

Communication about integrity violations

*Predictors of trust in the integrity of the Dutch
Ministry of Defense*

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Abstract

The Netherlands' Ministry of Defense has received some negative publicity regarding integrity violations over the last couple of years. Numerous studies have examined how governmental transparency about such integrity violations influences citizens' level of trust in a governmental organization such as the Ministry of Defense (MoD). However, outcomes of these studies are ambiguous as to the direction of transparency's influence on trust (i.e. positive or negative). The current study attempts to clarify these ambiguous outcomes and examines how communication about integrity violations occurring within the MoD towards citizens might influence citizens' trust in the MoD. To this end, six hypotheses were postulated. The first three postulated a positive influence of trustor's propensity, identification (with the MoD), and perceived integrity, ability, and benevolence of the MoD on the level of trust in the integrity of the MoD. The fourth and fifth hypotheses concerned the influence of the valence and source of information, and of source credibility on trust. The last hypothesis was about a possible interaction effect between perceived integrity prior to information about an integrity violation with valence and source credibility on the perceived integrity of the MoD after this information. To test these expectations two independent variables were manipulated and the effects measured: content, or valence of the communicated integrity violation (negative vs. neutral) and source of information (NOS-journalist vs. spokesperson of the MoD). In this respect, content of information is used as a measurement for transparency. The experimental manipulations were carried out using a news article about bullying amongst military personnel. In contrast to the first two hypotheses, but in line with the third, results indicated that only perceived integrity, ability and benevolence positively predicted trust in the MoD. Furthermore, hypothesis 4 and part of hypothesis 5 were rejected, as the valence and source of information did not affect the level of trust. However, the NOS-source did lead to high source credibility, which was in line with the other part of hypothesis 5 and was therefore partially confirmed. No interaction effect was found with the perceived integrity prior to the news article on the perceived integrity after the news article, rejecting the last hypothesis. This study concludes that when the information about integrity violations of the Ministry of Defense is communicated by a trustworthy source (as perceived by citizens), this has a positive influence on citizens' trust in the integrity of the Ministry of Defense.

Key words: trust, (perceived) integrity, ability, benevolence, identification, trustor's propensity, transparency, valence, source, source credibility, Ministry of Defense.

Samenvatting

Het Ministerie van Defensie heeft de afgelopen jaren regelmatig negatieve publiciteit ontvangen met betrekking tot integriteitsschendingen. Verscheidene studies hebben onderzocht hoe transparantie van de regering over dergelijke integriteitsschendingen het vertrouwen van burgers in de overheid beïnvloed. Echter, als het gaat om de richting van de invloed van transparantie op vertrouwen (d.w.z. een positieve of negatieve invloed) spreken de uitkomsten van deze studies elkaar tegen. De huidige studie poogt deze ambiguïteit te verhelderen door te onderzoeken hoe communicatie naar burgers over integriteitsschendingen, die binnen het Ministerie van Defensie plaats vinden, mogelijk het vertrouwen van burgers in Defensie beïnvloedt. Om dit te toetsen zijn er zes hypothesen opgesteld. De eerste drie gingen over de positieve invloed van iemands algemene bereidheid om een ander te vertrouwen, de identificatie met Defensie, en van de perceptie (van burgers) van de integriteit, bekwaamheid, en goedwillendheid van Defensie op het vertrouwen in de integriteit van Defensie. De vierde en vijfde hypothese hadden betrekking op de invloed van de toon en bron van informatie, en van de geloofwaardigheid van de bron op vertrouwen. The laatste hypothese ging over een mogelijk interactie effect tussen de perceptie van integriteit voorafgaand aan informatie over een integriteitsschending met de toon van het bericht en de geloofwaardigheid van de bron, op de perceptie van integriteit van Defensie na deze informatie. Om deze verwachtingen te testen zijn twee onafhankelijke variabelen gemanipuleerd: de inhoud, of toon van het bericht over de integriteitsschending (negatief vs. neutraal), en de bron van informatie (NOS-journalist vs. woordvoerder van Defensie). Hierbij wordt de inhoud van het bericht gebruikt als een maat voor transparantie. De experimentele manipulaties zijn uitgevoerd met behulp van een nieuwsbericht over pesten onder militairen. In tegenstelling tot wat was verwacht in de eerste twee hypothesen, maar in overeenstemming met de derde hypothese, tonen de resultaten aan dat alleen de subjectieve beleving (d.w.z. de perceptie) van integriteit, bekwaamheid, en goedwillendheid een positieve relatie hebben met vertrouwen. Daarnaast werden hypothese 4 en een deel van hypothese 5 verworpen. De toon en bron van informatie hadden namelijk geen invloed op het vertrouwen. Echter, de bron van de NOS bleek wel tot grotere geloofwaardigheid te leiden dan de bron van Defensie, wat een deel van hypothese 5 bevestigt. Verder is er geen interactie gevonden waarbij de subjectieve beleving van integriteit voorafgaand aan het nieuwsbericht een rol speelde en werd de laatste hypothese verworpen. De conclusie van dit onderzoek is dat wanneer de communicatie over integriteitsschendingen van Defensie wordt gedaan door een bron die door burgers wordt gezien als betrouwbaar, dit een positieve invloed heeft op het vertrouwen van burgers in de integriteit van Defensie.

Communication about integrity violations: Predictors of trust in the integrity of the Dutch Ministry of Defense.

In the last couple of years, several news articles have been published in which the Netherlands' Ministry of Defense (MoD) received negative publicity regarding their integrity. The most recent example (at the moment of writing) in which an integrity violation was highlighted in the news, is from November 2017. The *Volkskrant* (and many other newspapers) wrote an article about soldiers who were supposedly being bullied, abused or even raped under the guise of hazing (Effting & Feenstra, 2017). In 2016 the MoD also made the news, as some employees were involved in financial integrity misconducts at air base Eindhoven (ANP, 2016). A more dated non-Dutch example of a clear integrity violation is the torture and abuse that took place in the Abu Graib-prison by American military during 2003 and 2004 ("Abu Ghraib torture", 2018). The scandals within the Netherlands' MoD led to a lot of fuss within politics and among citizens and other soldiers (e.g. see "Herkent en behandelt", 2017; "Staatssecretaris Visser", 2017). This negative publicity is likely to overshadow the positive outcomes that the MoD accomplishes¹ (Kampen, De Walle, & Bouckaert, 2006). Additionally, it might lead people to question the integrity of the MoD.

There are many different definitions and ideas of what integrity should entail and it is often confused with concepts like honesty or conscientiousness (Becker, 1998; Palanski & Yammarino, 2007). Therefore, it is important to clarify the concept of integrity and how it will be used in this study. This study defines integrity as "the consistency of an acting entity's words and actions" (p. 17, Palanski & Yammarino, 2007), in which the words and actions are in accordance with the law and the moral norms and values of that acting entity. These words and actions also include the stated and enacted values of an organization and promise-keeping. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on the organizational level of integrity that is described in the multi-level theory of integrity (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009), as the MoD can be seen as a governmental organization. Hence, the acting entity in the definition refers to an organization and in this case, the MoD. An important addition to this definition is made by Hoekstra and Heres (2016): "integrity is judged not only in relation to the organization's own moral norms and values, but also to the collection of norms and values held by its primary and secondary stakeholders" (p. 3). This integrity perceived by stakeholders (i.e. citizens) is the

¹ This phenomenon in which negative information overshadows positive information is called 'negativity bias' (Rozin & Royzman, 2001).

public integrity of an organization (hereinafter referred to as integrity) and will be the focus of the current study.

