

The Effect of Perceived Management Skills on Trust in Supervisors: The Mediating Role of Supervisor Support

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the mediating role of supervisor support in the effect of management skills perceived by employees on the level of trust in supervisors. The sample of the study, in which quantitative research design was adopted, consists of employees in small and medium-sized enterprises operating in Kırşehir. Data were collected from 417 people reached by convenience sampling method through online survey. Smart-PLS statistical program was preferred to analyze the collected data. In line with the results obtained from the research, it was concluded that supervisor support has a partial mediating role in the effect of management skills on the level of trust in supervisors. Based on the research findings, it can be said that perceptions of management skills should be improved to increase trust in supervisors. In addition, it should be taken into consideration that perceptions of supervisor support will also be effective in this process.

Keywords: *Management skills, Skills, Supervisor support, Trust in supervisor*

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1. INTRODUCTION

To achieve specific goals, organizations need effective direction. Supervisors play a crucial role in this by systematically evaluating both internal and external processes and implementing necessary practices. Regardless of their quality, every decision made by a supervisor shapes the organization's future. Therefore, every organization needs competent and effective supervisors. The competence of supervisors can be gauged by evaluating their management skills. In other words, supervisors are expected to possess certain special skills such as technical, human, perceptual, and political skills (Nazari, 2018, p. 58).

Management skills refer to the application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for managerial work in a specific context, as demonstrated by work behaviors and achievements (Carbone et al., 2005, p. 28). These skills, when utilized by a supervisor to accomplish organizational goals, result in both economic and social value at the organizational level. Consequently, supervisors' management skills are externally manifested through their behaviors, influencing employees' perceptions of their supervisors. These perceptions play a significant role in the management process as they impact overall organizational activities. The social exchange theory, which explains the reciprocal behavior between an employee and a supervisor, has been used to study this situation (Stinglhamber et al., 2006, p. 443). This theory posits that an employee has two main social exchange relationships at work: one with their supervisor and one with their organization (Masterson et al., 2000). However, because supervisors are often viewed as representatives of an organization, perceptions about a supervisor may extend to the entire organization. This study aims to highlight the impact of a supervisor's skills and behaviors on both employees and the organization.

Drawing on Blau's (1964) study, which underscores the role of trust in social exchange theory within organizations, it is believed that employees' perceptions of their supervisors' skills can foster trust in supervisors. This sense of trust is particularly vital in SMEs, where growth-oriented activities are concentrated. In these smaller enterprises, trust forms the basis of internal social exchange relationships and is crucial in managing relations when establishing new collaborations. In other words, trust also influences the perception of potential benefits within networks engaged in collaborative efforts (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2007, p. 362). Supervisors have a critical role in promoting progress within an organization. While it's recognized that management skills can influence perceptions through various elements in an organizational context, these skills are also expected to affect trust indirectly through other factors. A study by Holland et al. (2017) suggested that supervisor support can directly influence trust in supervisor. Therefore, managerial skills may indirectly influence trust through perceived supervisor support. With this in mind, this study aims to explore the indirect and direct effects of management skills on trust in supervisor, as mediated by supervisor support, from the perspective of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) employees.

SMEs comprise 99.7% of all enterprises in Turkey, accounting for 71% of employment (TurkStat, 2021). Given their role in creating new jobs, adapting to changing conditions, and supporting economic development, it's clear that SMEs are particularly valuable for developing countries. The significant impact of SMEs on economic development highlights the significance of effective supervisors behind these statistics. The synergy created by combining the efforts of skilled supervisors and employees who trust and feel supported by them can enhance SMEs' quantitative and qualitative data. As a result, these businesses can succeed on an operational level and contribute to advancing the country's economy. For instance, Hayton's (2015) study on British SMEs suggested combining leadership and management skills with management practices can lead to improved business performance and employment growth. Based on these insights, this study aims to explore the indirect and direct effects of management skills, mediated by supervisor support, on trust in supervisors, as perceived by SME employees. While there are many studies examining the organizational behavior of employees/supervisors in SMEs, this study will contribute to the field of management by drawing attention to the fact that trust in supervisor is shaped by the perceptions (management skills and support) created by the relations between the employee and the supervisor. Theoretically, it is expected that employees will reciprocate management skills employed by supervisors appropriate to the organizational context, with perceptions of support and trust. In this regard, the study is thought to offer a new perspective on the understanding of reciprocity proposed by Blau (1964) within the social exchange theory framework.

In light of the above information, the general structure of this study is divided into four sections. First, literature studies on management skills, perceived supervisor support, and trust in supervisors were reviewed. In this context, hypotheses have been developed about how management skills may affect trust in supervisors and how perceived supervisor support may mediate. Secondly, the data and methods used in the study are explained. In the third section, the findings were shared. In the last section, the study's results, contributions, and limitations are discussed, and suggestions for future research are made.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Management Skills and Trust in Supervisor

The concept of skill was introduced to organizational psychology in the 1970s, thanks to the contributions of Gilbert and McClelland. They studied individual skills within the framework of organizational work. Mintzberg defined managerial roles in 1973 based on three functions: interpersonal communication, decision-making, and information processing. He also assessed these roles within the context of managerial skills. However, the term "management skills" was first coined by Richard Boyatzis in 1982 (Freitas & Odelius, 2017, p. 50). Boyatzis argued that skills are observable behaviors that enhance organizational performance and help reach target levels. This concept started gaining prominence in management during the 1990s, and was incorporated into organizational studies

(Montezano et al., 2015, p. 14). However, a conceptual consensus on skill evaluation has not yet been reached due to a lack of a universally applicable method.

