

[Generic sample]

Keeping up spirits: The effects of trust in lower-level and higher-level leaders on morale of deployed soldiers

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Paper Presented at the
25th Annual International Association of Conflict Management Conference
Spier, South Africa
July 12 – 14, 2012

Abstract:

Trust in leadership is essential in high-risk work-environments such as the military. Without a willingness to be vulnerable to the leader's directives, soldiers may lose their focus and become less prepared to respond to operational demands. The present research examined how trust in different hierarchical leaders affects soldiers' morale, defined by his or her *enthusiasm* and *dedication* to mission goals. Dutch soldiers' (N=1413), part of different work units of the International Security Assistance Force for Afghanistan (2009-2010), filled out a self-report on their personal morale and trust in three hierarchical leaders. Generalized Equation Modeling (GEE) was used to account for the correlation among multiple responses made per participant. Results showed that, in general, the relationship between soldiers' morale and trust in leadership is qualified by hierarchical distance. Leaders who stand more closely to their followers have more impact on followers' job-related well-being as compared to higher hierarchical leaders. However,

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taking the characteristics of the job context into account changed the relationship between leaders and soldiers' morale. Results provide insights on when military leaders should invest on forming closer relations with their followers or when they should operate at a distance.

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