The MoD pays a lot of attention to her ethical climate. The code of conduct of the MoD, for example, states that all employees should treat each other (and others) with respect, that they should be honest, trustworthy and accurate, and not accept any form of undesired behavior (with respect to themselves and to others) (Ministerie van Defensie, 2007). Being transparent and open about integrity towards her employees and to citizens is an important part of the MoD's policy to ensure integrity ("Aandacht voor integriteitsschending", 2017; "Defensie wil cultuur", 2016; "Defensie heeft aandacht", year unknown). Rawlins (2008) suggests that openness and transparency about integrity of the organization is important as it enhances the level of trust employees have in their organization. According to this statement the policy of the MoD should have a positive effect on the level of trust employees have in the organization. Additionally, the fact that the MoD pays attention to her ethical climate, trying to prevent and/or solve any misconduct within the organization, could have a positive effect as well on the overall level of integrity of the MoD, perceived by employees and the public, provided that this climate stays constant (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009).

However, what happens if this transparency from an organization (as part of its integrity policy) about the course of events leads to negative publicity concerning the integrity of the organization? Put differently, is openness and transparency about integrity of the organization when there is an integrity violation still beneficial for the level of trust people have in the organization? According to Nieuwenburg (2007) it is not. He argues that transparency about integrity violations is unlikely to promote trust of citizens in the government. At the same time he explains the necessity of making such violations public, as hiding them would in itself be a violation of integrity. This illustrates a complex situation that Nieuwenburg (2007) calls the 'integrity paradox'.

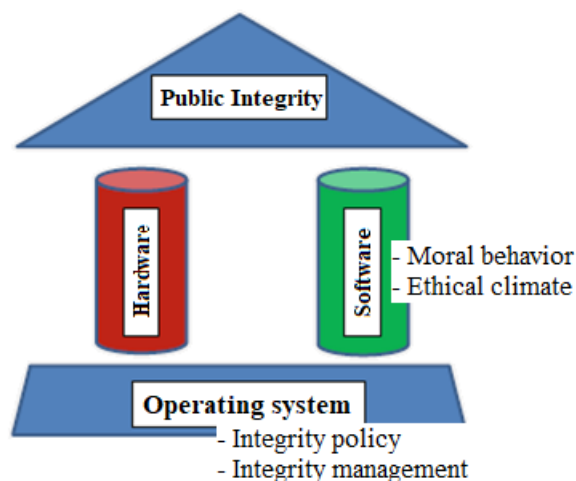
As the occurrence of the integrity paradox is inevitable it is important to study how to deal with this phenomenon. It is important that citizens trust the MoD, as it is a governmental organization and essential part of the Dutch society that ensures the safety of the Netherlands and its inhabitants. Hence, it concerns everyone. If trust in the integrity of the MoD is lost, this might also have a negative impact on the trust in the Dutch government. Furthermore, citizens look at the government as an example. Consequently, the government (thus also the MoD) is an important ethical role model.

In order to prevent such loss of trust it could be helpful to study integrity and how it relates to concepts such as transparency and trust. For instance, what effects does

communication about integrity (violations) have on the trust of citizens in an organization, like the MoD? What is the best way to communicate during integrity violations in order to reduce the impact of such violations on the trust of the organization as much as possible? And which aspects play an important role in that kind of situation? Consequently, the present study endeavors to look into these questions to find out the best way to deal with the integrity paradox in the communication towards Dutch citizens. Therefore, the aim of this study is to find out how communication about integrity violations of an organization towards citizens might influence citizens' trust in an organization such as the Dutch Ministry of Defense.

Integrity at an organizational level

Integrity of an organization (i.e. the MoD) includes a wide range of aspects, like the behavior of the individuals that work in the organization, the culture of the organization, and the management of the integrity within the organization. These aspects will be referred to in the following as moral behavior, ethical climate, and integrity policy respectively. Hoekstra and Heres (2016) categorize the aspects of integrity among three pillars. They do this using a computer metaphor: software (ethical culture), hardware (rules and procedures) and operating system (organization and coordination of integrity policies). This categorization is illustrated via a clear overview, shown in Figure 1. According to this grouping, moral behavior and ethical climate are both part of the software of an organization and integrity policy or management is part of the operating system.



*Figure 1. Model for upholding public integrity, edited to include the integrity aspects of an organization. Adapted from “Ethical Probity in Public Service,” by A. Hoekstra, and L. Heres, 2016, *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance*, p. 7.*

Combining the multi-level theory of Palanski and Yammarino (2009) with the grouping of Hoekstra and Heres (2016), one can conclude that the overall integrity of the MoD emerges

from the hardware and software of all the levels of the organization that lie below the higher-order organizational level (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). Hence, the integrity of the MoD is based on the policy and culture of several departments and divisions and on the behavior of individuals that are all part of the MoD. Still, the integrity of the organization is seen as a property of the organization in itself, instead of as a combination of its acting entities' integrity. Thus, the MoD only has a high integrity when this is displayed by all (interconnected) (sub-)departments.

Since the MoD is an organization, the stated organizational values are ubiquitous. These values need to be propagated by the whole organization, but this is often not the case as a discrepancy between stated and demonstrated values is common (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). Reason for this might be the many different components of which an organization like the MoD consists. Another element that makes organizational integrity difficult is promise keeping (Palanski & Yammarino, 2009), especially in an organization as big as the MoD, because there are numerous stakeholders that might play a part in accomplishing those promises (e.g. other ministries or multiple employees).

There are several aspects of integrity that can be relevant regarding organizations, such as the ethical climate of the organization. However, taking into account the focus of this study and all that is mentioned above, the most important aspect is how the integrity of the organization (i.e. the MoD) is perceived by others (i.e. citizens). Citizens and media are likely to perceive and frame an integrity violation of the MoD as an organizational violation, while in fact a lower-level acting entity (e.g. an individual or group) might have committed the violation instead of the MoD as a whole. Hoekstra and Heres (2016) describe this phenomenon as radiation and state that a consequence of this attribution to the whole system is a loss of credibility in the organization. Such phenomena need to be taken into account when communicating to the citizens about misconducts or integrity policy. Especially when individuals speak or act on behalf of the MoD, it is possible that citizens might see their actions, promises and words as those of the entire organization (Hoekstra & Heres, 2016). This type of generalization (from one person to a group) is particularly common when it concerns negative behavior, such as a violation or misconduct, and was demonstrated in a terrorism and a ethnicity context (Doosje, Zebel, Scheermeijer & Mathyi, 2007; Stark, Flache & Veenstra, 2013). Applying the effect of this generalization to the present study, Dutch citizens could be viewed as one group (ingroup), and the MoD as the other group (outgroup), in which an individual's misconduct (i.e. integrity violation of an employee of the MoD outgroup) is generalized to the entire outgroup (i.e. the MoD).

Integrity and trust in an organization

Several studies have shown that (organizational) integrity is positively related to trust in organizations, whereby integrity is a determinant of trust (Becker, 1998; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; Palanski & Yammarino, 2009). In the present study trust is defined as the citizens' belief that the MoD "(a) makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit and implicit, (b) is honest in whatever negotiations (more generally, any interactions) preceded such commitments, and (c) does not take excessive advantage of another² even when the opportunity is available" (p. 304, Cummings & Bromiley, 1996).

Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) proposed a model of trust that provides a clear illustration of the relationship between integrity and trust, among others (Figure 2). For the purpose of the current research, the focus will be on the first part of the model (Figure 2, delineated in red), which describes the factors that influence the perceived trustworthiness of an organization and the level of trust one has in an organization.

