Trust and Feedback: An exploratory study of the impact of trust on upwards feedback in a Multisource Feedback Review

By Judy Walsh

National College of Ireland

A dissertation submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements for the

MA in Human Resource Management

Submitted to the National College of Ireland (August 2019)

Abstract

Judy Walsh

Trust and Feedback: An exploratory study of the impact of trust on upwards feedback in a Multisource Feedback Review

Trust and feedback have long been considered critical elements of successful employment relationships. This qualitative study explores the impact that trust has on the provision of upwards feedback as part of a multisource feedback (MSF) review. Previous research suggests that trust within an employment relationship can improve the quality of feedback between individuals and reduce the fear associated with giving and receiving feedback. For this study, employees of an Irish Higher Education Institution (HEI) were interviewed. These participants had recently provided feedback to their supervisors as part of a developmental MSF review. The goal was to explore the participants' perceptions of trust within their employment relationship and to discover whether this perception of trust, or lack of trust, had any impact on the feedback they provided. While it is impossible to confirm that the presence or absence of trust was the only influencing factor on the feedback, the primary finding was that participants who trusted the motivation of their supervisors in requesting the feedback were more open and honest with the feedback they provided. Those participants who did not trust that their supervisors were seeking feedback for the purpose of development were more cautious with their feedback and less willing to be critical. This finding has practical implications for the future implementation of MSF reviews, particularly for developmental purposes. Practitioners should ensure that feedback recipients are undertaking the review for the purpose of development and this should be clearly communicated to those providing feedback. Very little research has considered the impact of trust on feedback as part of an MSF review. Very few studies have considered feedback from the perspective of the feedback provider rather than the feedback recipient. This study confirms the findings of previous research into trust, feedback and MSF reviews while addressing these gaps in the literature.

Declaration

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland

Research Students Declaration Form

Name: Judy Walsh

Student Number: 17147611

Degree for which thesis is submitted: MA in Human Resource Management

Material Submitted for award

a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself

b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of the information specifically acknowledged

c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis repository and reports)

d) I declare that no material in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award

Signature of Research Student:

_____

Date:

_____

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library, National College of Ireland

Student name: Judy Walsh Student number: 17147611

School: School of Business Course: MAHRMNCI1 – Part-time

Degree to be awarded: MA in Human Resource Management

Title of Thesis: Trust and Feedback: An exploratory study of the impact of trust on upwards feedback in a Multisource Feedback Review

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (http://trap.ncirl.ie/), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access.

I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate:

For completion by the School:
The aforementioned thesis was received by_____
Date:_____

This signed form must be appended to all hard bound and electronic copies of your thesis submitted to your school

Acknowledgments

I am hugely thankful to my supervisor Michael Cleary Gaffney for his support throughout this process, knowing he was there to answer any of my questions was a great support.

To Sean, Katy and the rest of my team of champions, I couldn't have gotten through this year without you all. Thanks for pushing me when I needed it.

Thanks to Barry and the rest of the team, I am so grateful for your support this year and your patience with me when times were tough.

Lastly, thanks to those who allowed me to interview them, thanks for your honesty and candour, without you this entire project would not have been possible.

Contents

Table of Figures

List of Acronyms

HEI – Higher Education Institution

HRM – Human Resource Management

MSF – Multisource Feedback

SET – Social Exchange Theory

1. Introduction

Both trust and feedback have featured independently in research for decades (Deutch, 1958; Boyle & Bonacich, 1970; Rotter, 1971; Klueger & DeNisi, 1996; Mishra, 1996). For the most part research has shown that trust and feedback both have positive impacts on employment relationship. The presence of feedback in the work place has been shown to increase productivity and strengthen employee relationships (Eva, et al., 2019), feedback has also been shown to reduce uncertainty, thereby reducing employees' intentions to leave (Zhang, et al., 2008). Similarly the presence of trust in an employment relationship has been shown to increase team work and cooperation (Korsgaard, et al., 2015) and to improve overall team performance (Boies, et al., 2015), thereby increasing organisational stability (Moye & Henkin, 2006).

To date, the majority of the research has examined either trust or feedback independently of one another. There is a dearth of literature examining the potential impact that trust may have on the type of feedback given in an employment relationship. Previous researchers have acknowledged that there is a link. Zhang, et al. (2008) suggested that the presence of trust in an employment relationship increases the likelihood of feedback seeking within that relationship. Seifert, et al. (2003) posited that that if one party trusts the motives of the other it softens the blow of negative feedback. Sedikides, et al. (2016) echoed this, indicated that the presence of trust in an employment relationship eases the discomfort and fear associated with receiving negative feedback. These findings, however, don't give us a sense of the potential impact that trust has on the type of feedback given. The focus of previous research has been on the impact trust has on the request for feedback (Zhang, et al., 2008) or the impact trust has on the feedback recipient (Seifert, et al., 2003; Sedikides, et al., 2016). The goal of this research project is to explore whether the presence of trust in an employment relationship does, in fact, influence the nature of the feedback parties are willing to share. Research suggests that the presence of trust in an employment relationship should make providing feedback easier.

The specific focus of this project is on upwards feedback, feedback given from an employee to their supervisor (Walker & Smither, 1999). Upwards feedback is rare, there are very few opportunities for employees to provide feedback to their supervisors (Atwater & Brett, 2006). A commonly used feedback tools is multisource feedback (MSF), often referred to as 360

degree feedback; multi-rater feedback; or full-circle appraisal (Nowack & Mashihi, 2012) and one of the strengths of MSF tools is that they invariably include upward feedback.

The use of MSF reviews became extremely popular in the 1990s and remain popular today, to the point that research suggested that up to 90% of Fortune 500 companies have used some form of multi-rater feedback for performance appraisal or leadership development (Conine Jr. & Leskin, 2016). Despite the popularity of MSF reviews, there are still questions over their efficacy, research has shown that in a number of instances the use of MSF reviews has actually resulted in lowered performance (Conine Jr. & Leskin, 2016). In attempts to understand why a review that is designed to help performance studies have looked at the purpose for which the review is being used (Kim, et al., 2016), whether for appraisal or development (Campion, et al., 2015), others have looked at the context in which they are being used, examining geographic and cultural differences (Shipper, et al., 2006), other studies have looked at the characteristics of the feedback recipients (Maurer, et al., 2002).

There is a dearth of research exploring the characteristics of the rater and the nature of the relationship between the rater and the recipient. This research project aims to provide a new insight into the importance of that relationship and the presence of trust within the rater-recipient relationship and how that might impact the feedback raters provide. Given the value attributed to the feedback provided in MSF reviews, and the fact that MSF reviews continue to be used extensively for both development and appraisal purposes it is important to understand the factors that could impact the type of feedback provided. Additionally, opportunities for individuals to provide upwards feedback are rare (Atwater & Brett, 2006). MSF reviews are one of the few opportunities for individuals to formally review their superiors. It is therefore important to understand the factors that could impact the success of these types of reviews.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Trust and Feedback – a winning combination

Trust and feedback are intrinsically linked, trust plays a key role in both feedback seeking behaviours (Zhang, et al., 2008) and how receptive a person is to feedback, good and bad (Sedikides, et al., 2016). The presence of mutual trust in a supervisor-subordinate relationship increases the likelihood that both parties will seek feedback, and reduces the perceived risk associated with feedback (Zhang, et al., 2008). While it is intuitive that most people prefer to receive positive feedback rather than critical or even constructive feedback, the presence of trust in a relationship can act to reduce the fear associated with feedback that is less than positive (Sedikides, et al., 2016). If the receiver knows that the feedback-giver's motives are benevolent they are more receptive to feedback that challenges their own beliefs (Seifert, et al., 2003).

2.2 Trust

2.2.1 Definition of trust

The concept of trust has been a feature of research across a multitude of disciplines for decades; conflict resolution (Deutch, 1958), game theory (Boyle & Bonacich, 1970), psychology (Rotter, 1971; Rotter, 1980), economics (Kamlet & Mowery, 1987), sociology (Sztompka, 1999) the list goes on. Trust in an organisational context has been studied for over 40 years (Lewicki, et al., 1998), and scholars have long lauded the importance of trust as a lubricant in social interactions (Gambetta, 1988). In a bid to define trust, early research focused on intention and motive as the underlying forces governing trust interactions (Lewicki, et al., 1998), the focus was on the confidence an individual had in the intentions and motives of others (Mellinger, 1956; Deutch, 1958). Later research focused on trust as a behaviour, as the 'confident positive expectation' that a person will behave in a positive way (Lewicki, et al., 1998, p. 439). To date the most oft cited definition of trust comes from Mayer et al.'s (1995) seminal paper (Rousseau, et al., 1998). Meyer, et al. (1995) defined trust as the willingness of person A (the trustor) to be vulnerable to the actions of person B (the trustee) based on person A's assumption that the intentions and actions of person B will be positive, irrespective of person A's ability to monitor person B (Mayer, et al., 1995).

2.2.2 Mayer's model of Trust

Mayer, et al. (1995) created a model of trust outlining the characteristics of both the trustor and trustee that are key to the development of trust (see figure 1).

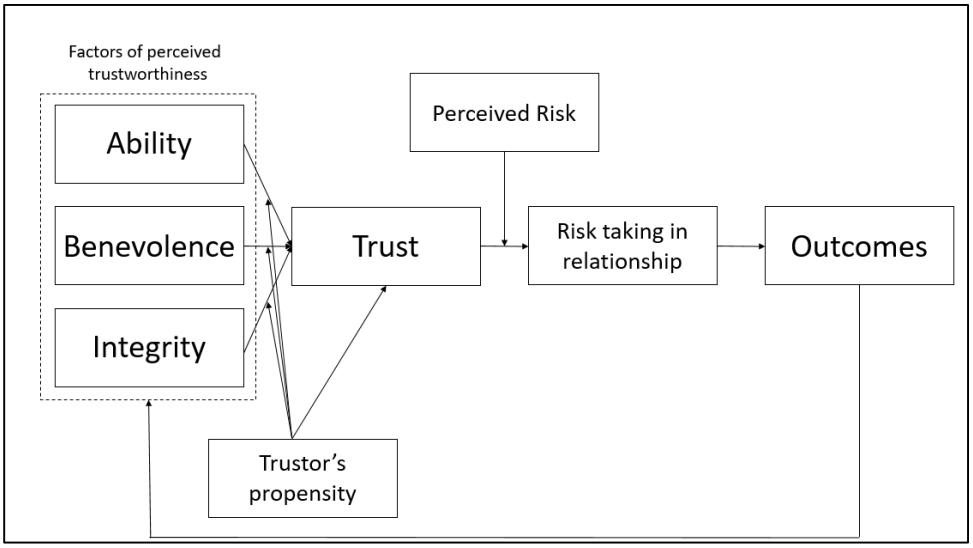

Figure 1 Model of Organisational Trust (Mayer, et al., 1995)

According to Mayer's model *trustee characteristics*, or perceived factors of trustworthiness, include ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer, et al., 1995). Mishra (1996) expanded upon this model to include predictability (or reliability), or, more accurately, perceived predictability, as a critical trustee characteristic (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006) (see Figure 2).

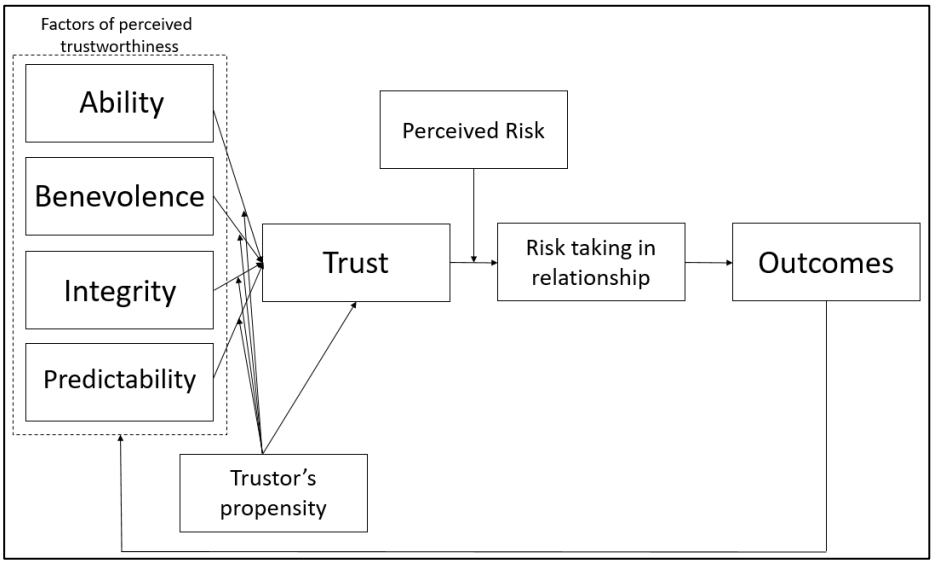

Figure 2 Combined Model of Organisational Trust, adapted from Mayer, et al (1995) and Mishra (1996)

Ability denotes the trustee's skill, competence and capabilities, within a particular context. Benevolence refers to the compassion the trustee feels toward the trustor. Integrity indicates the ethical principles that guide the trustee's decisions and predictability relates to the consistency of the trustee's behaviour (Mayer, et al., 1995; Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). It is important to point out that these characteristics might better be described as perceived ability, perceived benevolence, perceived predictability and perceived integrity, because while they are ascribed to the trustee, they are based on the perceptions of the trustor (Knoll & Gill, 2011). An individual may act with ability, benevolence, integrity, and consistency but if these traits are not perceived by would-be trustor they will, likely, not influence the decision to trust.