Management skills are generally accepted to comprise three elements: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. However, most studies have not assessed these skills from a holistic perspective that considers the synergy of these elements. Instead, they have examined them in the context of each component (Brandão, 2007, p. 150). In other words, management skills were evaluated based on a single component without considering their synergy. Definitions derived from this perspective do not adequately explain the term 'management skills.' According to a comprehensive definition approached systemically, management skills can be defined as behaviors exhibited by supervisors in accordance with organizational context, resources, and strategy. These skills allow them to demonstrate their knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and the synergy of personal qualities, creating value for themselves and others (Freitas, 2016, p. 36). This definition suggests that management skills encompass more than the expected knowledge, abilities, and attitudes. They must also be linked to the environment and work context in which they are used. In other words, management skills should not only be understood as a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to carry out certain activities but also as the supervisor's job performance within a particular context, in terms of the behaviors they adopt and the successes they achieve (Carbone et al., 2005, p. 28).

Management skills are critical indicators of professional performance within an organization and can influence how a supervisor is perceived. Prahalad and Hamel (1990, p. 79) state that management skills bridge the gap between personal characteristics and organizational strategy. From this perspective, the outcomes, or achievements a supervisor produces using their knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward organizational goals allow employees to form opinions about their supervisors. Trust in a supervisor can be seen as one of these opinions. Supervisors with the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience are expected to be trusted in management processes. Conversely, it is widely accepted that the essential requirement for trust in someone is "competence." To earn the trust of others, an individual must be competent at the task at hand, responsible, and consistent (Asunakutlu, 2002). In organizational processes, trust relationships between supervisors and employees are built upon the supervisor's competence and behavior. In this regard, supervisors are seen as the architects of trust within an organization. Trust in a supervisor also influences trust in the organization as a whole.

Whitener et al. (1998, p. 516) stated that five basic behaviors affect employees' perceptions of managerial reliability: "behavioral consistency, behavioral integrity, sharing/delegating control, communication, and showing interest." These behaviors stem from the management skills that supervisors possess. Such behaviors translate management skills into economic and social value at the organizational level. Therefore, it is widely accepted that a competent supervisor should excel in four skills: technical skills, perceptual skills, human skills, and political skills (Nazari, 2018, p. 58). The

behaviors that convert these skills into social and economic value influence the level of trust in supervisors.

Given the above considerations, this study suggests that management skills may influence trust in a supervisor. Upon reviewing the literature on this topic, no research was reached that directly examined the relationship between management skills and trust in supervisors. However, there is evidence that competencies indirectly affect trust (Frazier et al., 2015; Nienaber et al., 2015). Some studies focus solely on communication skills, one aspect of management skills (Bialaszewski & Giallourakis, 1985; Yeşil, 2022). To address this gap in the literature, the first hypothesis of this research was formulated as follows:

H₁: Perceived management skills have a positive and significant effect on trust in supervisors.

2.2. Management Skills and Supervisor Support

Supervisors, representing the organization, are responsible for directing, evaluating, and supporting employees (Dawley et al., 2008, p. 238). Their supportive behavior contributes to achieving organizational goals. Managerial support is perceived by employees as a sign that their contributions are valued, their well-being matters, and they have their supervisors' backing (Eisenberger et al., 2002, p. 565). As per organizational support theory, employees adjust their behavior based on their perceptions of how much their contributions are appreciated and the treatment they receive when facing undesirable outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 504). Essentially, for employees to exhibit constructive behavior and increase their contribution to the organization, they need to feel managerial support. Moreover, supervisors' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, along with their ability to integrate these into organizational processes, translate into behaviors that align with the perceived managerial support. This is because employees often interpret their supervisors' behavior as either supportive or unsupportive (Guchait et al., 2015, p. 295). In other words, employees' perceptions of their supervisors' skills can influence their behavior, either constructively or destructively, based on the level of managerial support they perceive.

Knowledge, skills, and attitudes, often referred to as management skills, have the potential to influence workplace behavior, success, and outcomes (Brandão, 2007, p. 151). This influence generates economic and social value at the organizational level. In other words, applying these skills in the workplace can lead to professional-level performance (Durand, 2000). This performance is defined by the individual's behavior and the subsequent success and results. In terms of management skills and behaviors, supervisors with these skills are expected to engage in constructive behaviors that positively affect the organizational context, ensuring coordination. Supervisors understand that employees are a crucial resource for achieving success and thus strive to support them in demonstrating the necessary performance. Therefore, supervisors who are aware of and actively use their skills are expected to exhibit supportive behavior towards their employees, adding social and economic value to the

organization. However, when employees perceive their supervisors to possess management skills, they may become more aware of managerial support.