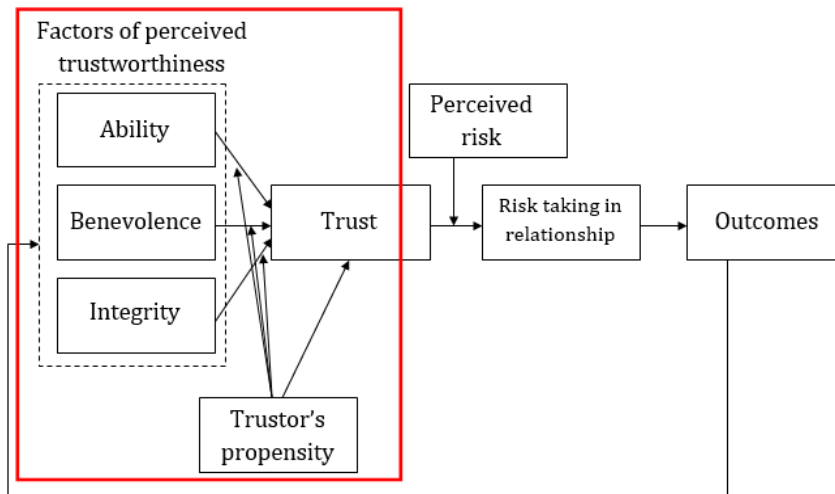


Figure 2. Proposed model of trust. Adapted from “An integrative model of organizational trust,” by R. C. Mayer, J. H. Davis, and F. D. Schoorman, 1995, *Academy of management review*, 20(3), p. 715.

Mayer et al. (1995) argue that in order for an organization (trustee³) to be trusted, the organization has to be trustworthy in the eyes of the trustor. However, whether or not a trustee is perceived as trustworthy largely depends on the characteristics of the trustor itself. When there are multiple trustors involved, in this case all Dutch citizens, it is only logical that the characteristics differ. Some parties might be trusting, while others might be more suspicious. This is visualized by ‘trustor’s propensity’ or “the general willingness to trust others” (p. 715,

² In case of the MoD ‘another’ refers to the Dutch civil society or the citizens in deployment areas.

³ Trustor: trusting party, trustee: the party to be trusted (Mayer et al., 1995)

Mayer et al., 1995). How much a citizen will trust the MoD after a violation depends on their general propensity to trust. This is independent of a person's knowledge of the MoD, it is rather a result of an individual's own experiences (Gefen, 2000). Since one's disposition to trust can also influence one's beliefs and intentions towards a company (Gefen, 2000; McKnight, Choudhury & Kacmar, 2002), it seems logical that a high trustor's propensity might lead to high trust in an organization. Hence, the following hypothesis:

H1: Citizens with a high trustor's propensity will have more trust in the Ministry of Defense compared to citizens with a low trustor's propensity.

Regardless of one's propensity to trust, the trust of a trustor in the trustee is likely to be higher when this trustee is part of the same group (ingroup) as the trustor, compared to when the trustee is part of another group (outgroup). For the reason that, in general, people have a more favorable attitude towards their own group (Doosje et al., 2007; Pennekamp, Doosje, Zebel & Henriquez, 2009). All Dutch citizens, including the employees of the MoD, could be seen as one group, since they are all part of the Dutch society. However, within such a large group it is likely that there exist numerous subgroups, as individuals can identify with others on multiple dimensions (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) like their heritage, age, but also their jobs. Hence, it is possible that citizens with jobs outside the MoD might feel less involved with the organization compared to the employees, which might cause an ingroup-outgroup mentality. In addition, there might be individuals who do not work for the MoD, but do view themselves as part of the "Ministry of Defense"-group. Reason for this might be that they identify with the MoD on another dimension and/or perceive less differences with (employees of) the MoD compared to with other 'outside job'-individuals (Leonardelli & Toh, 2015). For example, they dream to work for the MoD in the future, they have a partner that works for the MoD or they just feel like they are doing more to serve the country than other citizens do. Based on these ingroup-outgroup scenarios the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Citizens who identify with the Ministry of Defense will have more trust in the Ministry of Defense compared to citizens that do not identify with the Ministry of Defense.

In addition to the trustor's propensity, Mayer et al. (1995) describe three factors that influence the perceived trustworthiness of a trustee according to a trustor: ability, benevolence, and integrity.

The relationship between integrity and trust is often described as integrity-based trust, because it is the trustor's perception of the level of integrity that influences the trustworthiness of the trustee rather than the reasons that precede this perception (Mayer et al., 1995). Integrity-based trust is a complicated construct, as there are numerous issues that could affect the degree to which the trustee is judged to have integrity. Examples of such issues regarding the MoD are the consistency of the MoD's past actions, credible communications about the MoD from the media, and the extent to which the MoD's actions are congruent with her words (represented by all of her employees).

'Integrity' and 'trustor's propensity' seem to be the most meaningful characteristics that can help predict the Dutch citizens' trust in (the integrity of) the MoD. However, the MoD is *the* national organization specialized in the defense and safety of citizens (ability) in the service of the Dutch government for its citizens (benevolence). Hence, it is plausible that the factors 'ability' and 'benevolence' also influence the level of trust (in accordance with the model of Mayer et al., 1995).

Ability concerns the skills, competence, and characteristics of an organization within a specific domain (Mayer et al., 1995). In the case of the current study, the MoD's ability does not specifically focus on the defense and safety of citizens, but more on the MoD's ability regarding the integrity domain. Benevolence is the extent to which the trustee (i.e. the MoD) is believed to act in the best interest of the trustor (i.e. citizens) (Mayer et al., 1995). According to Kramer and Cook (2004) benevolence and integrity are closely linked.

Earlier studies found a positive relationship between integrity and trust. Therefore, it seems logical to assume this will also be the case in the relationship between citizens and the MoD. Furthermore, Mayer et al. (1995) suggest that when the ability and/or benevolence are (perceived to be) high, the perceived trustworthiness is also high. Hence, the following hypotheses are put forward for this study:

H3a: When citizens perceive a high level of integrity this leads to a higher level of trust in the Ministry of Defense compared to when they perceive a low level of integrity.

H3b: The perceived ability of the Ministry of Defense within the integrity domain has a positive relationship with the perceived level of trust in the Ministry of Defense.

H3c: Perceived benevolence of the Ministry of Defense has a positive relationship with the perceived level of trust in the Ministry of Defense.

Since the four factors of Mayer et al.'s (1995) model all might be of (some) influence on the level of trust citizens have in the MoD, they are incorporated in the research model of the current study (Figure 3).

Transparency and trust

In addition to integrity, transparency also appears to be an important factor that influences how much trust people have in an organization. When applied to an organization, transparency can be defined as “the availability of information about an organization or actor allowing external actors to monitor the internal workings or performance of that organization” (p. 5, Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014).

Numerous studies have researched the relationship between transparency and trust regarding governments, but overall findings are incongruent. Some argue that governmental transparency will not necessarily lead to higher trust of citizens and state that it will even have a negative influence on politics and the government (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014). For instance, that transparency only affects trust, in a negative manner, when it concerns negative policy outcomes (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013). At the same time, studies argue that transparency about government policies and outcomes does have a positive relationship with (perceived) integrity and trust in government (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014; Palanski, Kahai, & Yammarino, 2011).

Despite the ambiguous results found in studies, transparency appears to be an important factor of trust in organizations. This also becomes clear through the paradoxal relationship between trust and transparency. For people to trust an organization, they need to know what the organization is and does. An organization can provide this knowledge by being transparent (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012). However, transparency also requires trust, since an organization has to be vulnerable towards people to be transparent. Trust thus requires a reciprocal relationship between the trustor and its trustees, which is largely built on an organization's efforts to be transparent (Rawlins, 2008).

Thus, it seems that it is as important to look at both trustor and trustee, when considering the influence of transparency, as it is with integrity. Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2014) confirm this, as they found that the knowledge and predisposition to trust from the trustor influence the relation between transparency of and trust in a governmental organization. It appeared that when citizens have high knowledge about the specific issue, being transparent has no influence whatsoever on trust. Additionally, transparency of positive outcomes only prevents dissatisfaction (not enhance trust) for citizens with a high predisposition to trust, as

they already expected the organization to be transparent (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014). So, the attitude that one has towards the government is more important than transparency or prior knowledge alone (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012).