The primary *trustor characteristic* is propensity to trust (Mayer, et al., 1995). Propensity to trust is an individual's innate suspicion or naiveté (Krasman, 2014). For the majority of people this is a relatively stable internal trait, some individuals are inherently more likely to trust, whether or not they have sufficient information to predict the probable actions of others. Some people are more willing to trust blindly, while some people are reluctant to trust in most situations, even when circumstances would indicate that it's ok to do so (Mayer, et al., 1995).

2.2.3 Complexity of trust

The process by which one individual trusts another is complex. It is not as simple as making a decision to trust, even taking into account the trustor's propensity to trust or the trustee's integrity, ability and benevolence. Dietz and Hartog suggested that trust, as a concept, could be broken into three distinctive elements; "trust as a belief, as a decision, and as an action" (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006, p. 558).

2.2.3.1 Belief

The first element is the *belief* the trustor has in the other party's trustworthiness. This belief is built, based on a combination of the trustor's innate propensity to trust and their familiarity with the other party's integrity, benevolence and ability; their understanding of the relationship between the parties; and their confidence in the likely actions of the other party (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006).

2.2.3.2 Decision

The second element is the *decision* to trust. Perception of trustworthiness is not enough, an individual may perceive another as trustworthy but decide not to trust them (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). The other party may be perceived as trustworthy in a particular context, but not in another (Krasman, 2014) – an individual may trust their supervisor to treat them fairly, but may not trust them with sensitive, personal information. Therefore, to trust is an active rather than a passive process, it requires a decision or an intention to trust (Mayer & Gavin, 2005).

2.2.3.3 Action

The final element is the *action*, and herein lies the risk. Action refers to the final stage in the process of trust that renders the individual vulnerable, there is no risk in believing a person to be trustworthy or deciding to trust a person if there is no resulting action that may make the trustor vulnerable to the reaction of the trustee (Mayer & Gavin, 2005; Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). The results of this action will feed future beliefs – trust is a feedback loop rather than a linear process (Korsgaard, et al., 2015) the outcome of the action, the trust, feeds back to the factors affecting perceived trustworthiness (see figures 1 and 2).

2.2.4 Development of trust

As Mayer's model of trust and Dietz and Hartogs's conceptualisation of trust both suggest, trust is reinforcing; the concept of trust implies an inherent risk (Rousseau, et al., 1998), to "trust is to be vulnerable to the actions of another" (Mayer, et al., 1995, p. 712), when that person behaves as expected this validates and reinforces the trust (Rousseau, et al., 1998). As Korsgaard *et al*. put it; "trust begets trustworthiness and trustworthiness begets trust" (Korsgaard, et al., 2015, p. 54). This suggests that trust is built and strengthened through repeated positive interactions, equally, a trust can be degraded and broken following negative interactions (Brower, et al., 2009). If negative interactions continue then individuals will look to exit the relationship. Over time, through the course of multiple interactions, mutual levels of high trust will develop or the relationship will fall apart (Korsgaard, et al., 2015).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a useful framework for exploring the development of trust (Ferres, et al., 2004). SET posits that if an individual (actor) treats another individual (target) in a particular way, it is likely that the target will reciprocate in kind. If the initial interaction is positive, it is likely that the reciprocal action will also be positive; conversely, if the initial

treatment is negative it is likely that the reciprocal action will also be negative (Cropanzano, et al., 2017) (see figure 3). Positive social exchanges tend to evoke feelings of obligation and gratitude and levels of trust continue to increase with each interaction as parties share information and influence and avoid abusing the vulnerability of the other party (Kidron, et al., 2016).

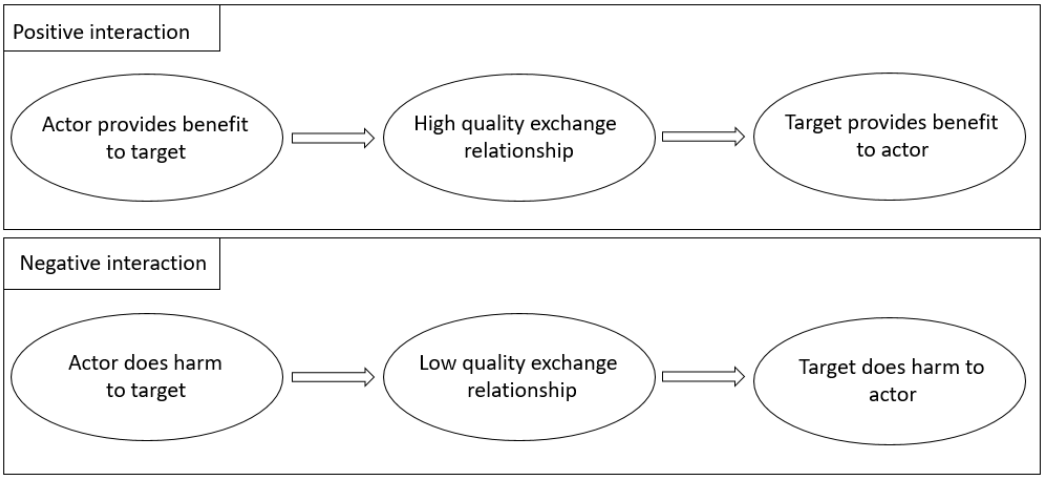

Figure 3: Model of Social Exchange Theory (adapted from Cropanzano et al. (2017))

In a new relationship, a logical assumption is that early decisions to trust carry the greatest potential risks, particularly if the trustor does not have sufficient information to predict the likely outcome of their decision to place trust in the trustee (Schilke & Huang, 2018). These early blind trust decisions are more strongly associated with the trustor's propensity to trust, whereas in better developed relationships, familiarity with the trustee's characteristics will allow the trustor to predict the likely actions of the trustee with greater accuracy (Brower, et al., 2009).

2.2.5 Importance of trust in the workplace

While the models of trust as both a concept and a process outlined above allow us to consider the modes by which trust occurs as an action and develops in a relationship, these models don't give an insight into why trust is important. The benefits of trust in workplace relationships cannot be understated. It has been suggested that when individuals in an organisation trust one another there is a sense that to take advantage of one another, to capitalise at the expense of others, to break the trust, would cause emotional pain and distress (Moye & Henkin, 2006). The presence of trust within organisational relationships has been shown to increase teamwork and cooperative behaviour (Korsgaard, et al., 2015); to

allow open communication (Payne, 2014; Nienaber, et al., 2015); to increase organisational commitment and citizenship behaviour; to contribute to long-term organisational stability (Moye & Henkin, 2006); and to improve task performance and improve overall team outcomes (Boies, et al., 2015).

2.2.5.1 Positive impacts of trust

Trust within teams

When individuals in a team trust one another the quality of communication improves, problem solving and innovation increases, individuals within the team are more committed and display greater citizenship behaviours (Moye & Henkin, 2006; Kidron, et al., 2016). These positive outcomes resulting from the presence of trust will also act to improve social connectedness between team mates, and to increase feelings of support and emotional stability within the team, which all act to reduce an individual's intent to leave (Ferres, et al., 2004). In line with the trust begets trust theory (Korsgaard, et al., 2015), trust between team members will continue to grow as they communicate, share influence and avoid abusing the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of their team mates (Kidron, et al., 2016).

Trust in management

As per Mayer's Model of Trust, when an individual can identify that their supervisor's actions are governed by an ethical code of conduct, they perceive their supervisor to be acting with integrity and, therefore, to be trustworthy (Kidron, et al., 2016). Individuals who have trust in their supervisor have been shown to be more satisfied with that supervisor and perceive them as more effective, they are also more willing to disclose information to their supervisor and to feel as though their voice is being heard (Nienaber, et al., 2015). Those who trust their supervisors are also happier in their jobs, perform better and have less intention to leave than those who don't trust their supervisors (Krasman, 2014). When supervisors trust their subordinates, they tend to show their trust by granting greater levels of autonomy, which in turn increases subordinate trust in the supervisor (Korsgaard, et al., 2015).

Trust in the organisation

Employee trust at the organisational level has been shown to increase organisational stability, organisational success and overall employee well-being and satisfaction (Zhang, et al., 2008). When employees have trust in their employer they spend less time worrying about job

security and less time monitoring the actions of their managers and supervisors and more time working on valuable activities (Grant & Sumanth, 2009). Employees who have trust in their employer are also more comfortable with change and less likely to oppose new HRM (human resource management) and organisational initiatives (Vanhala & Dietz, 2019).

While it is probably unreasonable for an organisation to anticipate complete trust within its staff, factors that impact trust within an organisation include transparent organisational actions and structures (organisational integrity), strong leadership (leader ability) and employees' belief in reciprocity (expectation of organisational benevolence) (Connell, et al., 2003). As integrity plays a primary role in perceptions of trustworthiness, highly formalised institutions, with clear structures and codes of practice, are positively correlated with higher levels of institutional trust (Kidron, et al., 2016)[1]. Equally, in less formalised institutions institutional trust has been shown to act as a substitute for formal structures in maintaining cooperation (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

Feeling trusted

As a static psychological trait trust exists within the individual (Rousseau, et al., 1998), but in order for the benefits of trust to be realised in workplace relationships, trust needs to be mutual (Korsgaard, et al., 2015). Trust is only mutual when both parties trust each other. Felt trust refers to the awareness an individual has about the trust another person has placed in them, their perception that the other person believes them to be trustworthy and is willing to be vulnerable to their actions (Chiu & Chiang, 2019). Individuals with lower levels of autonomy, felt less trusted and as a result had lower perceptions of supervisor trustworthiness (Rooney & Newby-Clark, 2009). This is in line with Brower et al.'s (2009) suggestion that a lack of trust weakens the bonds within the relationship.

[1] But is this trust? Is it the fear of the emotional distress associated with breaching a co-workers trust that prevents an individual from taking advantage of another or is it fear of the associated institutional sanctions that is acting as a proxy for trust? Is the decision not to breach a colleague's trust out of benevolence towards that person or is it to avoid punishment from the organisation? Are people in highly formalised organisations willing to take risks because they trust their co-workers or because they trust that the structures will protect them? While not the focus of this research paper this is a potential avenue for future research

2.2.5.2 Negative impacts of Trust

Too much trust?

While the benefits of trust at all levels of the organisation, as outlined above, are clearly numerous, are there instances in which high degrees of trust lead to negative outcomes? High levels of trust can lead to the development of biases, which can result in poor and costly decisions being made (Lumineau, 2017). High levels of trust have also been shown to reduce co-worker and subordinate monitoring (Langfred, 2004). When a supervisor grants an employee autonomy, this is indicative of trust within the relationship, the supervisor trusts that the employee will do a good job and doesn't require high levels of supervision and micro-managing (Korsgaard, et al., 2015). However, a certain level of monitoring is important to the supervisor-subordinate relationship as it allows for routine contact and frequent dialogue which is required for both maintaining strong relationships and improving work outcomes (Langfred, 2004).

Not enough trust

There is a sense of comfort and reassurance in the act of proffering trust to someone, and equally there is a sense of pride in being trusted. Conversely not trusting or not being trusted can result in feelings of fear, anxiety, shame and humiliation (Skinner, et al., 2014). While the presence of trust increases collaboration (Moye & Henkin, 2006), the absence of trust inhibits collaboration and innovation (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). A lack of trust can lead to a decrease in cooperation, when people don't trust each other, or feel trusted by their team mates they are less willing to collaborate and engage in interdependent work (Chiu & Chiang, 2019). It has long been argued that cooperation and team work are key to competitive advantage (Jones & George, 1998), and competitive advantage is key to long term sustainability (Porter, 2008), so it is logical to assume that an absence of cooperation would be detrimental to an organisations long-term viability (Mishra, 1996; Lewicki, et al., 1998).