The management skills of supervisors significantly influence perceptions of managerial support. According to Neves (2011, p. 446), employees perceive increased managerial support when they view their supervisors as competent. A study involving 210 public employees found a strong correlation between competence and managerial support. Guzmán, Castorena & Solarte (2022) stated that supervisors play a critical role in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with their management skills driving economic development. Machado and Pinheiro (2012) found that audit support directly reduces situational stress in SMEs. Henry et al. (2017, p. 1) included managerial supervisory skills in their research and concluded that auditing skills used in supportive activities are more effective than those used in corrective activities. This finding underscores the relationship between a supervisor's supportive behaviors and skills, supporting this research's hypothesis. However, the limited number of studies in this area suggests more research. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this research is as follows:

H₂: Perceived management skills have a positive and significant effect on perceptions of supervisor support.

2.3. Perceived Supervisor Support and Trust in Supervisor

Shapiro et al. (1992) suggest that trust is formed in three stages. The first stage, termed "deterrence-based trust," is based on the sense of obligation stemming from uncertain outcomes. Next, in the "knowledge-based trust" phase, trust is built on information acquired through personal interactions. Finally, "identification-based trust" arises when the parties' intentions align, reflecting a belief in inconsistent behaviors. Likewise, trust in a supervisor is established over time based on consistent behavior and intention between the employee and the supervisor. In other words, during the orientation process in an organization, employees tend to trust their supervisors based on their titles, as they lack the experience to evaluate the consequences of their supervisors' actions. In the following processes, employees have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with their supervisors, building trust in their supervisors' knowledge. Ultimately, if experiences and observations align and it's concluded that supervisors behave consistently, trust is fully established. This process demonstrates that trust in a supervisor is a belief developed over time, based on knowledge gained about the supervisor through their behavior.

Managerial support is a perception that arises in employees based on their supervisors' behaviors. The concepts of trust in a supervisor and managerial support, while similar in their formation stages, are essential tools for encouraging employees to adhere to organizational rules, support organizational change processes, and demonstrate high performance (Arslantaş & Dursun, 2008, pp.

113-114). Therefore, understanding the relationship between trust in a supervisor and perceived managerial support is crucial.

Positive thoughts about supervisors from employees often translate into perceptions of support and trust. When an employee views their supervisor positively, these thoughts are expected to develop into positive feelings and behaviors over time. Thus, employees who feel supported by their supervisor will likely trust them. Perceived managerial support is the extent to which employees feel their supervisors provide support and encouragement and value their contributions to organizational activities (Babin & Boles, 1996). Employees who perceive their supervisors as caring and supportive will likely trust them due to their trust-inspiring behavior. Several studies support the correlation between trust in a supervisor and perceived managerial support. For instance, studies by DeConinck (2010) and Holland et al. (2017) revealed that increased perceived supervisor support boosted employees' trust in their supervisors. Conversely, Afsar & Saeed (2010) proposed that perceived organizational support predicts trust in supervisor. Considering the literature studies, this study thought that perceived organizational support may impact trust in supervisor. In parallel with this idea, the third hypothesis of the research was determined as follows:

H₃: Perceived supervisor support has a positive and significant effect on trust in supervisors.

2.4. Supervisor Support as a Mediator in the Relationship Between Management Skills and Trust in Supervisors

SMEs, defined as businesses that operate in developing and highly competitive markets (Jennings & Beaver, 1997), frequently face dynamic competition-related challenges. However, their adaptability makes them crucial drivers of national economies. Globalization has emphasized the need to downsize for increased production, efficiency, and profitability in post-industrial societies (Özdemir, Ersöz, & Sarioğlu, 2007, p. 177). Consequently, SMEs, with their flexible structures and high-tech utilization, have emerged as the key to producing higher quality, more diverse, and cost-effective products. Socio-economically, efforts such as reducing unemployment, increasing employment, and ensuring fair income distribution are beneficial. From this viewpoint, it is clear that initiatives aimed at boosting the effectiveness and efficiency of SMEs are crucial. This study discusses the role of trust in SMEs in order to foster new collaborative initiatives and to improve efficiency in workforce employment. The importance of trust in SMEs, which account for 71% of employment in Turkey, cannot be overemphasized. However, it's also important to acknowledge certain issues that SMEs face. A key problem is their tendency to focus on immediate and short-term solutions at the expense of comprehensive planning processes. On the other hand, access issues to technology and resources often complicate structuring internal processes (Fajardo et al., 2017). Trust can serve as a vital tool in addressing these management gaps. In this context, supervisors play a crucial role given their various responsibilities at operational and strategic levels (Fuller-Love, 2006). However, supervisors' roles extend beyond planning and implementing management processes. Their unique skills significantly

contribute to economic gains and corporate success (Hoffman & Tadelis, 2021; Audretsch & Belitski, 2021). Trust is vital in fulfilling these roles, especially when providing resources based on needs. In other words, supervisors hold a significant position in the context of trust.