Though transparency might seem straightforward, it is a complex concept with a grey area, as the content of information can be transparent – that is, fully disclosed, timely, relevant, and comprehensible – but at the same time be subject to spin (e.g. making oneself look better to the public). The more information is subject to spin, the less transparent an organization is perceived to be (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2011). However, considering the ambiguous findings of studies mentioned earlier, one might ask oneself whether limited transparency, regarding the content dimension, is such a bad thing. Therefore, the present study will focus on the content of information regarding the transparency of the MoD.

A common way to spin is called the ‘crafting of stories’, whereby information with favorable and positive information of certain facts or data is released (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2011). (Governmental) organizations can easily formulate information so that the interpretation of facts will be more favorable, for example by changing the balance of positivity and negativity within a message.

One might argue that complete honesty and openness is the best practice to ensure integrity of and/or trust in the MoD, as perceived by citizens. However, Grimmelikhuijsen (2011) found evidence that people are rather soothed by a subtle form of spin, where an (false) image is created of a government “that knows what it is doing or at least portrays to the outside that it is” (p. 47). An emphasis should be placed on the word ‘subtle’, because the content of information should still leave some room for negative interpretation. An example of such a subtle spin could be a message stating that there was a ‘substantial improvement already’ instead of ‘the desired improvement was not yet achieved’ (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2011). Since the MoD is a governmental organization, the positive effects of a subtle form of spin might also be applicable here. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H4: A neutral news article about integrity misconducts leads to more perceived integrity of the Ministry of Defense and consequently leads to a higher level of trust in the Ministry of Defense compared to an explicitly negative news article about the integrity misconducts.

Here, the negative news article contains negative judgments regarding the MoD, while the neutral news articles only states facts, without accentuating positive or negative aspects.

Because of the absence of judgments with regards to the MoD, the current study views the neutral news articles as subject to subtle spin.

Source of information

In addition to the content of information, the source of the information needs to be taken into account as well when discussing transparency. ‘Third parties’, like journalists or bloggers, often mediate in disclosing information about governmental actions by assessing, scrutinizing or providing feedback on the actions (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2011). Moreover, research has shown that attribution of information to different sources changes the opinion of subjects on the issue, depending on the level of credibility of the source (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). For example, national news covered by journalists is more likely to change someone’s opinion than a political blog, as mainstream news outlets are thought of as more credible than non-mainstream news channels (Carr, Barnidge, Lee, & Tsang, 2014). Note that it concerns the *perceived* credibility, since inaccurate information might also be interpreted as credible by individuals, as long as they believe it (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008). Hence, who the source of the information in the news article is (e.g. a journalist or a MoD spokesperson) and whether or not he is perceived as credible play an important role in how the integrity of the MoD will be evaluated by citizens.

Most studies mention trustworthiness and expertise as the two primary dimensions of source credibility (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008; Giffin, 1967; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Sternthal, Dholakia & Leavitt, 1978). In addition, some studies state that bias and the judge’s point of view are also involved (Birnbbaum & Stegner, 1979; Carr et al., 2014).

Perceived trustworthiness can be defined as “the degree of confidence in the communicator’s intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid” (p. 21, Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). This confidence in the communicator’s (i.e. source) intent can be influenced by potential bias, as this might cause the source to be less objective (Birnbbaum & Stegner, 1979). The extent to which a source is objectively biased is inferior to people’s *perceptions* of whether a person is biased (Ariyanto, Hornsey, & Gallois, 2007). Consequently, it could be possible that an employee from the MoD is *perceived* to be (positively) biased towards the MoD as an organization, while in fact this does not have to be the case. These perceptions of bias appear to be embedded in the intergroup context concerning the issue (i.e. intergroup bias) (Ariyanto et al., 2007). In addition, it is likely that one’s perception of whether a person is biased is connected to one’s impression of the source (i.e. judge’s point of view) (Birnbbaum & Stegner, 1979). This would mean that if the trustworthiness is high, the perceived bias is likely to be low and the judge’s point of view to be positive.

The second primary dimension is expertise, which is defined as “the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions” (p. 21, Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953) and depends on factors such as training, experience, and ability (Birmbaum & Stegner, 1979). Whenever the source of information is an employee of the MoD, citizens might expect a higher accuracy or validity of information (Clark, Wegener, Habashi & Evans, 2012).

In the end, an MoD spokesperson might be perceived as having a higher level of expertise than an NOS⁴-journalist regarding the integrity of the MoD. At the same time, however, the employment at the MoD might increase a citizen’s perception of bias. Contrary, a NOS-journalist might be perceived as an expert in getting the facts on the table and being objective, as this is a journalist’s job. Hence, the following hypothesis is established:

H5: An NOS-journalist as a source leads to higher source credibility and eventually to more trust in the Ministry of Defense than a spokesperson from the Ministry of Defense.

Source credibility is the combined effect of trustworthiness and expertise, meaning that a high level of credibility can only be reached if the source possesses expertise and appears trustworthy (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008). Several studies found that highly credible sources have a greater effect on people compared to less credible sources (Birmbaum & Stegner, 1979; Sternthal et al., 1978). This effect appears to be best visible when negatively predisposed people are persuaded towards a positive direction by highly credible sources (i.e. the opposite direction). The reason for this is that high credibility leads to the inhibition of counter argumentation, while less credibility facilitates it (Sternthal et al., 1978). The present study examines whether the effect of the opposite direction is also conversely applicable to people who are positively predisposed towards the integrity of the MoD reading negative content.

H6: When people perceive the integrity of the Ministry of Defense as positive before they have read the negative news article, their perceived integrity will decrease more after reading the negative news article with information from a highly credible source compared to from a low credible source⁵.

⁴ NOS is a Dutch news medium.

⁵ i.e. an interaction effect between perceived integrity prior to the news article with valence and source credibility on the perceived integrity of the MoD after the news article.

Current study - Combining integrity, transparency and trust

In summary, there seem to be numerous different factors involved in an individual's process to determine whether an organization can be trusted or not. With an organization like the Ministry of Defense this process gets even more complicated since integrity violations are inevitable.

This study endeavors to gather more insight in this process and the way sources of information, transparency and integrity have an impact on the eventual judgment of trust. Therefore, the aim of this study is to find out how communication about integrity violations of an organization towards citizens might influence citizens' trust in an organization such as the Dutch Ministry of Defense. Based on a combination of the findings of several studies, the relationship between integrity, trust and transparency are visualized in the research model shown in Figure 3. By combining beforementioned trust-related aspects (i.e. source of information, transparency and integrity) into one research model the present study makes a unique contribution to the existing research area concerning integrity and trust, as other studies mainly focused on one specific trust-related aspect.