Distrust

Whereas trust is defined in terms of one's confidence that a person's actions and intentions will be positive in favour or the trustor (Mayer, et al., 1995), distrust is an expectation that a person's actions and intentions will be negative towards the trustor (Lewicki, et al., 1998). This negative expectation increases the perception that to trust that person would be harmful, thus the trustor is unwilling to be vulnerable to the actions of that person (Bijlsma-Frankema,

et al., 2015). Early trust scholars, considered trust and distrust to be directly opposite to one another, high levels of trust correlated with low levels of distrust, and vice versa (Rotter, 1971; Rotter, 1980). However, while trust and distrust are related, it is not fair to say that they are opposite, a lack of trust is not the same as distrust, rather trust and absence of trust are opposite ends of one spectrum and distrust and absence of distrust are the opposite ends of a separate, but related, spectrum (Lewicki, et al., 1998). Distrust, in an organisational context, is generally considered to be an undesirable trait, a trait that causes increased suspicion, scepticism and increased co-worker and manager monitoring – all of which act to depress productivity and cohesion (Bijlsma-Frankema, et al., 2015).

2.3 Feedback

Feedback is defined as "the actions taken by (an) external agent(s) to provide information regarding task performance" (Klueger & DeNisi, 1996, p. 255). Feedback doesn't have to be formal, although it is frequently considered only in the context of annual appraisals, and only in a downward direction from supervisor to subordinate, feedback could be compliments from supervisors or co-workers on a job well done, it could be informal advice from a colleague about a better way to complete a task. Feedback doesn't even have to be verbal, being trusted with additional responsibilities or more challenging projects or assignments, could both be considered feedback (Tanner & Otto, 2016). Feedback is important because it provides individuals with information about how they are doing and it regulates an individual or group's behaviour in line with the expectations of their organisation (Eva, et al., 2019). Feedback is most valuable when it is constructive and unbiased, and gives the person receiving it the tools to develop and grow as a result (Conine Jr. & Leskin, 2016).

2.3.1 The importance of feedback

Feedback is not a nice to have, it is essential, a lack of feedback is considered a breach of psychological contract (Eva, et al., 2019), the set of expectations not written into any employment contract but none the less, expected by the employee in reciprocation for the work that they do (Robinson, 1996). Employers that do not provide feedback are not holding up their side of the deal. Similar to the use of Social Exchange Theory (SET) for examining the importance of trust in the employment relationship (Ferres, et al., 2004), SET is also useful in considering the importance of feedback in the same relationship, if feedback is expected then the provision of feedback will create an obligation on the part of the receiver to respond

accordingly, in the case of feedback, to improve performance in line with the feedback received (Eva, et al., 2019).

If utilised appropriately feedback has been shown to increase employee engagement and innovation by strengthening the social exchange networks between employees (Eva, et al., 2019); feedback improves intrinsic motivation and organisational citizenship behaviours, the forces that push employees to go the extra mile for their colleagues, the organisation that employs them and the customers they serve (Tanner & Otto, 2016).Feedback has been shown to decrease uncertainty, increase job satisfaction and increase overall organisational commitment (Zhang, et al., 2008). Organisations that ensure their employees receive feedback from a multitude of sources have been shown to perform at a higher level than those who do not place the same stock in the importance of feedback (Eva, et al., 2019).

2.3.2 Multisource feedback

The impact of feedback on performance has been widely studied in the context of HRM, particularly in terms of management and leadership development (Lam, et al., 2011; Moss, et al., 2003; Rasheed, et al., 2015). As previously outlined feedback can take numerous forms, but for the purpose of this study the focus will be on MSF. MSF, multisource feedback is often referred to in the literature as 360 degree feedback; multi-rater feedback; or full-circle appraisal (Nowack & Mashihi, 2012). As a process it involves collecting performance related feedback, from numerous sources in the organisation and external to the organisation, and at different levels within the organisational hierarchy, about a particular individual, to create a full-circle picture of that individual (Kanaslan & Iyem, 2016). Commonly, sources include a person's line manager, their direct reports, their peers and team members, internal and external stakeholders, including customers and clients, as well as a self-rating from the individual at the centre of the circle (Conine Jr. & Leskin, 2016; Nowack & Mashihi, 2012; Vilkinas, 2016) (see Figure 4). This feedback is aggregated into an anonymised report, which is then provided to the subject of the feedback (Vilkinas, 2016).

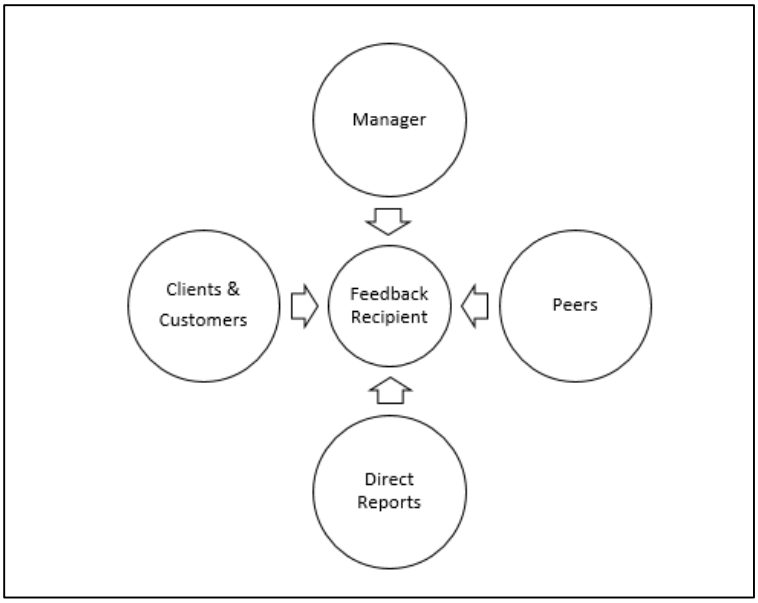

Figure 4 Multi Source Feedback Model

The strength of MSF as a tool lies in the fact that the feedback comes from a variety of sources, an individual can brush off feedback from a single source but if the same feedback is received from a number of different sources it is more difficult to challenge (Campion, et al., 2015). One of the particular strengths of MSF is the fact that feedback is given upwards as well as downwards (Brett & Atwater, 2001), in working relationships there are plenty of opportunities for managers to give feedback to those that report into them, it can be formal in terms of annual appraisals or performance reviews or less formal in terms of compliments or critiques during normal day-to-day interactions (Eva, et al., 2019). MSF gives employees the rare opportunity to give upwards feedback to those they report to, while remaining protected by the anonymity provided by MSF tools (Atwater & Brett, 2006).

2.3.2.1 History of MSF and its use in HRM

The use of MSF interventions became popular in the late 1990s (Kanaslan & Iyem, 2016) to the extent that over 90% of Fortune 500 companies have used these types of assessments, in some capacity, for management and leadership development, or appraisal (Conine Jr. & Leskin, 2016). Research into the efficacy of such interventions to improve performance has seen mixed results (Shipper, et al., 2006). Some studies have shown MSF interventions, under the right circumstances, to have positive effects on the subsequent behaviour of those at the centre of the assessment (Nowack & Mashihi, 2012). This is, in part, by increasing an

individual's self-awareness and highlighting certain blind spots, however, numerous studies have shown such MSF interventions to actually lower performance (Bailey & Fletcher, 2002).

2.3.2.2 Complexity of MSF

Why would an intervention, aimed at improving the performance of the recipient, have the opposite effect? The following section considers the complexity of MSF and the potential reasons for lowered performance following an MSF review.

Context

The purpose for which MSF is utilised is often critical to its success (London & Beatty, 1993). The two most frequently cited uses for MSF are administrative and developmental (Craig & Hannum, 2006; Hoffman, et al., 2012; Kim, et al., 2016; Campion, et al., 2015). When used in an administrative capacity organisations use the feedback as a tool to affect decisions in relation to compensation and/or promotion (Kim, et al., 2016). When used in a developmental capacity the purpose is to provide the recipient with feedback that will help them grow and develop within their role (Maurer, et al., 2002). Previous research has suggested that when MSF is used for administrative purposes it can promote game-playing, where colleagues may look to exchange positive ratings to ensure rewards, which could result in a you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours mentality (Kim, et al., 2016). Proponents of MSF as a purely developmental tool argue that feedback given for the purpose of evaluation will be less candid, more politically motivated and potentially less well received as the motives of the rater may be questioned by the feedback recipient (Campion, et al., 2015).

Culture

Culture will have an impact on the success of any feedback initiative, but MSF specifically, both in terms of the external culture in which the organisation exists and the internal organisational culture (Shipper, et al., 2006). Countries where high power distance is evident, give less credibility to upward feedback, employees are less willing to provide feedback, particularly critical feedback (Shipper, et al., 2006), to their supervisors and supervisors are more receptive to feedback from their superiors than their subordinates (Brutus, et al., 2006). In low power distance cultures such as Ireland (Hofstede, 1980), people at the centre of MSF reviews have less concern about the direction of the feedback and more concern about the content (Brutus, et al., 2006).

The organisational culture is also important, the use of MSF tools has been found to be most successful as a tool for development in organisations where a culture of learning and skill development exists and feedback is promoted and valued (Conine Jr. & Leskin, 2016). The importance put on hierarchy within an organisation is another cultural consideration, Seifert et al. (2003) found evidence that feedback from peers and supervisors is more positively related to behaviour change on the basis that more powerful people perceiving a deficiency in performance acts to increase an individual's effort to improve (Seifert, et al., 2003). Contrary to this, Maurer, et al. (2002) proposed that negative feedback from subordinates played a greater role in the feedback recipient's decision to set developmental goals than did feedback from peers or supervisors, on the basis that this type of feedback is more scarce than supervisor feedback and as such worthy of greater attention (Maurer, et al., 2002). The fact that studies have resulted in directly opposite, but still valid, results highlights the complexity of MSF as a feedback tool.

Recipient characteristics

Maurer et al. (2002) pointed out a number of feedback recipient characteristics that may affect the way in which feedback is received, namely

- Emphasis on learning goals – those who are focused on learning for improvement will have a more positive reaction to constructive feedback because their aim is to learn and improve
- Emphasis on performance goals – those who are focused only on performance will have a negative reaction to constructive feedback as their focus is more on immediate performance and less on long-term development
- Implicit theory of ability
    - Those with a fixed mind-set (Dweck & Yeager, 2019), who consider ability as finite and unmalleable will be less favourable towards constructive feedback
    - Those with a growth mind-set (Dweck & Yeager, 2019) who see ability as incremental will see constructive criticism as an opportunity to improve and increase their ability
- Self-efficacy – those who believe that they are capable of improvement and change will be more likely to accept constructive criticism
- Age – studies have shown older people to be less likely to take part in development initiatives and more concerned with the favourability of the feedback

In addition to these characteristics it is also important to consider whether the feedback received aligns closely with the recipient's self-rating, if there is a sharp discrepancy between the recipient's perception of their own performance and the perception others have of their performance this may make the feedback more challenging to receive (Jawahar, 2010). The recipient must recognise the value of the feedback and be willing to act on the feedback (Atwater, et al., 2000).

Anonymity

One of the key principles of MSF is that by maintaining the anonymity of the raters the feedback given is more accurate and honest (Brutus, et al., 2006). In instances in which the recipient knows the identity of the rater the feedback ratings tend to be higher than instances in which the rater remains anonymous (Ghorpade, 2000). Raters need to be assured of their anonymity prior to committing to provide ratings (Brutus, et al., 2006). While the majority of MSF tools promise the anonymity of raters, participants have reported fear of identification, which would likely affect the honesty, and integrity of feedback given (Brutus & Derayeh, 2002). In order to maintain this anonymity, best practise suggests using as many raters as possible, a minimum of four superiors, including the person's direct line manager, eight peers, and nine reports (Nowack & Mashihi, 2012). Practically, this is not always possible, particularly if a manager only has a small number of direct reports. It is probably fair to assume that the fewer direct reports involved in giving upward feedback, the greater the likelihood that those reports would be concerned about their anonymity, which could, potentially impact the information they are willing to share.

Previous research has also shown that feedback initiatives, aimed at improving performance, are most successful when the recipient seeks additional feedback to clarify the gaps in their performance and sets specific goals to close those gaps (Atwater, et al., 2000). If the feedback remains anonymous there is very little scope for the recipient to seek additional clarification in relation to the feedback. The use of a coach to help analyse the feedback is recommended, and can help provide additional clarity, but the use of a coach is not always feasible depending on the scale of the MSF initiative (Nowack & Mashihi, 2012).