Many management researchers posit that employees' trust in their supervisors is influenced by their skills that bring about positive changes (Conger, 1990, p. 50; Butler, 1991, p. 644; Davis et al., 2000, p. 573). If supervisors are perceived as competent, employees' trust will likely bloom as their expectations for a competent role model are met. Therefore, the management skills that supervisors possess can directly impact the level of trust employees have in them.

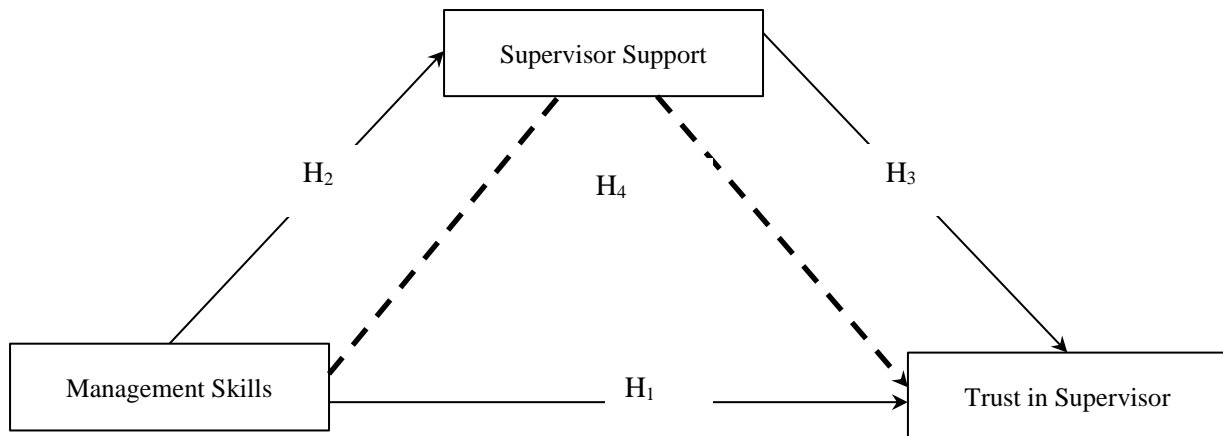
The feeling of trust requires the interaction of the characteristics possessed and the behaviors exhibited. Because the prerequisite for making abilities concretely visible is that they can be reflected in behavior. Otherwise, special effort is required for talents to be discovered by others. In organizational life, supervisors' skills need to be reflected in their behavior to facilitate their discovery by employees. On the other hand, Freitas (2016, p. 36) emphasized that management skills do not only mean having knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding management processes. He also stated that these should be displayed harmoniously with the organizational context, resources, and strategy. Because employees can develop perceptions and attitudes regarding the abilities they can observe, in this sense, in addition to the direct effect of management skills on trust, it can also cause indirect effects on trust through some behaviors exhibited. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) state that trust in the supervisor is strongly connected with attitudes and behaviors. They emphasized that the support perceived by employees plays a vital role in forming trust. Supervisor support reveals the levels of social interaction that reflect supervisors' ability to help their employees at work. Management skills displayed during this interaction process may have the power to shape trust in the supervisor.

This study postulates that managerial support may indirectly influence the effect of management skills on supervisors' trust. Drawing on the premise that trust is fundamental to social exchange relationships, the study aims to extend Blau's (1964) theory by demonstrating that perceptions of management skills and managerial support can foster trust among employees. Thus, the study seeks to uncover the role of employees' perceptions, beyond goal-oriented practices, in bolstering trust that underpins social exchange. Particularly in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) with high employment rates, understanding the impact of employee perceptions on trust in supervisors could guide managerial practices. A literature review revealed that there has been no research investigating the indirect effect of management skills on trust in supervisors via managerial support till now. The absence of such a study does not rule out its existence in the literature. However, given the need for further research on this topic, the four hypothesis of this study is as follows:

H₄: Perceived supervisor support has a mediating role in the effect of perceived management skills on trust in the supervisor.

As per the above discussions related to the research hypotheses, the research model, depicted in Figure 1, illustrates the mediating role of managerial support in the influence of perceived management skills on the level of trust in the supervisor.

Figure 1. Research Model



3. METHODOLOGY

This section of the research presents the study population, sample, data collection tools, and socio-demographic information of the participants.

3.1. Population and Sample

The research population comprises small and medium-sized enterprises in Kırşehir. This research targets businesses affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Organized Industrial Zone in Kırşehir. The aim is to determine the relationships between perceived management skills, trust in the supervisor, and managerial support, according to the views of individuals working in various businesses on the Kırşehir scale. The number of employees in businesses affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kırşehir is not available on the website. However, the Organized Industrial Zone's website shows that 1,750 employees work in its affiliated businesses. According to the 2022 Labor Market Research Result Report by the Turkish Employment Agency (Turkish Employment Agency, 2022), 29,168 people were employed with insurance as of July 2022. This number includes 1,750 people working in businesses affiliated with the Organized Industrial Zone. Based on this data, the universe of the study was determined to be 29,168 people, and the sample size needed to be at least 384 people, as per Coşkun et al. (2019). The research employed the convenience sampling method. To this end, the survey form, created via Google Forms, was distributed online to individuals working in SMEs in Kırşehir. The study reached a total of 417 people. Of these, 203 (48.7%) were female and 214 (51.3%) were male. Most participants, 140 (33.6%), had a high school education. The typical age range for participants was 18-24 (41.0%), and the majority (62.8%) were single. Additionally, it was found that 82% (345) of the participants did not hold managerial positions in their respective organizations.