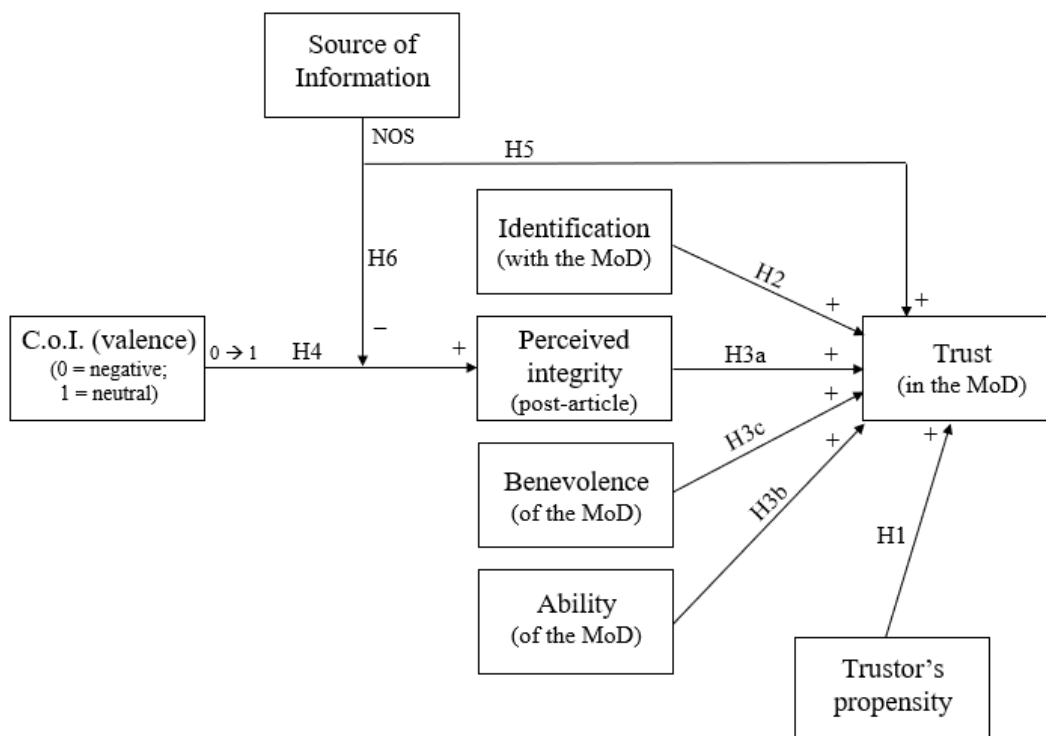


Figure 3. Proposed research model of the current study with the perceived integrity of the MoD and the trust in the integrity of the MoD as dependent variables. C.o.I = Content of Information.

Method

Design

The aim of this study was to research how communication about the MoD's integrity towards citizens influences citizens' trust in the MoD. It was an experimental study that used a 2 (Content of Information: negative vs. neutral) x 2 (Source of Information: journalist vs. MoD spokesperson) between-subjects design. For each of the conditions a news article was manipulated.

Participants

368 participants were recruited via convenience and snowball sampling, using e-mail, social media, Sona System and word of mouth. They were evenly and randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. 102 participants were not included in the analyses, because they quit before or just after reading the news article, which made it impossible to measure the influence of the experimental manipulations. One participant was not included, because the age-requirement⁶ was not met. In the end, 265 participants were used for data analysis (158 women, 105 men, $M_{age} = 37.77$, $SD_{age} = 17.85$, range = 18-76 years). According to power analysis (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) with type 1 error rate of 5%, this number ensures the results to have a power of .80 or higher, when the effect size is small to medium (.10 - .35)⁷, depending on the test used. Additional demographics and the division of the conditions can be found in Table 1. Participants with non-Dutch nationalities are included in the analyses. Since they participated in a Dutch questionnaire it is assumed that they are inhabitants of the Netherlands and, therefore, are similar to 'regular' Dutch participants.

⁶ Participants had to be at least 18 years old.

⁷ These effect sizes are in line with the effect size conventions of Cohen (1992). It was attempted to compare these effect sizes to those of previous studies. However, this appeared to be difficult as most studies used effect sizes for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which is a different method than the ones used in the current study (i.e. t-tests and regression analyses). Furthermore, numerous studies did not explicitly report the effect size. Wang and Benbasat (2007) did find similar effect sizes for competence (.25), which is similar to ability, and benevolence (.19).

Table 1.

Demographics and division news article conditions

	<i>n</i>		<i>n</i>
Nationality		Employment for the Ministry of	
Dutch	233	Defense (past or present)	
German	26	Yes	52
Other	4	No	211
Education		News article	
Primary school	3	Negative-MoD	68
Secondary school	18	Negative-NOS	70
Vocational education	22	Neutral-MoD	62
Higher professional education	77	Neutral-NOS	65
University	135		
Other	6		

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of several existing and self-established constructs and items⁸, which are further elucidated below. All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *completely disagree*, 5 = *completely agree*), with the exception of the IOS Scale items⁹ and the grading items. Factor analyses conducted in this section included all items¹⁰, unless mentioned otherwise, and were all principal component analyses with varimax rotation (Appendices A-C). The complete list of items for each construct can be found in Appendix F.

Independent variables. Two independent variables were manipulated in the current study: content (i.e. valence) and source of information. The experimental manipulations were carried out using a news article about bullying amongst military personnel. The news article mentioned that a number of soldiers came forward stating that they were being ignored by their supervisors and harassed by fellow military personnel (Appendix D).

In the negative condition of the content manipulation, judgmental statements were added to the facts that were listed (e.g. “It seems like the Ministry is not doing enough to prevent such incidents” or “The sincerity of this reaction can be questioned”), while in the neutral articles such statements were absent. Three items were used to check whether participants interpreted (the absence of) these statements as intended (i.e. negative or neutral) (e.g. “Did you

⁸ Since the questionnaire was Dutch, all questions were translated.

⁹ The IOS scale items were used in the constructs of source credibility and of identification.

¹⁰ i.e. all constructs used in the questionnaire, with the exception of the manipulation checks and demographics.

feel there were negative judgments about the Ministry of Defense in the news article?”, $\lambda^2 = .56$, $\alpha = .55^{11}$).

The second independent variable involved manipulating the way in which the information ended up in the media. The information was either discovered by journalists of NOS (e.g. “In a draft report that the NOS has managed to grab a hold of [...]”) or (a spokesperson of) the MoD had come forward with the news via previous news messages (e.g. “Previously, the Ministry of Defense has come forward with news about [...]). To ensure that participants had the right source of information in mind while answering further questions, they were asked to identify the source (“In what way did the information from the news article reach the media?”¹²). At last, an item checked whether participants read the news article attentively by asking about the subject (“What was the main topic of the news article?”).

In addition to the two manipulations, the current research model entailed four additional independent variables, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Trustor’s propensity. To determine participants’ general willingness to trust others five items were used, based on two constructs (i.e. Integrity & Trusting Stance) from the reliable trust scale validated by McKnight, Choudhury and Kacmar (2002), which showed sufficient reliability ($\lambda^2 > .70$). The items closely resembled Mayer et al.’s (1995) definition of trustor’s propensity.

In addition to an insufficient reliability ($\lambda^2 = .60$, $\alpha = .58$), factor analysis of just the trustor’s propensity items showed the items were dispersed over two components, explaining 40.25% of the variance (Appendix B). Therefore, the five items were split into two constructs: Honesty (H) (e.g. “In general, most folks keep their promises”, $\lambda^2 = .58$, $\alpha = .57^{13}$, all loadings $> .35$), and Trusting Stance (TS)¹⁴ (two items, e.g. “I generally give people the benefit of the doubt when I first meet them”, $r(265) = .46$, $p < .001$, all loadings $> .66$). Despite the insufficient reliability of the subconstruct Honesty it was decided to include the items in the analysis and to take this poor reliability in consideration when interpreting the results.

Benevolence. Three items from the benevolence-constructs of the studies from Gefen and Straub (2004) (e.g. “I expect that the intentions of the Ministry of Defense while dealing with integrity misconducts are benevolent”) and Wang and Benbasat (2007) (“The Ministry of

¹¹ α would be .62 if the third item were to be deleted (“I thought the news article was formulated more negative than other news articles that I have read lately”).

¹² Possible answers were “Via communication from the Ministry of Defense”, “By NOS-journalists”, “Via a letter of a subscriber”.

¹³ If the second item (“I think people generally try to back up their words with their actions.”) were to be deleted α would be .617.

¹⁴ Similar to one of the constructs of the trust scale (McKnight et al., 2002).