Different factors contributing to success

Bracken, et al. (2001) considered the stakeholders within an MSF process and defined success for each of them and factors that contribute to that success. (Bracken, et al., 2001)[2].

While the factors of success for raters and recipients are relatively similar:

1. Rater:

   Success: the recipient accepts the feedback and their behaviour improves as a result, there are no associated negative repercussions, the working relationship is maintained or improved and there is a better environment for feedback
2. Recipient:

   Success: they receive fair, actionable and constructive feedback, the working relationship is maintained or improved, there is a better environment for feedback and they are given the opportunity to action the feedback and improve their performance

Some of the influencing factors are contradictory:

1. Rater:

   Influencing factors: they retain their anonymity and the recipient is accountable for putting the feedback into action
2. Recipient:

   Influencing factors: they have access to the rater for follow up, the raters are held accountable for the honesty of their feedback

As previously discussed, one of the primary principles of MSF is that the anonymity of the rater allows for more frank and honest feedback (Brutus, et al., 2006) but if the recipient requires access to the rater for follow-up this puts the rater's anonymity in jeopardy. Can an MSF review be successful in the eyes of both of these stakeholders if these two factors for success appear to be at direct odds with one another? This may be another reason that feedback recipients are more receptive to feedback from their superiors (Brutus, et al., 2006), it was previously mentioned that recipients value feedback from their line managers for cultural and hierarchical reasons (Maurer, et al., 2002; Brutus & Derayeh, 2002; Seifert, et al., 2003), but perhaps the fact that they are able to identify the source of the feedback from their

[2] The focus of this study is upwards feedback and for that reason only the rater and the recipient were considered. Full details of the definitions of success and influencing factors for all stakeholders can be found in Bracken, et al. (2001).

managers and follow up with them directly is another reason to place more emphasis on this feedback source.

These considerations may shed some light on why studies utilising MSF have often had contradictory findings (Bailey & Fletcher, 2002). It would be extremely challenging to control for culture, recipient characteristics, anonymity and delivery in a single study, and to ensure success for all stakeholders, but it would appear that all are important to the ultimate outcome of an MSF review.

2.3.2.3 Implementing a Multisource Feedback Review: Best Practise

Purpose

As discussed, MSF reviews can be used for both developmental and administrative purposes (Campion, et al., 2015; Kim, et al., 2016; Hoffman, et al., 2012; Craig & Hannum, 2006). It is important that all participants, including raters, recipients and managers, are completely clear about the purpose for which an MSF review is being completed (Lawrence, 2015). The suggestion being that if raters are aware that the review is for purely developmental purposes they will be more candid with their responses as they know the goal of the review is to help the recipient grow and develop (Campion, et al., 2015). It is important that the recipient is aware of the purpose of the review, this impacts the lens through which they view the results of the feedback, if they trust that the raters are providing feedback purely for their benefit and growth they will be less likely to question whether their motives are in any way political (Campion, et al., 2015).

Participants

In the case of MSF, more is more, best practise suggests using as many raters as possible. Using a minimum of four superiors, eight peers, and nine reports serves to get the most well rounded feedback report while protecting the anonymity of the raters (Nowack & Mashihi, 2012). There is a question about who picks the raters, Brutus et al. (2006) looked at the implementation of MSF reviews across six different countries and found huge variance in the selection of raters, in the countries where MSF was used primarily for development, namely the UK and Australia, the recipients had full control over the selection of the raters, whereas in countries that used MSF for formal evaluation, either the persons manager, or a third party (usually HR) had responsibility for the selection of raters (Brutus, et al., 2006).

Again the purpose for which the MSF review is being carried out will play a role in how best to select the raters. There is a risk that some participants, if given full control to select raters, will select only those raters who will provide positive feedback, particularly if the outcome of the review has any bearing on remuneration or promotional opportunities. Conversely, if the selection of raters is left in the hands of a third party or the person's manager, the recipient may receive feedback from sources whose views they won't respect and as a result, won't action (Lawrence, 2015).

There is also the question of rater fatigue, if an MSF programme is being rolled out widely across an organisations, either for developmental or administrative purposes, there is the risk that individuals may be asked to provide feedback for a number of different recipients (Lawrence, 2015). This can place an unwelcome burden on the rater and affect both the quality of their responses, as they may not be able to give as much time and attention to each survey as is needed, and their motivation to complete the survey if they see it as an administrative burden rather than a valuable opportunity to provide feedback (Bracken, et al., 2001).

It is important, therefore to strike a balance that aims to target as many raters as possible (Nowack & Mashihi, 2012), that includes raters who will provide honest, candid feedback that is valuable to the recipient (Campion, et al., 2015), and that avoids requesting feedback from the same raters for numerous recipients (Bracken, et al., 2001).

Feedback Delivery

The delivery of MSF results is critical to the success of MSF reviews. It is recommended that a facilitator is used to help the recipient read, understand and develop action plans based on the feedback (Lawrence, 2015). Feedback from multiple sources can add layers of complexity that make it challenging for an individual to assess on their own, the use of a facilitator can help recipients understand the relevance of the feedback and identify the areas for improvement and help with development plans (Seifert, et al., 2003). Supervisors who receive largely negative feedback from their subordinates show less commitment to their team following an MSF review, those who receive largely positive comments show greater levels of commitment, suggesting that good managers benefit most from MSF reviews (Atwater & Brett, 2006). This outcome is counter-productive to the use of such reviews for improvement. However the use of a facilitator has been shown to keep the recipient focused on the purpose

of the review rather than on threats to their own self-esteem, and has resulted in more positive behaviour change as a result (Seifert, et al., 2003).

2.4 Trust and Feedback – how do they interact?

So while it is clear from the plethora of research outlined above that trust and feedback are both fundamental elements of the employment relationship. Both have been shown to increase teamwork and cooperation (Korsgaard, et al., 2015; Eva, et al., 2019), both have been shown to improve operational outcomes (Boies, et al., 2015; Nowack & Mashihi, 2012) and the absence of either has been shown to negatively impact organisational commitment (Moye & Henkin, 2006). Very little research to date has looked at the how trust and feedback interact, or whether they interact. Perhaps they are two independent variables, both important to the employment relationship but unrelated to one another. This research aims to explore whether the presence or absence of trust within a relationship has an impact on upward feedback.

3. Research Objective

Previous research has examined the importance of both trust and feedback at all levels within an organisational context (Zhang, et al., 2008; Boies, et al., 2015; Korsgaard, et al., 2015; Eva, et al., 2019). Most commonly, the impacts of both trust and feedback have been quantitatively measured as an indicator of their impact on performance (Salamon & Robinson, 2008). Assumptions have been made that the anonymity of MSF reviews allow for greater honesty on the part of the rater (Brutus, et al., 2006) and that the presence of trust within an employment relationship increases a recipients acceptance of challenging feedback (Seifert, et al., 2003). Much of the research into the effectiveness of MSF reviews focus on the impact the feedback has on the behaviour of the recipient (Conine Jr. & Leskin, 2016; Campion, et al., 2015; Hoffman, et al., 2012), but very little attention has been given to the impact that providing upwards feedback has on the rater, even the studies reporting on the impact of upwards feedback focus on the recipient (Atwater, et al., 2000; Reilly, et al., 1996; Walker & Smither, 1999) . There is also a dearth of research exploring the direct impact that trust has on an individual's feedback as part of an MSF review.

The goal of this research project is to explore and understand the impact that trust, in an employment relationship, has on the provision of upwards feedback as part of a MSF review in an Irish HEI. The objective is to explore, through participant interviews, people's understanding of trust and their perception of trust within their employment relationship. The research aims to discover how trust manifests in a subordinate-superior relationship from the subordinates perspective and to explore whether the presence or absence of trust, as perceived by the individual had any impact on the provision of upward feedback as part of an MSF review.

3.1 Research Questions

Some of the specific questions that will be explored include:

1. How an employee perceives the presence of trust in their relationship with their supervisor?
2. Does the presence of trust in a relationship lead to more open and honest feedback as suggested by Payne (2014) and Nienaber et al (2015)?

3. Does the anonymity of the MSF tool allow for more open and honest feedback as suggested by Brutus et al (2006)?
4. Does the presence of trust in a relationship give an employee the perception that their supervisor will more readily accept challenging feedback as indicated by Seifert et al (2003)?

It is hoped that this project will go some way towards addressing the lack of research focusing on the feelings and perspectives of the raters in MSF reviews and will give consideration to the impact trust has on the feedback provided in MSF reviews.

4. Methodology

4.1 Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of the research objectives, qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine the relationship between trust and feedback (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The decision to conduct qualitative interviews was two-fold, firstly much of the existing research on both trust and feedback, including MSF, is quantitative in nature, looking to objectively measure the impact of trust or feedback on a desired outcome, often performance (Boies, et al., 2015; Kim, et al., 2016; Sedikides, et al., 2016; Chiu & Chiang, 2019; Eva, et al., 2019), the use of qualitative interviews will allow for more in depth explorations (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007) of individual perceptions of trust and whether these perceptions impact upward feedback. Secondly, this research project is relatively time restricted and as such identifying a large enough representative sample for a quantitative study, who meet the critical inclusion criterion of having recently provided feedback as part of a multisource review, would be challenging within the allocated time.

4.2 Sample

As part of a recent management development programme, fourteen mid-level managers employed by an Irish HEI were asked to complete a 360-degree feedback review. Each of these managers has a minimum of two direct reports, this was a criterion for inclusion in the programme. An email was sent to each manager outlining the purpose of this research project and asking them to provide the names of the direct reports from whom they requested feedback as part of the 360-degree feedback review. Of the fourteen managers who were contacted, nine responded providing the names of the direct reports from whom they requested feedback, two responded but declined to provide the names of those from whom they requested feedback and three did not respond. These nine responses yielded a total of twenty-five employees who were asked to provide feedback to their managers as part of this process. Each of these employees was emailed an outline of the research project in the form of an information sheet (see Appendix A) and asked if they would like to volunteer to take part in the research project. Of the twenty-five employees contacted, fourteen responded to confirm that they had provided feedback to their supervisor as part of the 360-degree

feedback review and to confirm their interest in being interviewed for this project. Of the other eleven, five responded but had not completed the feedback review, three responded but declined to be interviewed and three did not respond. This sub-sample of fourteen respondents represented eight of the managers who took part in the management development programme. Ideally all fourteen employees would have been interviewed but given the limited time available and the difficulties encountered with interview scheduling it was decided to focus on one direct report for each of the eight managers represented by the sample.

4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Face to face interviews were conducted with six of the respondent employees, it was hoped to interview all eight but saturation was reached after the sixth interview. The interviews were semi-structured and each of the interviewees was interviewed using roughly the same interview protocol (see Appendix B) and the same open ended questions, some deviation from the interview protocol was required depending on the answers given to the questions. The interview questions were devised following a wide review of the available literature on both trust and feedback, particularly multisource feedback, in order to ensure that the questions explored the phenomena in question but equally, didn't ask anything that wasn't strictly necessary for the purpose of this project (Kallio, et al., 2016). Based on the interview protocol (see Appendix C), the interviews naturally occurred in two sections, one pertaining to the individual's perception of trust within the employment relationship and the second pertaining to their specific feelings about giving feedback as part of a MSF review. Each interview lasted between 20 minutes and 50 minutes. Consent was acquired from each interview participant, at the beginning of the interview, to have the interview audio recorded to allow for complete and accurate transcription following the interview. Given the sensitive nature of the topic at hand, participants were assured of their anonymity and the anonymity of any individual they mentioned during the course of the interview. Participants were advised before the interview commenced that they could withdraw from the interview process at any stage, they could decline to answer any question or they could request specific sections of the interview to be omitted from the final transcription if they were uncomfortable with having it included. Participants were asked again at the end of the interview if there was any section of the interview that they would like omitted. All participants confirmed that they were happy to

have all elements of the interview included in the transcripts but requested that any names be redacted.

4.4 Analysis

Once the interviews were fully transcribed verbatim, yielding fifty pages of transcribed text, the resulting data was thoroughly investigated. A deductive approach to theoretical thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The interview transcripts were coded and the resulting codes were grouped into related and relevant themes as per Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach to analysing the data was chosen as the goal was to address specific research questions, rather than a more inductive, bottom-up approach to the analysis which allows themes to emerge from the data without being driven by a specific question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This top-down, theoretical approach also meant that not all of the data needed to be coded, just the data of interest that contributed to the answer to the research questions (Creswell, 2007). Open coding was used, the codes were not pre-determined, but rather were elucidated from the interview data. Ideally the transcribed data would have been independently coded by a second researcher and separately grouped into themes. This would have allowed for a higher degree of validation of the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Francois, et al., 2018), unfortunately given the nature of this project and the fact that the research is being conducted by a single individual this was not possible.