3.2. Measurement Tools

The survey form utilized in this research is divided into four sections: socio-demographic information, management skills scale, trust in the supervisor scale, and supervisor support scale.

Management Skills: The scale was developed by Quast & Hazucha (1992), and its Turkish adaptation was made by Şekerci (2006). The scale consists of 34 statements and five sub-dimensions: taking initiative, taking responsibility, technical skills, qualitative skills, and others. The 5-point Likert scale is rated as "1-I Completely Disagree / 5-I Completely Agree". In the scale, "Our supervisor listens carefully to employees' questions and comments.", "Our supervisor directs employees to group work." There are expressions such as.

Trust in Supervisor: The scale was developed by Podsakof et al. (1990), and its Turkish adaptation was made by Turunç & Çelik (2012). The scale, comprising six statements and a single dimension, is a 5-point Likert type rated as "1-Strongly Disagree / 5-Strongly Agree". The scale includes expressions such as: "I am sure that my supervisor will always try to treat me fairly." and "I have a very high level of loyalty to my supervisor."

Supervisor Support: The scale was developed by Giray & Şahin (2012) and consisted of 11 statements and a single sub-dimension. The 5-point Likert type scale is rated as "1-Strongly Disagree / 5-Strongly Agree". The scale includes statements such as "My supervisor defends me against other people in the organization when I make a mistake without knowing it." and "My supervisor takes care of my general situation, such as health and happiness."

4. FINDINGS

This part of the study introduces details about the validity analysis of the scales, the structural equation model, and the effect size. Structural equation modeling (SEM), a multidimensional analysis method, has been utilized to scrutinize the data gathered within the scope of the study. Hypothesis tests were executed with the aid of the Smart-PLS program, maintaining a $p < 0.05$ statistical significance level. During the process of structural equation analysis in Smart-PLS, the research incorporated an exhaustive review of the scales and variables employed within the measurement model.

4.1. Measurement Model

The validity of the scales used in the research was tested using the Smart-PLS program. It's crucial that the scales' validity and reliability coefficients are sufficient for hypothesis testing. Factor loadings of the scales used in the research should be above 0.50. As stated by Hair et al. (2017), Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, Composite Reliability (CR and ρ_A) values should exceed 0.70 for validity and reliability, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value should be over 0.50. The scales' factor load values, validity, and reliability values are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Facto Loadings, Reliability and Validity Values for the Scales

Variable	Factor Loadings	Mean	sd	Skewness	Kurtosis
Management Skills Scale					
Cronbach's Alpha= 0.981; rho_A=0.9981; CR=0.982; AVE=0.615					
MS1	0.744	3.926	0.927	0.991	-0.992
MS 2	0.749	3.861	0.962	1.189	-1.065
MS 3	0.816	3.815	0.930	0.598	-0.827
MS 4	0.787	3.882	0.918	1.083	-0.979
MS 5	0.695	3.751	0.996	0.225	-0.783
MS 6	0.810	3.837	0.948	0.390	-0.804
MS 7	0.742	3.779	0.959	0.003	-0.642
MS 8	0.826	3.856	0.936	0.403	-0.801
MS 9	0.820	3.863	0.910	0.465	-0.781
MS 10	0.807	3.923	0.921	0.528	-0.846
MS 11	0.800	3.880	0.903	0.311	-0.762
MS 12	0.834	3.878	0.912	0.495	-0.803
MS 13	0.817	3.890	0.894	0.158	-0.693
MS 14	0.803	3.849	0.946	0.432	-0.819
MS 15	0.776	3.866	0.968	0.553	-0.892
MS 16	0.789	3.885	0.901	0.510	-0.818
MS 17	0.767	3.789	0.936	-0.228	-0.589
MS 18	0.706	3.954	0.862	1.120	-0.970
MS 19	0.713	3.938	0.860	0.928	-0.924
MS 20	0.824	3.854	0.927	0.373	-0.794
MS 21	0.780	3.882	0.891	0.718	-0.848
MS 22	0.754	3.808	0.960	0.173	-0.716
MS 23	0.772	3.849	0.913	0.718	-0.855
MS 24	0.784	3.832	0.932	0.591	-0.766
MS 25	0.811	3.844	0.928	0.243	-0.716
MS 26	0.805	3.928	0.837	0.304	-0.653
MS 27	0.748	3.916	0.884	1.060	-0.942
MS 28	0.799	3.902	0.907	0.466	-0.811
MS 29	0.755	3.885	0.885	0.613	-0.815
MS 30	0.819	3.823	0.983	0.506	-0.824
MS 31	0.789	3.866	0.927	0.678	-0.835
MS 32	0.788	3.818	0.952	0.250	-0.732
MS 33	0.805	3.866	0.919	0.641	-0.827
MS 34	0.812	3.791	0.988	-0.091	-0.636
Trust in Manager Scale					
Cronbach's Alpha= 0.911; rho_A=0.911; CR=0.934; AVE=0.737; WIF=3.810					
TM1	0.834	3.758	1.044	0.501	-0.936
TM2	0.860	3.779	1.045	0.344	-0.901
TM3	0.875	3.743	1.008	0.409	-0.879
TM4	0.876	3.743	0.996	0.544	-0.871
TM5	0.848	3.775	0.988	0.609	-0.884

