessed systematic within- and between-organization variance in the dependent variable. Specifically, the ICC(1) value was computed. The ICC(1) value was .12 for individual job satisfaction. Therefore, the proportion of explained variance associated with organizational membership was approximately 12%.

With regard to Hypotheses 1 and 2 (see Table 2), we investigated whether there was significant variance in the intercepts and slopes across organizations to specify the best fitting random coefficient model. In Model 1, individual trust in leadership was entered (Level 1). In Model 2, the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and consensus on trust were introduced (Level 2) (Hypotheses 1 and 2, respectively). Both predictor variables were entered in the same model. We examined the improvement in each model over the previous one with a likelihood ratio difference test. Differences between likelihood ratios follow a chi-square distribution (with degrees of freedom equal to the number of new parameters to the model). The findings revealed that

Model 1 showed a significant improvement over the null model (difference of -2*log = 194.86; $df = 1$; $p < .01$). Individual trust in leadership was positively and significantly associated with job satisfaction ($\beta = .42$, p $< .01$). Results for Model 2 showed an improvement over Model 1 (difference of -2*log = 3.90; $df = 2$; $p < .01$). Magnitude of organizational trust in leadership was not significantly associated with job satisfaction ($\beta = -.03$, $n.s.$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Consensus on trust in leadership was significantly associated with job satisfaction ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

To test the mediator role of perceived communication quality (Hypothesis 3), we compared two models. In Model 1, we included the control (individual trust in leadership and consensus on trust in leadership) and predictor (magnitude of organizational trust in leadership) variables. In Model 2, the mediator variable (perceived communication quality) was entered, and we examined the model's improvement compared to Model 1. The results are shown in Table 3. In Model 1, individual trust in leadership and consensus on trust were positively associated with job satisfaction ($\beta = .43$, $p < .01$ and $\beta = .18$, $p < .05$, respectively), and the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership was not significantly related to job satisfaction ($\beta = .02$, $n.s.$). In Model 2, perceived communication quality was significantly and positively related to individuals' job satisfaction ($\beta = .31$, $p < .01$). The findings revealed that Model 2 showed a significant improvement over Model 1 (difference of -2*log = 75.1; $df = 1$; $p < .01$). Mediation analysis showed that perceived communication quality mediated the effect of the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership on individual job satisfaction (estimate of indirect effect = .25 (BootSE= .03); 95% confidence interval = .19 to .30). We tested an additional hierarchical linear model to analyze the cross-level influence of the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership on perceived communication quality after controlling individual trust in leadership (see Table 4). Results showed that the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership was positively related to perceived communication quality ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Discussion

This study addressed trust in leadership at the organizational level and its cross-level relationship with job satisfaction. Organizational trust in leadership was conceptualized as a collective property of organizations that considers both its magnitude and the degree of consensus. Results showed that the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership positively influences job satisfaction via perceived communication quality, rather than exerting a direct influence on job satisfaction. These results extend previous research by providing insight into the mechanisms underlying the cross-level relationship between the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and job satisfaction, which had not previously been explored.

Unexpectedly, our results showed that the direct relationship between the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and job satisfaction was non-significant. Previous research (Jiang & Probst, 2015) has shown a positive cross-level relationship between trust in university administrators and employees' job satisfaction. Several issues might explain these conflicting results. Jiang and Probst (2015) operationalized trust in leadership at the departmental level, and the target of trust consisted of university administrators. However, our study addresses organizational trust in immediate supervisors. Another relevant difference is the fact that Jiang and Probst's study (2015) was carried out in a different organizational context: a public university in the United States during a period of budget cuts. This difficult situation might

Table 1

Multilevel Estimates for Models Predicting Job Satisfaction

	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Individual trust in leadership	3.5	1.17	-				
2	Magnitude of organizational trust in leadership	3.51	.48	.40**	-			
3	Consensus on trust in leadership	-.82	.23	.25**	.64**	-		
4	Perceived communication quality	3.51	.94	.65**	.37**	.31**	-	
5	Job satisfaction	3.38	.71	.63**	.34**	.31**	.71**	-

Note. *$p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; two-tailed

Table 2
Multilevel Estimates for Models Predicting Job Satisfaction

Variable	Null Model			Model 1			Model 2		
	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t
Intercept	3.4757	.0730	47.612**	3.4216	.0529	64.626**	3.4529	.0463	74.540**
Control variable									
Individual trust in leadership[a]				.4254	.0318	13.373**	.4105	.0327	12.536**
Predictors									
Magnitude of organizational trust in leadership[b]							-.0318	.0793	-.401
Consensus on trust in leadership[b]							.1769	.0668	2.647*
2*log	756.374			561.509			557.605		
Difference of -2*log				194.86**			3.901**		

explain why trust in leadership became a relevant predictor of job satisfaction. Therefore, one might argue that this relationship cannot necessarily be extrapolated to other organizational contexts. Our study extends previous research by testing the cross-level effect of the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership on job satisfaction in a sample of professional drivers. However, our measure of organizational trust presents some limitations that are discussed below, and so further research is needed.

showed that the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership increases communication quality, which in turn enhances job satisfaction.