5. Results

5.1 Sample Demographics

All of the interviewees were Irish, five women and one man. All reported to work in professional services or administrative roles. The average employment tenure was five years, with one having working for the institution for only eighteen months and another for over twelve years. Two of the six reported having only one direct line manager during their tenure with the institution, the other four reported having two or more direct line managers during their employment. All of the interviewees had taken part in at least one MSF review, most reported having taken part in more than one review, although only one had provided feedback to the same manager more than once.

5.2 Codes and Emergent Themes

From the transcriptions 447 text units were extracted, 111 text units related specifically to trust and 336 related to feedback. These text units amounted to particular phrases or sentences of interest within the text (Willemyns, et al., 2003). These text units were coded and grouped into themes. The coded text units pertaining to trust were grouped into two primary themes (the development of trust and the importance of trust) and four sub-themes (based in belief and based in experience and, security and motivation) and the text units pertaining to feedback were also grouped into two primary themes (original motivation and individual characteristics), these primary themes were also subdivided into multiple sub-themes. A final theme emerged based on the impression that each of the participants had on the process as a whole.

Primary Theme 1: Trust grows and develops

The majority of participants made reference to the fact the trust does not merely exist within their employment relationships, it is cultivated and grown based on repeated interactions. This was particularly evident for the participants who had the longest relationships with their supervisors.

"I don't think it's something that just happens. I think it's something that you learn as you work with somebody"

The development of trust was based on both experience and belief.

- Secondary Theme 1: Trust based on belief – this sub-theme was directly related to the participants' propensity to trust. A number of participants commented that they are generally trusting in nature and believe that their supervisor has their best interests at heart. Equally important was participants' perception of the benevolence of their supervisor, with almost half of participants mentioning the faith they had in the intentions of their supervisor and the belief they had they their supervisor will do what is best for their team.

  "You have faith in that person that they're not going to do you wrong"

- Secondary Theme 2: Trust based on experience – this sub-theme was related to time and repeated interactions. Those who had the longest relationships with their supervisors and worked closely with their supervisors were more confident in the intentions of their supervisor.

  "They know that they can give me a task to do and I'll do it"

Primary Theme 2: Trust is vital to a good working relationship

All of the interview participants commented on the importance of trust in their relationship with their supervisor, both in terms of trust in their supervisor and feeling trusted by their supervisor. The greatest indicator of trust within the relationship appeared to be autonomy, with most participants commenting that being given the autonomy to do their job and not be micromanaged by their supervisors, to them was critical and indicative that their managers trusted them.

"If they have trust in you to just do your own thing, it's a lot better way of working"

"If somebody is constantly looking at your work or looking over your shoulder that would be a clear indication that there is a lack of trust"

Trust in the working relationship acts to motivate people to go the extra mile and it offers them a sense of safety and security within their working relationships.

- Secondary Theme 3: Security – a number of the participants commented on the fact that trust gave them a sense of safety and security within their relationship. Trust empowered them and allowed them to do their role without the fear of repercussions, while still safe in the knowledge that they could approach their supervisor for help if they needed to.

  "You have the trust that you know that you can go and do stuff and there won't be crazy repercussions"

- Secondary Theme 4: Motivation – a common thread that ran through the interviews was that of trust as an intrinsic motivator, the presence of trust motivated people to go the extra mile and strive to impress their manager. While the absence of trust acted to demotivate people.

  "At the time that I felt trusted, I felt really empowered and motivated to work. And I felt motivated to do a good job and go the extra mile"

  "If it is someone who I am really empowered by because they trust me, I will want to finish that, whereas if not, I will be like, do you know what I'll hand that in as it is, it's fine"

Primary Theme 3: Motivation to request/provide feedback

While all of the participants confirmed that the purpose of the MSF review they completed was primarily developmental a couple of people questioned the motivation of their supervisors in requesting the feedback, was it purely developmental or were they partaking in the MSF review because it was expected on them? Rater motivation also varied, with some participants purely looking to provide helpful constructive criticism and others looking to take advantage of a rare opportunity to provide upwards feedback.

- Secondary Theme 5: Recipient Motivation – about half of participants were confident that the purpose for which they were being asked for feedback was purely developmental, their supervisor was taking part in a management development programme and was looking for feedback that would help them improve. Some participants, however, were under the impression that their supervisor was taking part because it was expected of them and not because they genuinely wanted to improve.

  This secondary theme can be further divided:

  - Tertiary Theme 1: Developmental

"I knew the reason it was being ask for was because my boss wanted to improve rather than it was being forced upon him"

- Tertiary Theme 2: Optical

  "I think it was to be seen to be seeking feedback for development"

- Secondary Theme 6: Rater Motivation – rater motivation varied widely, those who had trust in their supervisor and trust in their supervisors motivations were happy to be asked for feedback and were committed to providing honest and constructive feedback. Those who questioned their supervisor's motivation, or lacked trust in their supervisor were more cautious and more concerned about being identified. Regardless of the underlying motivation, the majority of interview participants commented on the fact that giving upwards feedback as part of an MSF review was a unique opportunity, one that they didn't want to waste.

  This secondary theme can be further divided:

  - Tertiary Theme 3: Desire to help

    "I tried to think of as much as I could to give the best feedback there was"

  - Tertiary Theme 4: Self-preservation

    "If I brought up something specific then I know that that's kind of sacrificing that anonymity"

  - Tertiary Theme 5: Opportunity

    "I thought it would be my one opportunity to give feedback and I wanted to use the opportunity, I didn't want to waste it."

Primary Theme 4: Characteristics of the rater and the recipient

It was clear that the characteristics of the rater and their perception of the recipient influenced the feedback they provided. Some of the raters were inherently more trusting and more open with their feedback whereas some of the raters were very conscious of the way the recipient would react to the feedback based on their familiarity with the recipient.

- Secondary Theme 7: Recipient Characteristics – some of the raters were very aware of the way in which the recipient handled feedback in general and as such were conscious of this when formulating their feedback.

"I know how my manager reacts to criticism, they don't necessarily take criticism very well"

Some raters were also conscious of the seniority of the person to whom they were providing feedback and the risk they were taking if they provided overly negative feedback.

"Writing feedback about somebody who has the potential to fire you is going to be nerve-wrecking"

- Secondary Theme 8: Rater Characteristics – the raters differed in terms of their willingness to give open and honest feedback.

  "I'm quite a sensitive person as well so I wouldn't want to write something that I know would upset someone"

  "Less concerned about their reaction and more concerned that this was helpful feedback"

The majority of raters also commented on the importance of timing when it came to giving the feedback. The importance of not leaving the feedback until the last minute, or completing it when they felt overly emotional. Most commented that they returned to the feedback numerous times before submitting it and that it changed with each revisit.

"I am very aware that depending on my mood I could write completely different feedback or depending on what interaction I have had with them recently"

- Secondary Theme 9: Team Characteristics – the size of the team and the length of time a person had worked with their supervisor played a big role in the feedback that they gave. The smaller the team, the more concerned the participants were of being identified. The longer that the participants had worked with their supervisors the more conscious they were of wording the feedback in such a way so as not to be identified.

Primary Theme 5: Rater Impression of MSF Process and Outcome

The impression that raters had following the completion of the process was largely influenced by their motivation to complete the feedback. Those who approached the review as an opportunity to help their supervisor improve, and who saw their manager reflect on the feedback they received had a much more positive impression of the overall outcome over those who saw the process either as a "tick the box" exercise or were fearful of the

repercussions. Those who approached the process with low expectations of any resulting change, and saw those low expectations realised, were relatively neutral about the whole process.

- Secondary Theme 10: Positive impression

  "Maybe then it gave my manager more confidence in themselves"

- Secondary Theme 11: Neutral Impression

  "Don't think it has changed how I feel about them or how they feel about me

- Secondary Theme 12: Negative Impression

  "Wouldn't have ever thought that that person would have taken my advice"

5.3 Summary of findings

Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Operational Definition	Typical Text Unit
Trust grows and develops	Trust based on belief	Trust develops through the belief and faith an individual has in the intentions of others	have faith in that person
			they have your best interests in mind
			faith they place in you is well founded
	Trust based on experience	Trust develops through repeated interactions and familiarity with one another	they know that they can give me a task to do and I'll do it
			I don't think that trust is automatically there, you learn to trust somebody
			I know I can approach them at any time
Trust is vital to a good working relationship	Security	The presence of trust in a relationship allows people to feel safe and secure.	you know that they have your back, they will stand up for you
			nothing to worry about
			you know that you can go and do stuff and there won't be crazy repercussions
	Motivator	Trust is an intrinsic motivator that acts to encourage people to do a good job, to go the extra mile.	I felt really empowered and motivated to work
			want to do a good job, I want to impress them
			It's empowering, you feel more capable of doing a better job
Motivation	Recipient Motivation	The raters understanding of why the individual took part in the MSF review	developmental review, wanted to improve
			to be seen to be seeking feedback for development
			learn and develop
	Rater Motivation	The rater's reasons for providing the feedback	unique opportunity, first time I have been asked to give feedback to a manager
			you want to do a good job for them and give the best feedback
			one of the only opportunities to give feedback and I hoped it would change some behaviours
Characteristics	Recipient Characteristics	The rater's understanding of the recipient and how they would take the feedback	very confident, sometimes feedback is like water off a ducks back
			somebody who has the potential to fire you
			they would be very sensitive

	Rater Characteristics	The characteristics of the rater and how that impacted the feedback they gave	I would have been a little bit braver, it is difficult to give this kind of feedback face to face
			we have quite an open relationship, I would be happy to sit down with my manager and discuss the feedback
			I'm quite a sensitive person, I wouldn't want to write something that I know would upset someone
	Team Characteristics	The size and make-up of the team and how that impacted the feedback given	more people that do it, the more diluted it is and the stronger the level of anonymity
			still aware of how many people are doing it and that it is colour coded
			when it comes to a smaller team you know, you're still trusting but you are aware who might have said that
Rater Impression of MSF Process and Outcome	Positive	Raters who felt positively about the MSF process	it's good if you trust your manager/supervisor and you know that they are going to take the feedback well
			gave my manager more confidence in themselves and that kind of you know boosted their confidence
			I have changed, we've both changed
	Neutral	Raters who felt neither positive or negative about the MSF process	would be a bit more cynical but I probably would approach it the same way
			it didn't really affect the relationship, working relationship or anything like that
			manager has stayed very consistent which is good, so I couldn't say 'oh since I've said this now something has changed'
	Negative	Raters who felt negatively about the MSF Process	the expectations were low of what the outcome would be
			Probably didn't have hugely high expectations of there being many changes
			it is also a shame but I am not at all surprised

Figure 5: Summary of results - Primary themes, sub-themes, operational definitions and typical text units

Thematic maps showing the interactions between the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data can be seen in Figures 6, 7 and 7.