Table 1 (Continued)

Variable	Factor Loadings	Mean	sd	Skewness	Kurtosis
Manager Support Scale Cronbach's Alpha= 0.949; rho_A=0.950; CR=0.956; AVE=0.664; WIF=1.000					
Msup1	0.738	3.717	0.970	0.290	-0.720
Msup 2	0.808	3.758	0.950	0.764	-0.913
Msup 3	0.841	3.779	0.957	0.952	-0.964
Msup 4	0.815	3.801	0.945	0.453	-0.808
Msup 5	0.825	3.859	0.925	0.629	-0.847
Msup 6	0.848	3.710	1.011	0.131	-0.779
Msup 7	0.792	3.782	0.959	0.762	-0.929
Msup 8	0.834	3.811	0.950	0.553	-0.844
Msup 9	0.824	3.758	0.983	0.668	-0.930
Msup 10	0.842	3.743	1.003	0.220	-0.770
Msup 11	0.792	3.719	1.006	0.228	-0.776

MS= Management Skills; TM= Trust in the manager; MSup=Manager Support; CR= Composite Reliability; AVE= Average Variance Extracted

Table 1 presents the results regarding reliability, validity, and confirmatory factor analysis. The 6th statement from the Trust in Manager Scale was excluded from the analysis due to insufficient factor loading, which affected the validity results. Based on the values in Table 1, it can be inferred that the scales used in the research are both valid and reliable. Additionally, the sample appears to be normally distributed as the kurtosis and skewness coefficients fall within the range of +1.96 and -1.96 (Hair et al., 2017).

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values obtained from the analysis are less than 5. Hair et al. (2017) state that a VIF value below five doesn't cause multicollinearity issues. Alongside the validity values in Table 1, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is used to calculate differences between scales. This criterion was developed by Fornell and Larcker (Yıldız, 2021). In addition, Henseler et al. (2015) proposed a new discriminant validity, Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT), instead of the Fornell-Larcker criterion. According to this view, HTMT values above 0.90 reveal discrimination problems.

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values

Fornell-Larcker Criterion				Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)			
	Msup	TM	MS		Msup	TM	MS
Msup	0.815	-	-	Msup	-	-	-
TM	0.812	0.859	-	TM	0.873	-	-
MS	0.859	0.807	0.785	MS	0.889	0.852	-

MS= Management Skills; TM= Trust in the manager; MSup=Manager Support

The scales used in the research also provide discriminant validity of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Structural equation modeling was applied since the

relevant values were found suitable for analysis. Apart from the appropriate analyses, R^2 and Q^2 values for the scales used within the scope of the research were examined. According to Sarstedt et al. (2014), the Q^2 value above zero is essential for the quality and measurability of the scales. Table 3 contains the relevant values.

Table 3. R^2 and Q^2 Test Results

	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Q^2
Msup	0.738	0.737	0.486
TM	0.705	0.704	0.515

SM= Trust in the supervisor; SSup=Supervisor Support

As shown in Table 3, R^2 values exceed 0.50 and Q^2 values are positive. According to literature, an R^2 coefficient between 0.25 and 0.50 is seen as weak, 0.50 and 0.75 is medium, and anything above 0.75 is a strong explanatory ratio. However, these assessments should also consider disciplinary conditions. Some fields view a 10% disclosure rate as very strong (Yıldız, 2021). The f^2 coefficient is another measure of effect size, with values presented in Table 4.

Table 4. f^2 Test Results

	SSup	SM	MS
SSup	-	0.184	-
SM	-	-	-
MS	2.810	0.154	-

MS= Management Skills; SM= Trust in supervisor; SSup=Supervisor Support

The f^2 coefficients used in calculating the effect size are provided in Table 4. As per Cohen (1998), an f^2 coefficient of 0.02 or more is considered a low effect, 0.15 or more is considered a medium effect, and 0.35 or more is considered a high effect. The effect size ratios in Table 4 indicate a sufficient level.

4.2. Structural Model-Hypothesis Tests

In this part of the research, the relationship between the variables in the research model was examined using path analysis. Path analysis was performed with a 5000-sample bootstrap in the Smart PLS program. T-tests and p-values were examined to determine whether the β values obtained from the analysis were significant at the 5% significance level. Figure 2 shows the path diagram of the structural equation model.