Defense keeps my best interest in mind”) were adapted to determine whether participants believed the MoD acted in their (i.e. Dutch citizens) best interest. The present study found a moderate validity (factor loadings $>.36$) and sufficient reliability ($\lambda^2 = .74$, $\alpha = .74$), which is similar to what was found in the studies of Gefen and Straub (2004) and Wang and Benbasat (2007).

Ability. Five items measured the perceived competence of the MoD as an organization in dealing with integrity issues. To this end, four items were adapted from the construct ‘ability’, validated by Gefen and Straub (2004) (e.g. “The Ministry of Defense knows a lot about integrity”). One item was self-established, so that not only the view on the ability of the management of the MoD was measured, but also of the entire organization (“The Ministry of Defense is skilled in expediting integrity violations”). Although the factor loadings of ‘ability’ were good (all loadings $>.56$), the items did appear to load on the same construct as ‘level of trust’. Nevertheless, the construct proved to have a sufficient reliability ($\lambda^2 = .85$, $\alpha = .85$) and is therefore seen as a separate construct.

Identification. Identification measured to which extent someone felt involved with the MoD, since someone does not necessarily have to work for the MoD to identify with the organization. To this end, five items were adapted from the In-group identification scale (Leach et al., 2008) (e.g. “The Ministry of Defense is important to me”). One item was self-established, so not all questions were positively formulated (“The Ministry of Defense is distant from me”). Lastly, the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale was included, which consists of a Venn-like diagram that represents the degree of overlap one feels with someone (Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992), in this case with the organization (i.e. the MoD) (Figure 4).

Contrary to what Leach et al. (2008) found, factor-analysis of the present study showed all items of the identification construct loaded on the same factor, with almost all loadings higher than $.63^{15}$. However, although factor-analysis proved the IOS Scale fit the construct this scale was held separate during analysis. The reason for this was that the IOS Scale focused on one’s overall feeling towards the MoD, whereas the other items described more specific aspects regarding one’s perception of the MoD. In addition, the IOS Scale consisted of a different type of scale (i.e. 7-point Likert scale instead of a 5-point Likert scale). In total, the seven items proved to have a high reliability ($\lambda^2 = .88$, $\alpha = .89$).

¹⁵ One item had a factor loading of .40 (“I have a lot of respect for the Ministry of Defense and her employees”).

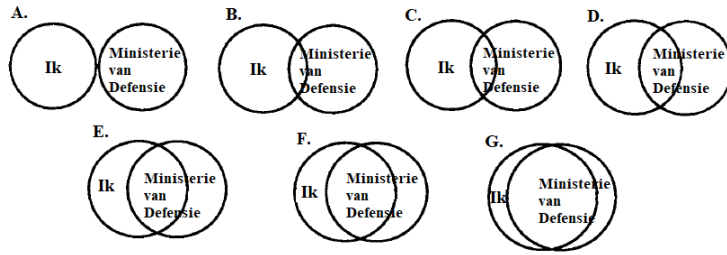


Figure 4. The Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale; adjusted to “the Ministry of Defense”. Adapted from “Interpersonal relations and group processes: Inclusion of other in the self scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness,” by A. Aron, E. N. Aron, and D. Smollan, 1992, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(4), p. 597.

Dependent variables. The current study contained four dependent variables, of which perceived integrity and trust were the main focus.

Source credibility. To measure how participants perceived the source of information eleven items were used that incorporated the expertise and/or trustworthiness of the source. Nine items were adapted from studies of Giffin (1967)¹⁶ (e.g. “The source is well informed about this topic”) and Gaziano and McGrath (1986) (“The source is unbiased”). Both studies found high validity for these items. One item was based on the theory about journalist credibility of Carr, Barnidge, Lee, and Tsang (2014) (“The source tells the truth”). Lastly, the IOS Scale (Aron et al., 1992) was used. However, in contrast to the earlier IOS Scale figures, this IOS Scale measured the identification with the source instead of with the MoD (Figure 5). As with ‘identification’, the IOS Scale fits the construct, but was held separate during analysis. Reason for this was that identification with the source of information can be seen as a distinct component of source credibility. Also, the type of scale differed from the other items (i.e. not a 5-point Likert scale).

Factor-analysis indicated a spread of the items over two components, explaining 7.07% of the variance of all items used in the questionnaire (factors 5 and 7, Appendix A). The components can be interpreted as the two aspects of source credibility: expertise (all loadings: $> .34$) and trustworthiness (all loadings: $> .32$). The reliability of both the main construct (source credibility: $\lambda^2 = .76$, $\alpha = .78$), and the subconstructs (expertise: $\lambda^2 = .72$, $\alpha = .72$; trustworthiness: $\lambda^2 = .70$, $\alpha = .73$) were sufficient.

¹⁶ Eight items were used from the ‘authoritativeness scale’.

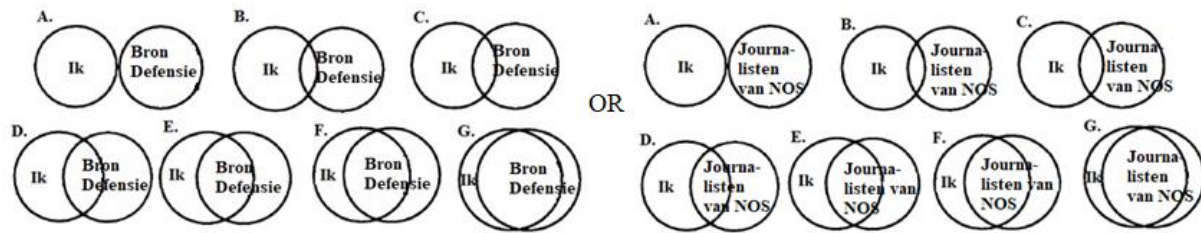


Figure 5. The IOS Scale; adjusted to “source MoD” (left) and “journalists of NOS” (right). Adapted from “Interpersonal relations and group processes: Inclusion of other in the self scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness,” by A. Aron, E. N. Aron, and D. Smollan, 1992, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(4), p. 597.

Transparency. Four items measured how participants perceived the level of transparency of the article and whether they were satisfied with it. One item was based on Gaziano and McGrath’s (1986) measurement of the ‘credibility factor’ (“The news article tells the whole story”). The other items were self-established, as one item did not cover the construct (e.g. “I was satisfied with the level of transparency about the situation sketched in the news article”). Transparency proved to be a valid construct (all loadings > .49) with sufficient reliability ($\lambda^2 = .76$, $\alpha = .75$).

Perceived integrity. Eight items measured the perceived integrity of the MoD. Three of these items were adapted from the Perceived Integrity construct of the altered integrity scale from Kim, Ferrin, Cooper and Dirks (2004) (e.g. “The Ministry of Defense has a great deal of integrity”), whom proved a high validity. Five items (“e.g. I think the Ministry of Defense has a good integrity policy”) were self-established, because no items about the integrity policy were included yet, while it could be important as to how the organization’s integrity is perceived by the public. Also, a short definition of the concept ‘integrity’ was added to make sure all participants understand what was meant by this.

By assessing perceived integrity before and after the news article it was possible to detect a potential direct influence of the source and content of information on citizens’ perceived integrity. To reduce the hazard of participants being consistent with the pre- and post-measurement¹⁷, the post-items were formulated in another format (i.e. “After reading the news article I think/find...” instead of “I think/find...”) and were not following immediately after the news article.

A factor-analysis on just the perceived integrity items indicated three components, explaining 59.28% of the variance (Appendix C). All post-test items loaded strongly on only one component (all loadings > .49), whereas the pre-test items were divided over two

¹⁷ This phenomenon is a response bias called demand characteristics.

components (factor 1 [6 items]: all loadings > .52; factor 2 [2 items]: all loadings > .61). Nevertheless, both constructs appeared reliable (pre-test: $\lambda^2 = .88$, $\alpha = .87$; post-test: $\lambda^2 = .91$, $\alpha = .91$) and, hence, were used in the analyses.