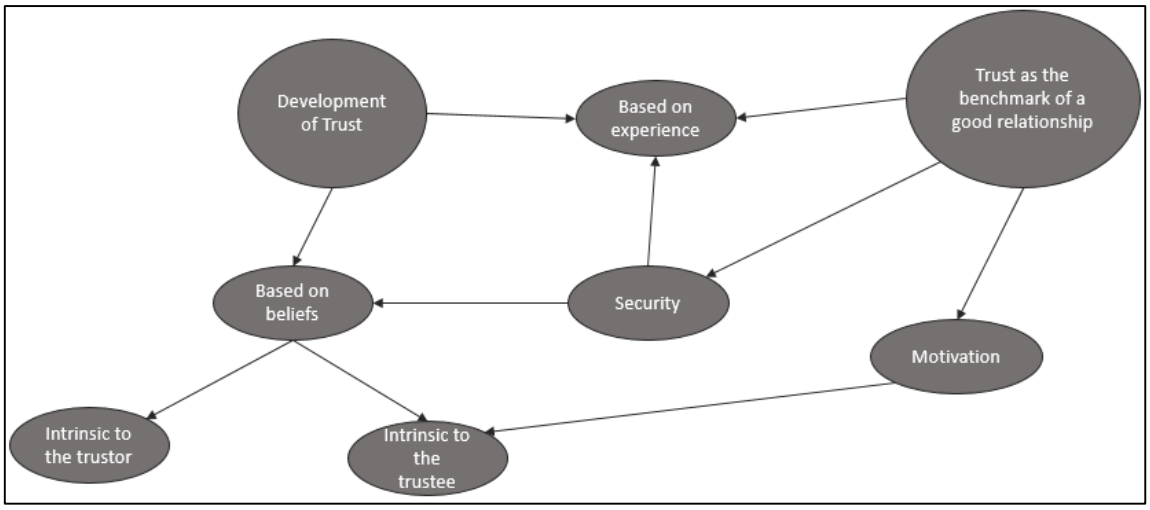

Figure 6: Interactions of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary themes relating to Trust

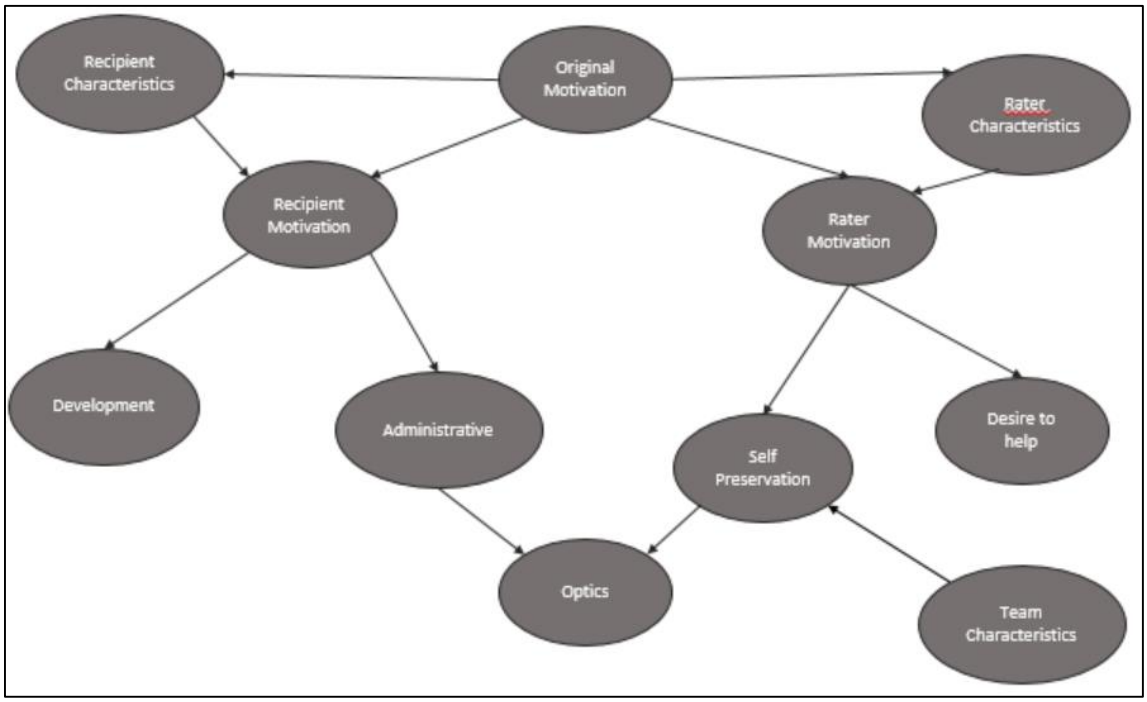

Figure 7: Interactions of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary themes relating to Feedback

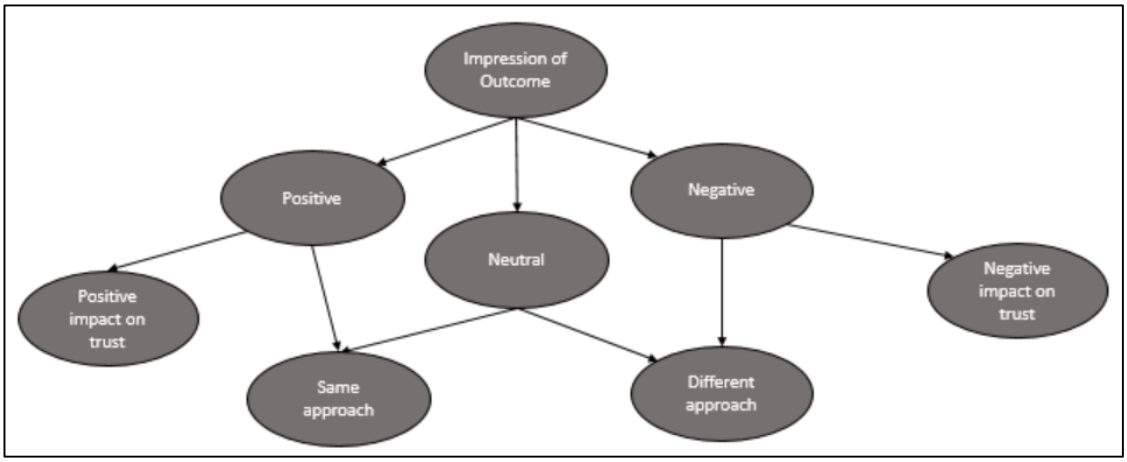

Figure 8: Rater perception of the outcome of the MSF process

6. Discussion

6.1 Research Questions Answered

This research project aimed to explore a number of questions:

1. How an employee perceives the presence of trust in their relationship with their supervisor?

   Primary themes 1 and 2 go some way towards answering this question. It is clear that the participants of this study are aware of the presence or absence of trust in their relationship with their supervisors. Participants all agreed that trust develops with time, but that their own characteristics, as well as those of their supervisor have a strong impact on the development of that trust. For most participants, autonomy was evidence that their supervisor trusted them. Being trusted by their supervisors gave most participants a feeling of safety.

2. Does the presence of trust in a relationship lead to more open and honest feedback as suggested by Payne (2014) and Nienaber et al (2015)?

   While it was clear that participants who trusted their supervisors were happier providing feedback, even critical feedback, more important than trust in the relationship was trust in the motivation of the recipient (see secondary theme 5). Those who felt that their supervisors were requesting feedback for self-improvement and development were more willing to be honest in their feedback than those who felt their supervisor was partaking because it was expected of them.

3. Does the anonymity of the MSF tool allow for more open and honest feedback as suggested by Brutus et al (2006)?

   While the majority of participants trusted that their names wouldn't be directly associated with the feedback in the final report provided to their supervisor, they weren't confident that the feedback was completely anonymous. It was clear that two factors played a strong role in the feedback that the participants chose to share; the first was the size of the team, (see secondary theme 9), the second was how specific they were willing to be with their feedback, (see tertiary theme 4). The majority of participants commented that due to the size of the team reporting into their supervisor they were not convinced that

the qualitative feedback they provided would be completely anonymous. Most participants were less willing to provide overly specific qualitative feedback for the same reason, they felt it was likely they would be identified from it. Both of these factors were particularly influential for participants who had the longest working relationships with their supervisors.

4. Does the presence of trust in a relationship give an employee the perception that their supervisor will more readily accept challenging feedback as indicated by Seifert et al (2003)?

   While trust was important in terms of the participants' perception of how well their supervisors would accept the feedback, again rater motivation appeared to concern interview participants more than just the presence of trust. If participants were confident that their supervisor wanted to improve, and that development was the primary motivation for requesting feedback, participants were more willing to be critical in their feedback and more confident that the feedback would be more readily accepted.

The overall purpose of this study was to explore whether trust impacts the upwards feedback given in an MSF review in an Irish higher education institution. Based on the outcome of the interviews it is clear that participants recognise the value of trust in their relationships with their supervisors. This also aligns with Krasman's (2014) suggestion that trust is essential to strong employment relationships (Krasman, 2014). It is also clear that participants value the opportunity to provide feedback to their supervisors.

The primary themes that emerged relating specifically to trust within the employment relationships confirm earlier research indicating that trust does not merely exist within a relationship, it develops and strengthens through repeated interactions (Brower, et al., 2009), and equally negative interactions can cause the degradation of trust (Korsgaard, et al., 2015). It also became clear that, trust is indeed an active process (Mayer & Gavin, 2005) and it is contextual (Krasman, 2014). A number of participants confirmed that they trusted their supervisors in certain situations but not in others. They trusted that their supervisor had their best interests in mind in most instances but they were still cautious about being identified from the feedback they gave as part of their MSF review. Raters didn't completely trust that their supervisor wouldn't react badly or treat them differently as a result of the feedback, in line with Atwater and Brett's (2006) suggestion that managers who receive largely negative

feedback show less commitment to their subordinates following the feedback (Atwater & Brett, 2006).

The themes that emerged relating to feedback indicate that employees value the opportunity to give feedback. These opportunities to provide upwards feedback appear to be rare and when offered employees want to make the most of them. Participants valued the opportunity to have their voices heard, even if they were sceptical that the feedback would result in any marked improvement on the part of their supervisor. Employees considered their feedback carefully, either to avoid being identified from the feedback or in an effort to provide the most valuable feedback to their supervisors in order to help them improve in their roles. Given the time that employees took to consider their feedback it was clear that some were frustrated when it appeared that the feedback was disregarded. This frustration could be considered an example of a negative interaction that could potentially cause the trust within the relationship to be degraded (Korsgaard, et al., 2015).

While it was not clear from the analysis of the interview data if the presence of overall trust in the employment relationship had a direct impact on the nature of the feedback given as part of an MSF review. What was clear, was that motivation appeared to have the biggest impact on feedback, the rater needed to trust that the motivation of the recipient was purely developmental in order to provide honest and constructive feedback. The motivation and the characteristics of the rater were also critical. Those raters who approached the review with self-preservation in mind were also those most conscious of being identified from their feedback and they had the most negative impression of the process as a whole, with some even commenting that they would not be happy to take part in a future review. Those raters who trusted that the recipients wanted to use the feedback for self-improvement provided the most open and honest feedback and were most happy with the process as a whole. This surely indicates the importance of both recipient and rater motivation in completing MSF reviews. If raters don't trust that the recipient truly wants the feedback in order to improve and develop they are much less likely to provide open and honest feedback.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this research project was to explore whether the presence of trust had an impact on the provision of feedback. The results of this exploration highlight the factors that influence a subordinate's decision to trust their supervisor and the factors that influence the feedback they are willing to share.

Many of the findings relating to trust confirmed the findings of previous research; individuals recognise that trust is risky (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006) and that trust doesn't just occur, trust builds and develops (Brower, et al., 2009). Trust with one's supervisor is valued by employees and it is important to the overall success of the relationship (Krasman, 2014). Trust is also contextual, an individual may trust their supervisor in one instance but not in another (Krasman, 2014). This was clear from the interviews, participants stated that they trusted their supervisors, and they felt trusted in return. They valued this mutual trust but they still didn't trust that their supervisor wouldn't react badly to feedback or look to identify the rater from the feedback.

The findings relating to feedback also reflected previous research findings; participants valued the opportunity to give feedback and have their voices heard (Nienaber, et al., 2015). Participants recognised the value of feedback in their relationship with their supervisor (Eva, et al., 2019) and recognised the potential value of MSF reviews for performance improvement (Nowack & Mashihi, 2012).

Interestingly, the majority of participants were sceptical that their feedback was anonymous. Most participants felt that due to the size of the team and the number of raters providing feedback they would be easily identified based on their feedback, even those in larger teams felt that if they provided overly specific feedback it would allow the recipient to identify them. This finding is important, because one of the basic tenants of MSF reviews is that by maintaining anonymity the resulting feedback is more open, honest and objective (Brutus, et al., 2006). If the value of MSF reviews lies in the anonymity of the rater and objectivity of their feedback, but raters are sceptical of their anonymity, then surely this devalues the overall purpose of MSF reviews. Practitioners should approach the use of MSF reviews with caution, particularly in small team settings.

Another important finding, was that those providing feedback were keenly aware of the motivation of their supervisor in requesting feedback. Those who felt that their supervisor

truly wanted to improve based on the feedback they would receive were more likely to provide open and honest feedback and were less concerned about being identified from the feedback. Those who felt that their supervisors were requesting feedback because it was expected of them were more cautious with the feedback they provided and more concerned about being identified. Equally, the motivation of the raters also impacted the feedback they were willing to provide, those raters who approached the provision of feedback with a desire to help were less concerned about the potential risks of being identified and those who approached the provision of feedback with self-preservation in mind were more cautious with their feedback. This finding is important for those considering implementing MSF reviews in the future. If the rater is not convinced that the motives of the recipient are in line with the purpose for which the review is being carried out, their motives in providing feedback will be out of line as well.