Figure 2. Structural Equation Model Path Diagram

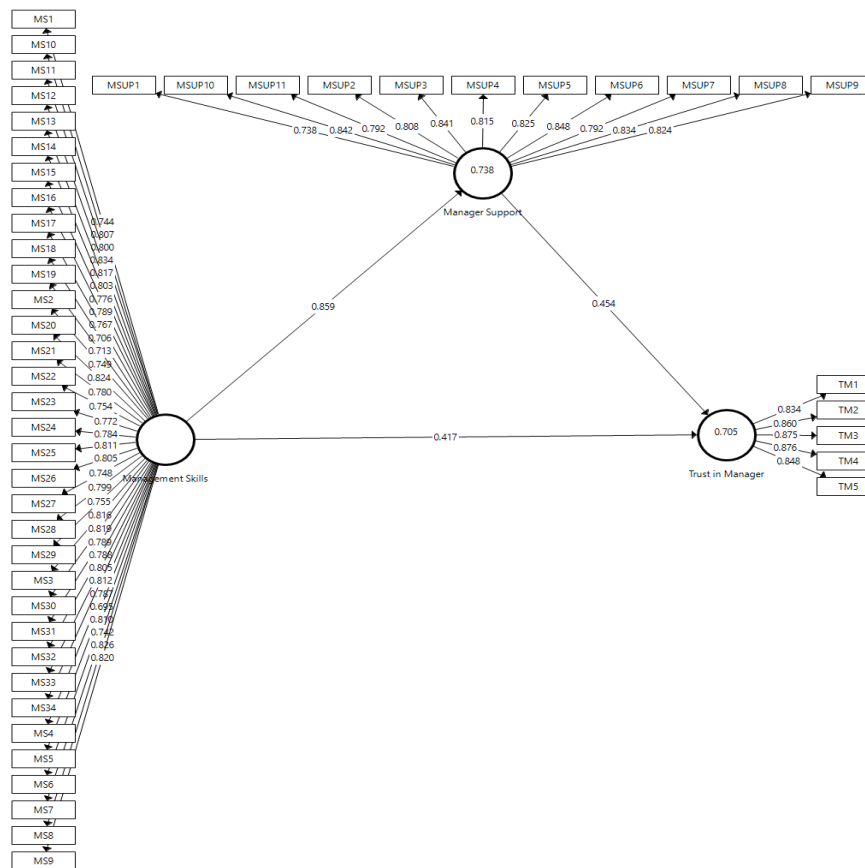


Figure 2 presents a structural equation model between perceived management skills, trust level in the supervisor, and supervisor support. The goodness of fit values from the model show that the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value is 0.039 (SRMR<0.080), the d_ ULS value is 1.901, the d_ G value is 1.762, the Chi-Square value is 3.687.744, and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) value is 0.824 (NFI>0.80, Chi-square<5). Byrne (2016) states that the relevant values are appropriate for literature. Yıldız (2021) asserts no clear distinction between d_ ULS and d_ G values regarding goodness of fit. Based on these analyses, the hypotheses formed for the research were accepted, and the structural equation model coefficients can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Paths	Beta (β)	sd	t-values	%95 confidence level	P values
MS→SM (Total Effect)*	0.807	0.036	22.200	(0.731; 0.865)	0.000
MS→SM (Direct Effect)*	0.417	0.117	3.549	(0.204; 0.640)	0.000
MS→SSup*	0.859	0.033	26.214	(0.767; 0.902)	0.000
SSup→SM*	0.454	0.124	3.665	(0.226; 0.681)	0.000
MS→SSup→SM* (Indirect Effect)*	0.390	0.097	4.037	(0.186; 0.536)	0.000

*p<0,000; MS= Management Skills; TM= Trust in supervisor; SSup=Supervisor Support

Table 5 presents the coefficients that illustrate the mediating role of supervisor support in the effect of perceived management skills on the level of trust in supervisor. The mediation test employs the bootstrap test, an iterative, non-parametric test developed by Preacher & Hayes (2004, 2008). This method is straightforward to implement in partial least squares structural equation modeling. Compared to the Sobel test, the bootstrap test provides more precise results on the mediation effect and has a higher statistical power. Hair et al. (2014) explain that the bootstrap test is first conducted without the mediator variable in the model, making it easier to comprehend and interpret the mediation effect when the mediator variable is subsequently included. Before including the mediator variable in the model, management skills significantly impacted trust in supervisors ($\beta=0.807$; $p<0.01$) - this represents the total effect. After adding the supervisor support variable to the initial model, management skills still had a significant positive impact on trust in supervisors ($\beta=0.417$; $p<0.01$). Furthermore, management skills positively and significantly affected supervisor support ($\beta=0.859$; $p<0.01$), and supervisor support positively affected trust in supervisors ($\beta=0.454$; $p<0.01$). The literature suggests that additional tests should be conducted to confirm a mediation effect. While the Sobel test is commonly used, it has recently been criticized. Hair et al. (2017) recommended the Variance Accounted For (VAF) test instead. This is calculated by dividing the indirect effect by the sum of the total and indirect effects. A VAF value between 0% and 100% is obtained; more than 80% indicates full mediation, between 20% and 80% suggests partial mediation, and less than 20% implies no mediation effect.