Second, the current study supports the relevance of consensus on trust as a focal construct. Results showed that consensus elicits employees' job satisfaction after controlling for organizational trust in leadership. Thus, it plays a unique and differentiated role from that of the magnitude of organizational trust. Some studies

Table 3
Multilevel Estimates for Models Predicting Job Satisfaction

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t
Intercept	3.4415	.0613	56.094**	3.4031	.0517	65.824**
Control variable						
Individual trust in leadership[a]	.4332	.0495	8.743**	.2249	.0396	5.677**
Consensus on trust in leadership[b]	.1800	.0790	2.276*	.1347	.0682	1.975
Predictors						
Magnitude of organizational trust in leadership[b]	-.0256	.9925	-.297	-.0100	.0725	-.139
Mediator						
Perceived communication quality[a]				.3082	.0427	7.218**
2*log	778.85			703.75		
Difference of -2*log				75.1**		

Additionally, the findings supported the positive influence of organizational consensus on trust in leadership on job satisfaction. To our knowledge, this relationship had not been explored before. These findings are congruent with previous research conducted at the team level. Fulmer (2012) showed that consensus on trust in leadership is a relevant antecedent of team performance and team voice behavior.

This study has relevant theoretical implications for multilevel research in organizations. First, it shows that the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership deserves research attention, in line with Fulmer and Ostroff's (2016) claims that research on emergent properties with the leader as the target is scarce. Results

have focused on consensus either as a prerequisite for aggregation or as a non-central predictor (e.g. Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012), neglecting consensus on trust as a focal construct. This study overcomes this limitation and provides theoretical arguments that support the relevance of consensus based on Social Influence Theory (Festinger, 1950). It postulates that consensus on trust in leadership can contribute to a positive social environment, stimulate organizational cohesion, and prevent interpersonal conflicts.

In summary, following several authors (Fulmer, 2012; Fulmer, 2018; Jong et al, 2020), this study challenges the dominant assumption that the mean level of trust in leadership

Table 4
Multilevel Estimates for Models Predicting Perceived Communication Quality.

Variable	Null Model			Model 1		
	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t
Intercept	3.766	.0955	39.432**	3.6612	.0545	67.085**
Control variable						
Individual trust in leadership[a]				.5512	.0346	15.929**
Predictors						
Magnitude of organizational trust in leadership[b]				.1451	.0703	2.064*
2*log	1226.96			935.66		
Difference of -2*log				291.2**		

is the only significant way to conceptualize trust in leadership at the organizational level. Our results suggest that, in order to provide a complete understanding of the role of organizational trust in leadership, both the magnitude and the consensus on organizational trust in leadership should be considered.

Finally, this study contributes to the development of more comprehensive multilevel leadership models. Our findings showed that perceived communication quality mediates the relationship between organizational trust in leadership and job satisfaction.

Regarding the practical implications, the positive influence of organizational trust in leadership on job satisfaction through communication quality, as well as the benefits of consensus, encourage organization-oriented leadership practices that support this positive work environment. For instance, leaders' organization-oriented behaviors that show their personal willingness to serve the organization's interests and their commitment to the organization, as well as fair decision-making about the organization's members, should be encouraged in order to foster organizational trust and consensus (Giessner, et al., 2013). Likewise, taking care of and showing concern for all the organization's members, setting group goals, aligning individual goals with a shared mission, or stimulating team building are some examples of organization-oriented leadership practices that might cultivate organizational trust in leadership and consensus.

Finally, our findings have practical implications for both employees and organizations. They provide insight about ways to increase employees' job satisfaction, which will ultimately benefit organizations by increasing employees' performance (Ayala, et al., 2017; Judge, et al., 2017).

This study has several limitations. First, this is a cross-sectional study, and causal relationships and the direction of the mediation relationship cannot be assumed. The organizational trust in leadership-perceived communication quality linkage could also be explained by reversed (Thomas et al., 2009) or reciprocal relationships (Hakanen & Soudunsaari, 2012). However, in line with our study, several authors (Mishra, 1996) have postulated that trust will foster communication quality and reinforce positive expectations (Rousseau, et al., 1998) related to communication that will be judged as clear, sufficient, and timely. Future longitudinal studies on the trust-building process should be conducted to address this unresolved research question. Several studies (Hakanen & Soudunsaari, 2012; Monzani, et al., 2015) also acknowledge this and view trust-building as a process in which reciprocal relationships can be established between trust and communication.

Second, this study is based on self-reported data, and common method variance may have inflated the hypothesized relationships. Nevertheless, following the recommendations of Schmitt (1994), we minimized the problem by using aggregated data in our main predictors, the magnitude of organizational trust in leadership and consensus, in order to reduce the potential for spurious results based on individual-level observed variance. Moreover, following Podsakoff et al.'s (2012) recommendations to prevent common method bias, we informed participants about the relevance and benefits of the research project, we guaranteed anonymity, and we kept the questionnaire short and minimized redundancies, in addition to using different anchor labels. In this way, employees are more likely to provide accurate answers and avoid social desirability.

Third, trust in leadership was measured with an overall single-item scale that has not previously been validated. Moreover, one might argue that this item is closer to perceived trustworthiness than to trust per se. Previous research has criticized the use of measures of perceived trustworthiness as a proxy for trust (Gillespie, 2015), arguing that it does not involve the actual willingness to be vulnerable or take risks. Therefore, we encourage future research to replicate our study using a validated scale of organizational trust.

Finally, future research should investigate how to build organizational trust (magnitude) in leadership and consensus. Moreover, the findings on the relevance of consensus on trust in leadership open up new avenues for multilevel research. Because consensus has rarely been considered as a focal construct, little is known about its antecedents, correlates, and the underlying mechanisms that explain these relationships. The magnitude and consensus on organizational trust in leadership might elicit different processes of influence. Further theoretical development that addresses these differential effects is needed. For instance, consensus might trigger socio-emotional processes related to cohesion, affective climate, or similar phenomena related to employees' emotions. This study has focused on organizational trust in immediate supervisors, but we encourage future research to examine the relevance of different trust referents and how their alignment could contribute to building a positive social work environment.

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