Based on the findings of this research project, it is clear that trust is complex and multi-faceted. It is difficult to show that trust has a direct impact on the feedback given in an MSF review but it does suggest that trust in an individual's motivation for requesting feedback is an important consideration. The review of the literature for this research project made it clear that both trust and feedback play an important role in the success of the employment relationship (Korsgaard, et al., 2015; Eva, et al., 2019; Boies, et al., 2015; Brower, et al., 2009). While it is difficult to say that trust directly impacts feedback, this project, in some small part, adds credence to the findings of previous research while contributing a new perspective about the potential impact the perception of trust plays on the provision of upwards feedback as part of an MSF review.

7.1 Limitations of the research

The sampling methodology for this project limited participants to those in a single Irish HEI, limiting the ability to extrapolate the results more widely than this setting. The sample was further limited to those participants who had supervisors who took part in a management development programme and were willing to provide the names of those from whom they had requested feedback. The fact that supervisors were taking part in a development programme was perhaps indicative of their receptivity to feedback and their willingness to provide the names of the people from whom they had requested feedback could be suggestive of their perception of trust in their subordinates. The fact that only those who

provided feedback were interviewed may also skew the data, perhaps a willingness to provide upwards feedback is indicative of trust within the relationship.

In addition to this, qualitative analysis allows for the exploration of correlation between themes but causation cannot be shown. The analysis of interview data does not allow this researcher to confirm that the presence of trust does in fact impact feedback but rather it shows that individuals' perception of trust may influence the type of feedback they are willing to share.

Qualitative data analysis is an active approach to synthesising results, the researcher is directly involved in the decisions relating to how the data is coded (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Hoover, et al., 2018). This can introduce bias. Commonly, this bias is reduced by having more than one researcher analyse the data and independently develop codes and themes, and then agreeing on the final themes and codes by consensus (Shipper, et al., 2006). This was not possible in this study and as such biases in the coding of the data is inevitable.

It is clear from the plethora of research looking at both trust and feedback within employment relationships that employment relationships are complex, while trust and feedback are important, it is not fair to say that they are the only important factors. This research did not look to control for the presence or absence of other factors such as team size, tenure with company, seniority of employee or supervisor, although many of these factors were discussed during the interviews and had a clear impact on both the presence of trust and the willingness of participants to provide feedback.

7.2 Future Research

It would be interesting to expand this research project across multiple HEIs or multiple industries. A mixed methods approach could be adopted using a scale such as Lau et al.'s (2008) 17-item scale to quantitatively measure participants' perception of their supervisor's trustworthiness prior to completing an MSF review and then interview them following the review. Doing this would allow researchers to compare the responses of those with high and low perceptions of trustworthiness scores. A similar scale could be administered to those who chose not to complete the MSF review to see if there is a difference in perception of trustworthiness between those who chose to provide feedback and those who opted not to. Including a larger sample size and instances where the MSF tool was used for administrative purposes would also allow for greater exploration of the importance of recipient motivation.

7.3 Implications for practitioners

As previously discussed, the use of MSF interventions has seen mixed results (Shipper, et al., 2006), this study indicates that there could be multiple reasons for this. For practitioners hoping to implement successful MSF reviews a few factors became clear during both the literature review and the interview data analysis:

1. The *purpose* for which the review is being completed impacts the feedback. Raters and recipients should be clear about the purpose for which the review is being carried out.
2. The *size of the team* reporting into the feedback recipient plays a role in how honest raters are willing to be. Individuals in smaller teams are more conscious of being identified by the feedback that they give. Previous research has suggested using a minimum of nine direct reports (Nowack & Mashihi, 2012).
3. Raters are also fearful of the *specificity* of their qualitative comments as they fear being identified from them. If possible raw qualitative comments should not be provided back to the recipient but rather general themes extracted from the comments.
4. The *timing* of the MSF review plays a role in the feedback given. Raters should be given enough notice that they are required to provide feedback and ample time to complete the review. Raters should also be advised of the approximate time the MSF review will take in advance of commencing to avoid providing rushed and unconsidered feedback.
5. The *outcome* of the MSF review, in terms of any impact or change the raters observe in the recipient plays a role in how they would approach future reviews. Recipients should be aware of the impact their reaction to the feedback will have on the motivation of those who provided it.

7.4 Reflection

I found the process of researching and writing this dissertation immensely satisfying and incredibly challenging. It required a level of time management and commitment I didn't think I could muster at the beginning of the process. I chose to focus on the use of multisource feedback tools and the impact that trust may have on the feedback because this is a topic of personal interest to me. I have been on both sides of an MSF review, I have completed reviews for peers and supervisors and I have been at the centre of a MSF review. When researching the topic I became aware of the lack of research considering the rater as the focus of interest. I also became aware of the number of assumptions underlying the success of the MSF review, primarily trust between the rater and the recipient.

I think that this topic is of great importance given the value placed on the feedback generated by MSF reviews, by both the recipient and the organisation in which the review is taking place. These reviews can be costly and time consuming to run and if the results are invalid because the motivation of the rater and the recipient is out of line with the purpose of the review then it devalues the process and the results.

The biggest personal challenge for me was preparing for and scheduling the interviews. This is a sensitive topic and I was nervous that interview participants would be cautious and guarded with their responses. If I could go back and repeat the project I would not have been so worried about the interviews and I would have started the process sooner.

References

Atwater, L. & Brett, J., 2006. Feedback format: Does it influence manager's reactions to feedback? *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* 79(4), pp. 517-532.

Atwater, L., Waldman, D., Atwater, D. & Cartier, P., 2000. An upward feedback field experiment: Supervisors' cynicism, reactions, and commitment to subordinates. *Personnel Psychology,* 53(2), pp. 275-297.

Bailey, C. & Fletcher, C., 2002. The impact of multiple source feedback on management development: Findings from a longitudinal study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 23(7), pp. 853-867.

Bijlsma-Frankema, K., Sitkin, S. & Weibel, A., 2015. Distrust in the balance: The emergence and development of intergroup distrust in a court of law. *Organization Science,* 26(4), pp. 1018-1039.

Boies, K., Fiset, J. & Gill, H., 2015. Communication and trust are key: Unlocking the relationship between leadership and team performance and creativity. *The Leadership Quarterly,* 26(6), pp. 1080-1094.

Boyle, R. & Bonacich, P., 1970. The development of trust and mistrust in mixed-motive games. *Sociometry,* Volume 33, pp. 123-139.

Bracken, D., Timmreck, C., Fleenor, J. & Summers, L., 2001. 360 feedback from another angle. *Human Resource Management,* 40(1), pp. 3-10.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3(2), pp. 77-101.

Brett, J. & Atwater, L., 2001. 360° Feedback: Accuracy, Reactions, and Perceptions of Usefulness. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 86(5), pp. 930 - 942.

Brower, H., Lester, S., Korsgaard, M. & Dineen, B., 2009. A closer look at trust between managers and subordinates: Understanding the effects of both trusting and being trusted on subordinate outcomes. *Journal of Management,* 35(2), pp. 327-347.

Brutus, S. & Derayeh, M., 2002. Multisource assessment programs in organizations: An insider's perspective. *Human Resource Development Quarterly,* 13(2), pp. 187-202.

Brutus, S. et al., 2006. Internationalization of multi-source feedback systems: A six-country exploratory analysis of 360-degree feedback. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 17(11), pp. 1888-1906.

Campion, M., Campion, E. & Campion, M., 2015. Improvements in performance management through the use of 360 feedback. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* 8(1), pp. 85-93.

Chiu, H. & Chiang, P., 2019. A trickle-down effect of subordinates' felt trust. *Personnel Review,* 48(4), pp. 957-976.

Chiu, H. & Chiang, P., 2019. A trickle-down effect of subordinates' felt trust. *Personnel Review,* 48(4), pp. 957-976.

Conine Jr., T. & Leskin, B., 2016. Developing emotional intelligence and conflict management skills through the 360 assessment. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence,* 35(3), pp. 18-26.

Connell, J., Ferres, N. & Travaglione, T., 2003. Engendering trust in manager-subordinate relationships: Predictors and outcomes. *Personnel Review,* 32(5), pp. 569-587.

Cook, J. & Wall, T., 1980. New work attitude measures of trust, organizational commitment and personal need non-fulfilment. *Journal of occupational psychology,* 53(1), pp. 39-52.

Craig, S. & Hannum, K., 2006. Research update: 360-degree performance assessment. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research,* 58(2), p. 117–122.

Creswell, J., 2007. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E., Daniels, S. & Hall, A., 2017. Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies.. *Academy of Management Annals,* 11(1), pp. 479-516.

Deutch, M., 1958. Trust and Suspicion. *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Volume 2, pp. 265-279.

Dietz, G. & Den Hartog, D., 2006. Measuring trust inside organisations. *Personnel review,* 35(5), pp. 557-588.

Dweck, C. S. & Yeager, D. S., 2019. Mindsets: A View From Two Eras. *Perspectives on Psychological Science,* 14(3), pp. 481-496.

Eva, N. et al., 2019. Is coworker feedback more important than supervisor feedback for increasing innovative behavior?. *Human Resource Management,* pp. 1-14.

Ferres, N., Connell, J. & Travaglione, A., 2004. Co-worker trust as a social catalyst for constructive employee attitudes. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 19(6), pp. 608-622.

Francois, J., Sisler, J. & Mowat, S., 2018. Peer-assisted debriefing of multisource feedback: an exploratory qualitative study. *BMC medical education,* 18(1), pp. 36-42.

Fulmer, C. & Gelfand, M., 2012. At what level (and in whom) we trust: Trust across multiple organizational levels. *Journal of Management,* 38(4), pp. 1167-1230.

Gambetta, D., 1988. *Can we trust in trust?.* 1st ed. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Ghorpade, J., 2000. Managing five paradoxes of 360-degree feedback. *Academy of Management Executive,* 14(1), pp. 140-150.

Grant, A. M. & Sumanth, J. J., 2009. Mission Possible? The Performance of Pro-Socially Motivated Employees Depends on Managerial Trustworthiness. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 94(4), pp. 927-944.

Hoffman, B. et al., 2012. Evidence for the effectiveness of an alternative multisource performance rating methodology. *Personnel Psychology,* 65(3), pp. 531-563.

Hofstede, G., 1980. Motivation, leadership, and organization: do American theories apply abroad?. *Organizational dynamics,* 9(1), pp. 42-63.

Hoover, S. et al., 2018. eaching qualitative research interviewer skills: A developmental framework fQualitative Psychology,or social justice psychological research teams. *Qualitative Psychology,* 5(2), p. 300–318.

Jawahar, I., 2010. The mediating role of appraisal feedback reactions on the relationship between rater feedback-related behaviors and ratee performance. *Group & Organization Management,* 35(4), pp. 494-526.

Jones, G. & George, J., 1998. The experience and evolution of trust: Implications for cooperation and teamwork. *Academy of management review,* 23(3), pp. 531-546.

Kallio, H., Pietilä, A., Johnson, M. & Kangasniemi, M., 2016. Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of advanced nursing,* 72(12), pp. 2954-2965.

Kamlet, M. & Mowery, D. S. T., 1987. Whom Do You Trust? An Analysis of Executive and Congressional Economic Forecasts. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management ,* 6(3), pp. 365-384..

Kanaslan, E. K. & Iyem, C., 2016. Is 360 Degree Feedback Appraisal an Effective Way of Performance Evaluation?. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences,* 6(5), pp. 172-182.

Kidron, A., Tzafrir, S. & Meshoulam, I., 2016. All we need is trust: trust and human resource management. *Team Performance Management,* 22(3/4), pp. 139-155.

Kim, K., Atwater, L., Patel, P. & Smither, J., 2016. Multisource feedback, human capital, and the financial performance of organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 101(11), p. 1569–1584.

Klueger, A. & DeNisi, A., 1996. Effects of feedback intervention on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin,* 119(2), pp. 254-284.

Knoll, D. & Gill, H., 2011. Antecedents of trust in supervisors, subordinates, and peers. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 26(4), pp. 313-330.

Korsgaard, M., Brower, H. & Lester, S., 2015. It isn't always mutual: A critical review of dyadic trust.. *Journal of Management,* 41(1), pp. 47-70.

Krasman, J., 2014. Do my staff trust me? The influence of organizational structure on subordinate perceptions of supervisor trustworthiness. *Leadership & organization development journal,* 35(5), pp. 470-488.

Lam, C. F., DeRue, D. S., Karam, E. P. & & Hollenbeck, J. R., 2011. The impact of feedback frequency on learning and task performance: Challenging the "more is better" assumption. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes,* 116(1), pp. 217-228.