As per Table 5, the indirect effect between management skills, trust level in the supervisor, and supervisor support is $\beta=0.390$, and the total effect is $\beta=0.807$. The calculated VAF value is 32%, indicating that supervisor support partially mediates the effect of perceived management skills on the level of trust in the supervisor. Therefore, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4, created for this research, were accepted.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research explored the mediating role of supervisor support in the impact of management skills on trust in supervisors. The initial hypothesis suggested that positive employee perceptions of management skills would enhance trust in supervisors. The study's results confirmed this hypothesis. Competence is crucial in building trust. If employees perceive their supervisors as effectively applying their managerial skills in organizational processes, this can lay the groundwork for trust in the supervisor. Similar studies have found that high-quality leader-member interaction, justice, honesty, skill, political competence, and a transformational leadership style increase employees' trust tendencies and their trust in their supervisor (Afsar & Saeed, 2010; Frazier et al., 2015). Simultaneously, it has been found that supervisors' characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors shape the foundations of a trust climate in organizations (Nienaber et al., 2015). When supervisors are perceived as more proficient in management tasks, employees tend to perceive higher levels of supervisor support. This result aligns with the organizational support theory, which posits that perceived supervisor support develops partly

based on employees' perceptions that their supervisors can assist them, thereby contributing to the evaluation of competencies (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 2002). This is also in line with the research findings of Neves (2011, p. 446), who cites organizational support theory to guide supervisors in shaping employees' responses to change. According to these results, employees who view their supervisors as competent perceive higher levels of managerial support. This aligns with the second hypothesis that managerial skills positively impact trust in the supervisor.

Managerial behavior can significantly influence the establishment of trust within organizations. Employees may develop trust in their supervisors when they feel respected and valued. The third hypothesis of this study reveals a positive correlation between perceived managerial support and trust in the supervisor. This finding aligns with the outcomes of similar studies exploring the relationship between managerial support and trust (Akram et al., 2018; DeConinck, 2010; Ji & Jan, 2020). These studies highlight that higher perceived managerial support enhances employees' trust in their supervisors.

In the conclusion of this research's fourth hypothesis, it was found that perceived managerial support from employees partially mediated the impact of management skills on trust in the supervisor. If employees believe their supervisors effectively employ skills such as initiative, responsibility, and technical prowess, they may interpret this as managerial support. Consequently, they start to trust their supervisors.

Consequently, this research broadens the existing literature and acts as a reference for future studies. Specifically, the absence of any similar studies on supervisor support's mediating role in the impact of management skills on trust in supervisors underscores this research's potential contribution to the literature. Furthermore, considering the country's economic development status and employment statistics, this study helps highlight the perceptions arising from employee-supervisor relationships in SMEs. The interaction between supervisors possessing management skills and employees who trust these supervisors can lead Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to success, not just at the business level, but also in supporting the development of the country's economy. This relationship draws attention to the influence of a supervisor's perceived skills and support in shaping employee trust. The quality of this relationship depends on the interaction between the employee and the supervisor. Trust is fundamental to a supervisor's role. Employees' trust in their supervisors is based on the belief that their supervisors will make the right decisions. This trust can only be fostered if supervisors effectively use their skills within the organizational context. Regardless of the outcome, supervisors should also support their employees in all their endeavors. The findings of this study highlight that simply fulfilling essential managerial responsibilities can garner employees' trust without the need for additional measures. This study also provides practical guidance for organizations, suggesting they focus on ensuring the effectiveness of essential responsibilities before implementing other dynamics in human resources practices. By doing so, organizations can avoid wasting time and resources on unnecessary practices in

human resources, offering a valuable perspective on efficient resource management. Theoretically, employees are expected to perceive support and trust when supervisors exhibit skills suitable for the organizational context. This means that when supervisors show initiative, take responsibility, and demonstrate their abilities, employees reciprocate with support and trust. This idea extends the understanding of reciprocity proposed by Blau (1964) in the context of social exchange theory, thereby adding a new dimension to the field.

While research recommendations are noteworthy, it's essential to consider the study's limitations. Due to its cross-sectional nature, data was obtained from a limited number of participants at a specific time. Consequently, these findings should be supplemented with other research designs to understand better the contributions of management skills, supervisor support, and trust dynamics to management processes. Further research is needed to generalize these findings, as they were obtained from small and medium-sized employees in Kırşehir. There are not enough studies in the literature on this research topic. Hence, future research could include different organizational dynamics to underscore the importance of employees' perceptions of their supervisors at the organizational level. For instance, it would be beneficial to examine the effects of employees' perceptions of their supervisors' abilities and support on dynamics such as organizational performance, intent to leave, and work engagement. Conversely, this research, which investigates the impact of management skills and managerial support on trust in supervisors, could be expanded. The organizational implications of the trust fostered under the system's approach could also be examined.

For the study, ethics committee permission document dated October 18, 2023 and numbered 07/02 was obtained from the Yozgat Bozok University Ethics Committee.

The study has been crafted in adherence to the principles of research and publication ethics.

The authors declare that there exists no financial conflict of interest involving any institution, organization, or individual(s) associated with the article. Furthermore, there are no conflicts of interest among the authors themselves.

The authors contributed equally to the entire process of the research.

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