Langfred, C., 2004. Too much of a good thing? Negative effects of high trust and individual autonomy in self-managing teams. *Academy of management journal,* 47(3), pp. 385-399.

Lawrence, P., 2015. A best practice model for the effective deployment of 360 feedback. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal,* 29(6), pp. 13-16.

Lewicki, R., McAllister, D. & Bies, R., 1998. Trust and distrust: New relationships and realities. *Academy of management Review,* 23(3), pp. 438-458.

London, M. & Beatty, R., 1993. 360-degree feedback as a competitive advantage. *Human Resource Management,* 32(2-3), pp. 353-372.

Lumineau, F., 2017. How contracts influence trust and distrust. *Journal of Management,* 43(5), p. 1553–1577.

Maurer, T., Mitchell, D. & Barbeite, F., 2002. Predictors of attitudes toward a 360-degree feedback system and involvement in post-feedback management development activity. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* 75(1), pp. 87-107.

Mayer, R., Davis, J. & Schoorman, F., 1995. An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of management review,* 20(3), pp. 709-734.

Mayer, R. & Gavin, M., 2005. Trust in management and performance- who minds the shop while the employees watch the boss. *Academy of management journal,* 48(5), pp. 874-888.

Mellinger, G. L., 1956. Interpersonal trust as a factor in communication. *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology,* pp. 304-309.

Mishra, A., 1996. Organisational response to crisis. In: R. Kramer & T. Tyler, eds. *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 261-287.

Moss, S. E., Valenzi, E. R. & & Taggart, W., 2003. Are you hiding from your boss? The development of a taxonomy and instrument to assess the feedback management behaviors of good and bad performers. *Journal of Management,* 29(1), pp. 487-510.

Moye, M. & Henkin, A., 2006. Exploring associations between employee empowerment and interpersonal trust in managers. *Journal of management development,* 25(2), pp. 101-117.

Nienaber, A., Romeike, P., Searle, R. & Schewe, G., 2015. A qualitative meta-analysis of trust in supervisor-subordinate relationships. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 30(5), pp. 507-534.

Nowack, K., 2009. Leveraging multirater feedback to facilitate successful behavioral change. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research,* 61(1), pp. 280-297.

Nowack, K. & Mashihi, S., 2012. Evidence-based answers to 15 questions about leveraging 360-degree feedback. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research,* 64(3), pp. 157-182.

Payne, H., 2014. Examining the relationship between trust in supervisor–employee relationships and workplace dissent expression. *Communication research reports,* 31(2), pp. 131-140.

Porter, M., 2008. The five competitive forces that shape strategy. *Harvard business review,* 86(1), pp. 25-40.

Rasheed, A., Khan, S., Rasheed, M. & Munir, Y., 2015. The impact of feedback orientation and the effect of satisfaction with feedback on in-role job performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly,* 26(1), pp. 31-51.

Reilly, R., Smither, J. & Vasilopoulos, N., 1996. A longitudinal study of upward feedback. *Personnel Psychology,* 49(3), pp. 599-612.

Robinson, S., 1996. Trust and breach of the psychological contract. *Administrative science quarterly,* 41(4), pp. 574-599.

Rooney, J. G. B. & Newby-Clark, I., 2009. How support-related managerial behaviors influence employees: an integrated model. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 5(410-427), p. 24.

Rotter, J. B., 1971. Generalized expectancies for interpersonal trust. *American Psychologist,* 26(5), pp. 443-452.

Rotter, J. B., 1980. Interpersonal trust, trustworthiness, and gullibility. *American Psychologist,* 35(1), pp. 1-7.

Rousseau, D., Sitkin, S., Burt, R. & Camerer, C., 1998. Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust.. *Academy of management review,* 23(3), pp. 393-404.

Salamon, S. & Robinson, S., 2008. Trust that binds: The impact of collective felt trust on organizational performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 93(3), pp. 593-601.

Schilke, O. & Huang, L., 2018. Worthy of swift trust? How brief interpersonal contact affects trust accuracy. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 103(11), pp. 1181-1197.

Sedikides, C., Luke, M. & Hepper, E., 2016. Enhancing feedback and improving feedback: Subjective perceptions, psychological consequences, behavioral outcomes. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology,* 46(12), pp. 687-700.

Seifert, C., Yukl, G. & McDonald, R., 2003. Effects of multisource feedback and a feedback facilitator on the influence behavior of managers toward subordinates. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 88(3), pp. 561-569.

Shipper, F., Hoffman, R. & Rotondo, D., 2006. Does the 360 feedback process create actionable knowledge equally across cultures?. *Academy of Management Learning & Education,,* 6(1), pp. 33-50.

Skinner, D., Dietz, G. & Weibel, A., 2014. The dark side of trust: When trust becomes a 'poisoned chalice'. *Organization,* 21(2), pp. 206-224.

Sztompka, P., 1999. *Trust: A sociological theory.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tanner, G. & Otto, K., 2016. Superior–subordinate communication during organizational change: under which conditions does high-quality communication become important?. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 27(19), pp. 2183-2201.

Vanhala, M. & Dietz, G., 2019. How Trust in One's Employer Moderates the Relationship Between HRM and Engagement Related Performance. *International Studies of Management & Organization,* Volume 49, pp. 23-42.

Vilkinas, T., 2016. Comparing multisource ratings: can I believe what they say about my leadership behaviour?. *Management Research Review,* 39(9), pp. 1105-1121.

Walker, A. & Smither, J., 1999. A five-year study of upward feedback: What managers do with their results matters. *Personnel Psychology,* 52(2), pp. 393-423.

Willemyns, M., Gallois, C. & Callan, V., 2003. Trust me, I'm your boss: Trust and power in supervisor–supervisee communication. *International Journal of Human Resource Management,* 14(1), pp. 117-127.

Yip, J. & Schweitzer, M., 2015. Trust promotes unethical behavior: Excessive trust, opportunistic exploitation, and strategic exploitation. *Current Opinion in Psychology,* Volume 6, pp. 216-220.

Zhang, A. et al., 2008. How do I trust thee? The employee-organization relationship, supervisory support, and middle manager trust in the organisation. *Human Resource Management: Published in Cooperation with the School of Business Administration, The University of Michigan and in alliance with the Society of Human Resources Management,* 47(1), pp. 111-132.

Appendices

Appendix A – Information Sheet

Trust and Feedback: An exploratory study of the impact of trust on upwards feedback in a Multisource Feedback Review

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand, why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

My name is Judy Walsh and I am currently pursuing a Masters qualification from the National College of Ireland in Human Resource Management. As part of this Masters, I am required to conduct some primary research for the completion of a dissertation. The research project I am conducting aims to explore, through participant interviews, whether the presence of trust in a supervisor-employee relationship has any impact on the feedback given, by the employee, to the supervisor as part of a multisource feedback review.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

Participation in this research study will require you to take part in a one-hour interview. This interview will be arranged at a time and location that suits you best and should take no more than an hour. In this interview, we will discuss:

- What trust means to you
- Your perception of trust in your relationship with your supervisor
- Your thought-processes while completing the 360 feedback review for your supervisor

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You have been selected as a possible participant because your supervisor recently requested you, to provide feedback to them, anonymously, as part of a multisource feedback review. I am unaware if you did choose to complete this feedback review, or the content of that review, that remains anonymous, the only information I have at present is that your manager suggested you as a person from whom s/he would like to get feedback.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary and that you have the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time without any consequence whatsoever.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

The goal of this research is to provide another lens through which to view the results of multisource feedback reviews. Often these results do not take into consideration the human relationships that exist between people and the impact that elements of these relationships have on the way that people choose to provide feedback. This research project aims to consider the perspective of the person giving the feedback and not just the feedback itself.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no physiological or psychological risks to taking part in this research project.

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

The details of all interviews will be kept completely confidential. Interviews will be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription. The audio-recordings will be stored in password-protected files, the file names will be coded so no participant names will be associated with the files. Interviews will be arranged in suitable locations to ensure the privacy of the participants and the confidentiality of anything discussed. Names and identifiable details will be redacted from any transcribed interview documentation. Non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings will be collected and retained as part of the research process.

HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in password-protected files on my personal U: drive until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legislation are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

The results of this study will be presented as part of a dissertation manuscript for the completion of a Master's degree in NCI.

For further information, please contact:

Researcher
Judy Walsh
Email:

Telephone:

NCI Academic Supervisor
Michael Cleary Gaffney
Email:

Telephone:

Thank you

Appendix B – Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. I have provided you with an electronic copy of the consent form but before we start I just want to run through it with you again and have you sign a hard copy for my records. As I outlined in the information sheet that I sent to you, I am completing a Masters and as part of that Masters I am required to complete some primary research. The aim of my research is to explore, through participant interviews, whether the presence (or absence) of trust in a supervisor-employee relationship has any impact on the feedback given, by the employee, to the supervisor as part of a multisource feedback review.

I have some specific questions to ask but I am interested in your experience completing the 360 feedback and so if, at the end, you have any additional comments to make please let me know. If you would rather not answer any of the questions that is fine, just let me know and we can move to the next question. Once the interview is finished I will transcribe it and delete the audio file. I won't include any names or identifying comments and the final report will only include aggregated data and themes identified from the interviews – essentially nothing you say will be directly attributed to you. I may use quotes for emphasis but again they won't be attributed to you. Is that ok?

At the end of the interview I will ask you for any additional comments you may have. I will also give you the opportunity to let me know if there are any elements of the interview that you would prefer that I didn't include in my analysis. I will ensure to make note of the sections you don't want included and when I am completing the transcription these sections will not be included.

Can I now get you to sign a copy of the consent form? Are you happy with everything I have outlined? Are you happy to go ahead with the interview?

Interview schedule

Demographic questions:

1. What is your role here?
2. How long have you worked here?
3. What age are you?
4. Where are you from?
5. How many people are on your team?
6. How many times have you provided feedback to your supervisor or manager as part of a formal 360 review?

I am now going to ask you some questions about your feelings of trust and feedback as they exist in your relationship with your supervisor – again if you would rather not answer any of these questions don't hesitate to let me know

1. What does the word trust mean to you?
    a. What does it mean to feel trusted by your supervisor?
    b. What does it mean to have trust in your supervisor?
    c. How does it manifest in your relationship with your supervisor
2. You recently gave feedback to your supervisor as part of a 360 Degree Feedback exercise
    a. Can you remember your initial feelings when you were asked to provide feedback?
        i. Nervous/excited

    ii. Anxious
    iii. Happy
  b. Why do you think you felt like that?
  c. Did you understand the reason you were being asked to give feedback?
  d. Did you spend much time thinking about the feedback you would give?
  e. Did you think about how the feedback would be received?
  i. If yes, do you think that influenced the feedback that you gave?
3. Are you aware that the feedback was completely anonymous?
  a. Did you trust that the feedback was anonymous?
    i. If not, why not?
    ii. Did it impact the feedback you gave?
  b. Did the 360 feedback process allow you to give feedback you wouldn't have ordinarily given?
  c. Was the feedback you gave your supervisor as part of this process new or have you provided the same feedback to them before?
  d. If new – was this because of the assured anonymity?
4. Did your supervisor share the results of the 360 Degree Feedback process with you/your team?
  a. How do you feel your supervisor felt about the feedback they received?
  b. Have you observed any changes in their behaviour as a result?
    i. Changes related to the feedback?
    ii. Changes related to the team?
  c. If you were to provide feedback about your supervisor again would your approach be the same?
    i. More honest/less honest
    ii. More critical/more constructive
  d. Has the provision of feedback changed your relationship with your supervisor? How?
5. Do you have any other comments to make?
6. Are there any sections of the interview you would rather I didn't include in my analysis?

Appendix C – Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Trust and Feedback: An exploratory study of the impact of trust on upwards feedback in a Multisource Feedback Review

Consent to take part in research

- I…… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves discussing my perception of the degree of trust that exists within my relationship with my supervisor and the impact that this trust had on the feedback I gave as part of a recent Multisource Feedback review.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by removing my name from any transcripts and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the researcher's dissertation for the completion of a Master's in HRM.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that I or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be password protected retained electronically on a secure network only accessible by the researcher and their academic supervisor until such a time that the NCI Exam Board confirms the results of their dissertation at which point they will be deleted.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the NCI exam board.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Researcher details:

Judy Walsh

NCI Masters student

Email:

Phone:

NCI Academic Supervisor details:

Michael Cleary Gaffney

Email:

Signature of research participant

---------- ----------

Signature of participant Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

---------- ----------

Signature of researcher Date