Level of trust. To determine the level of trust participants had in the integrity of the MoD eight items were used. Two were adapted from the Organizational Trust Inventory validated by Nyhan and Marlowe (1997) (e.g. “I am confident that the Ministry of Defense will make well thought out decisions with regards to her integrity policy”), and two from a study done by the Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties (2007) (e.g. “I trust that the Ministry of Defense takes responsibility for the consequences of her decisions with regards to integrity issues”). The remaining items were self-established and touched on the transparency and priority of the integrity(policy) within the MoD. Examples of self-established items are “I have the feeling that the Ministry of Defense will try to hide her mistakes” and “My trust in the Ministry of Defense has [...] after reading the news article”¹⁸. The present study showed ‘level of trust’ to be a valid construct (all loadings > .37), with high reliability ($\lambda^2 = .86$, $\alpha = .84$).

Procedure

This study used a Dutch questionnaire¹⁹ which contained a fake news article. This news article allowed participants to answer the questions that followed as if the violation really happened, so the results of the study would resemble the reality as much as possible. The news articles were made to look as if it was a news item from NOS (a Dutch news medium). This medium was chosen, because it is relatively neutral (i.e. not religious, regional or commercial) and the range covers about 94% of the Dutch population of 18 years and older (NOS, 2017). Also, NOS is available to everyone with access to the Internet or television, since it is free and you do not need to take out a subscription, like with news media such as Volkskrant or Trouw. The articles can be found in Appendix D.

The questionnaire started with a small introduction, stating the goal, duration and the confidentiality of the data of the questionnaire. Prior to the news article, the trustor’s propensity and pre-test of perceived integrity were measured. Following the news article, questions were asked about the experimental manipulations, source credibility, transparency, perceived integrity (post-test), benevolence, ability, trust in integrity, identification and the general demographics. At the end, an e-mail address was presented to mail potential questions or interest in the results to, and a debriefing clearly stated the news article was not real.

¹⁸ Options to choose at the [...] were: dropped a lot, dropped, stayed the same, grown, grown a lot.

¹⁹ The questionnaire was composed via the website Qualtrics.

Before the questionnaire was distributed, two pilot tests were done. At first, four people were asked to judge the questions on their readability and understandability, to read the experimental manipulations, and to answer the manipulation checks (i.e. determine the source and valence of the article). Unfortunately, the neutral news articles were judged as negative as the negative articles, which was inconsistent with the intentional manipulation. Therefore, the news articles were adjusted: the titles of the neutral articles were adapted to focus more on the point of improvement for the MoD instead of on the integrity misconduct itself, and the type of misconduct (i.e. bullying) was specified more). Also, two extra questions were added to check the perceived valence of the article. Next, 16 people were asked again to answer the manipulation checks and determine the source and valence of the article. This time, 14 people got at least 2 out of 3 questions about the valence correct. Feedback and suggestions regarding the valence of the news article after the second pilot test were incorporated²⁰ in the final version of the news article.

²⁰ These feedback and suggestions mostly concerned the nuance, repetition and choice of words in the neutral articles. For examples, at first, two consecutive sentences emphasized earlier publicity of the MoD regarding integrity misconduct. Someone suggested to remove this emphasis in one of the two sentences.

Results

Manipulation check

Several manipulation checks verified whether participants interpreted the manipulations of the news article as intended. Unfortunately, the results showed that this was not the case. Just a small majority had the source of information correct (60.75%)²¹. Overall, participants seemed to struggle the most with the valence of the article, as there are small differences between the ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ numbers (Table 2). Reason for this could be that participants interpreted the negative topic as measurement for the valence of the news article, instead of the way the content was formulated. Nevertheless, a comparison of the means showed that, though the intended scores were not always met, the interpreted valence did appear to be significantly more negative for the negative news articles ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.62$) compared to the neutral news articles ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.66$) ($F(1, 263) = 4.84$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .02$, observed power (OP) = 0.59)²², independent of the source of the information in the article ($F(1, 263) = 2.51$, $p = .11$, $\eta^2 = .01$, $OP = 0.37$).

Additionally, a check about the main topic of the article was added to confirm whether participants read the news article thoroughly, since the topic of the article was clear when compared to the alternatives²³. Almost all participants proved to have read the article sufficiently (Table 2)²⁴.

Table 2.

Frequencies of (in)correct manipulation checks.

	Correct		Incorrect	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Source of information	161	60.75	104	39.25
Valence				
Negative judgments ²⁵	138	52.08	101	38.11
Interpretation valence	140	52.83	125	47.17
Valence of formulation	155	58.49	110	70.97
Read thoroughly	250	94.34	15	5.66

Note. % = percentage (in)correct answers of total sample (N = 265).

²¹ The guidelines for correct answers of the manipulation checks can be found in Appendix E.

²² G*Power was used to calculate the power of the results (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007)

²³ The article was about bullying among military personnel. Alternatives were ‘fraud at the police or Ministry of Defense’ and ‘negotiations about a new collective agreements for military personnel’.

²⁴ Although 15 participants did not read the article sufficiently, they were included in the analyses.

²⁵ 25 participants responded with ‘I don’t know’ to “Did you have the feeling there were negative judgments about the Ministry of Defense in the news articles?”.

General analyses

The descriptive statistics of the independent and dependent variables are shown in Table 3. The variables ‘perceived integrity’ (pre-test), ‘trustworthiness’ (source credibility), ‘identification’, and ‘age’ seem to correlate most often with other variables. Hence, it appears as if these variables have the largest influence within the proposed research model and are important in the context of the present study. The correlations with age are remarkable, since these were not initially incorporated in the research model. The demographic of (previous) employment at the MoD also proved to have a strong correlation with numerous variables. Therefore, it might be worth looking further into the relationship these constructs have with other variables.

Another noteworthy observation about the correlations between the variables is the fact that ‘trusting stance’ (trustor’s propensity) correlates with almost every demographic and does not seem to have an association with any of the other variables. This finding might also be worth looking into and will be elaborated on in the discussion.

Some strong correlations stand out, besides those of the subconstructs with their main constructs (see *Hypothesis testing - assumptions*). That is, a positive correlation exists between the ability of the MoD to effectively deal with integrity issues and the perceived integrity of the MoD herself (pre-test: $r(264) = .56, p < .001$; post-test: $r(264) = .72, p < .001$). This could indicate that if the MoD is not seen as conscientious and honest, it is assumed that she is also not capable to adequately handle integrity issues (or vice versa). The perceived integrity of the MoD also shows a positive relation with the level of trust citizens have in the integrity(policy) of the MoD (pre-test: $r(264) = .69, p < .001$; post-test: $r(264) = .75, p < .001$). This could suggest that when citizens trust the MoD to have a good integrity policy, they also perceive the MoD to be conscientious and honest (or vice versa). Additionally, the level of trust citizens have in the integrity(policy) of the MoD appears to have a positive correlation with citizens’ belief that the MoD acts in their best interest ($r(264) = .62, p < .001$) as well as with the ability of the MoD to effectively deal with integrity issues ($r(264) = .76, p < .001$). Logically, this means that an increase in the level of trust is coherent with an increase in the perceived benevolence or ability of the MoD.

Table 3.

Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Correlation²⁶ between the Independent and Dependent Variables (N = 265)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. Age ^c	37.77	17.85	1																			
2. Gender ^b	1.60	.49	-.33***	1																		
3. Nationality ^b	1.13	.38	.39	.05	1																	
4. Education ^d	4.31	.99	.50**	.25**	.33***	1																
5. Employment at the MoD ^b	1.80	.40	-.26***	.30**	.18*	.29***	1															
6. Trustor's Propensity (TP)	3.74	.44	.22**	-.14*	.41***	.30***	-.11	1														
7. TP - Honesty	3.63	.50	.08	-.05	.33***	.24**	-.04	.81***	1													
8. TP - Trusting Stance	3.92	.65	.28**	-.18**	.24**	.18	-.14*	.74***	.21***	1												
9. Perceived integrity pre-test	3.43	.57	-.38***	.13*	.44***	.35*	-.01	.06	.15*	-.06	1											
10. Source Credibility (SC)	3.09	.48	-.05	-.02	.29	.26	.05	.11	.16**	-.01	.16**	1										
11. SC – SI	3.11	1.60	.06	-.03	.17	.17	-.18**	.05	.07	.01	.06	.31***	1									
12. SC – Expertise	3.02	.55	-.10	-.01	.21	.22	.11	.02	.09	-.08	.06	.82***	.16**	1								
13. SC – Trustworthiness	3.17	.59	.01	-.02	.20	.23	-.02	.16*	.18**	.05	.21***	.85***	.36***	.40***	1							
14. Transparency	2.80	.64	.11	.05	.16	.20	.13*	.04	-.00	.07	-.11	.50***	.20***	.46***	.37***	1						
15. Perceived integrity post-test	3.04	.67	-.20***	-.07	.46***	.34	-.12	.00	.07	-.08	.69***	.14*	.09	.02	.21***	-.10	1					
16. Benevolence	3.49	.65	-.15*	.10	.20	.20	-.00	.04	.12	-.07	.56***	.12	.04	.02	.18**	-.08	.54***	1				
17. Ability ^a	3.01	.67	-.23***	.06	.45***	.31*	-.15*	-.04	.01	-.08	.56***	.09	.05	-.00	.15*	-.05	.72***	.54***	1			
18. Level of trust ^a	3.09	.66	-.25***	.00	.40***	.30	-.07	.04	.08	-.03	.69***	.12	.04	.01	.19**	-.12*	.75***	.62***	.76***	1		
19. Identification ^b	2.94	.77	-.01	-.17**	.32	.31	-.56***	.02	.02	.00	.46***	-.06	.17**	-.15*	.05	-.24***	.49***	.36***	.40***	.47***	1	
20. Identification (IOS) ^b	2.77	1.81	.09	-.22***	.21*	.18	-.55***	.05	.03	.05	.26***	.01	.37***	-.08	.09	-.10	.35***	.22***	.25***	.33***	.72***	1

Note. SI = Source Identification; IOS = Inclusion of Other in the Self. 'SC – SI' and 'Identification (IOS)' were scored on a 7-point Likert scale, the other constructs were scored on a 5-point Likert scale.

^a $n = 264$. ^b $n = 263$. ^c $n = 262$. ^d $n = 261$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

²⁶ Since 'Nationality' and 'Education' were non-dichotomous variables, Cramer's V (instead of Pearson r) was used to measure the associations with these variables.

Hypothesis testing

Assumptions. Before executing any further analyses, the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity were tested. Histograms showed all variables are normally distributed and PP-plots proved good linearity. Scatterplots also showed the data is homoscedastic. Lastly, low VIF-values and a tolerance higher than 0.2 showed the absence of multicollinearity (Field, 2009). However, when correlations are higher than .80 it is recommended to only use one of the two variables (i.e. predictors) in the analyses, so the outcome of the multiple linear regression analysis will be more accurate (Field, 2009). This is the case for two constructs. That is, ‘trustor’s propensity’ has a strong correlation with ‘TP – honesty’ ($r(265) = .81, p < .001$) and ‘TP – trusting stance’ ($r(265) = .74, p < .001$). Additionally, ‘source credibility’ also shows strong correlations with subconstructs ‘expertise’ ($r(265) = .82, p < .001$) and ‘trustworthiness’ ($r(265) = .85, p < .001$). So, although the multicollinearity assumption has been met, only the subconstructs of trustor’s propensity and source credibility were used in the analyses. At last, a comparison of means proved there was a significant difference between the perceived integrity pre- and post-test ($F(25, 239) = 10.27, p < .001, \eta^2 = .52, OP = 1.00$)²⁷.

Hypotheses. First, a series of regression analyses were done to test to what extent perceived integrity (pre-test), source credibility, and the source and valence of the news article were predictors of perceived integrity (post-test) (Table 4)²⁸. In model 1 the predictors were entered, in model 2 the interactions were added, and in model 3 the possible three-way interactions were included. Contrary to what was expected in hypothesis 6, the perceived integrity prior to the news article only seems to add significantly to the prediction as a sole predictor and not in combination with other variables ($B = 0.41, t = 5.62, p < .001$). Hence, the models show that there are no mediators involved in the relation between the pre- and post-test of perceived integrity. However, model 3 does show a significant interaction between valence of the article and the identification with the source, which is an element of source credibility ($B = -0.27, t = -2.64, p < .01$) (Figure 6)²⁹. A slope difference test (Dawson, 2015) showed that the extent to which someone identifies with the source only influences the level of perceived

²⁷ Even though the correlation between perceived integrity pre- and post-test was below .80 and they met the assumptions, this test was done as an extra check to ensure there was a difference between these constructs.

²⁸ A regression analysis was also conducted for the difference between the Perceived Integrity post- and pre-test. However, this did not produce any significant results.

²⁹ Be aware that this interaction concerns the identification with the source (i.e. NOS-journalist or MoD-spokesperson) and *not* the identification with the MoD as an organization.

Table 4.
Regression analysis with Perceived Integrity (post-test) as dependent variable.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	t	B	t	B	t
Predictors						
Perceived integrity pre-test	0.45	14.35***	0.43	7.75***	0.41	5.62***
Valence	-0.03	-0.53	0.02	0.24	0.05	0.51
Source	0.06	0.94	0.10	1.04	0.10	1.04
SC – Expertise	-0.05	-1.37	-0.07	-1.00	-0.02	-0.27
SC – Trustworthiness	0.06	1.65	-0.02	-0.22	-0.02	-0.21
SC – Source Identification	0.02	0.69	0.05	0.72	0.12	1.49
Interaction-effects						
Perceived integrity pre-test * SC – Expertise			-0.03	-0.72	-0.10	-1.42
Perceived integrity pre-test * SC – Trustworthiness			0.04	1.03	0.12	1.64
Perceived integrity pre-test * SC – Source Identification			-0.02	-0.59	-0.01	-0.07
Perceived integrity pre-test * Valence			0.09	1.41	0.12	1.20
Perceived integrity pre-test * Source			-0.11	-1.50	-0.04	-0.35
Source * Valence			-0.06	-0.44	-0.08	-0.53
Valence * SC – Expertise			-0.04	-0.51	-0.08	-0.72
Valence * SC – Trustworthiness			0.06	0.71	0.05	0.46
Valence * SC – Source Identification			-0.11	-1.63	-0.27	-2.64**
Source * SC – Expertise			0.09	1.12	-0.03	-0.22
Source * SC – Trustworthiness			0.17	1.88	0.21	1.74
Source * SC – Source Identification			0.07	0.97	-0.06	-0.57
SC – Expertise * SC – Trustworthiness			-0.04	-1.04	-0.04	-1.04
SC – Expertise * SC – Source Identification			-0.02	-0.42	-0.03	-0.79
SC – Trustworthiness * SC – Source Identification			0.03	0.61	0.03	0.75
Three way interaction-effects						
Perceived integrity pre-test * Valence * SC – Expertise					-0.08	-1.03
Perceived integrity pre-test * Valence * SC – Trustworthiness					0.11	1.36
Perceived integrity pre-test * Valence * SC – Source Identification					-0.12	-1.45
Perceived integrity pre-test * Valence * Source					-0.09	-0.60
Perceived integrity pre-test * Source * SC – Expertise					-0.01	-0.11
Perceived integrity pre-test * Source * SC – Trustworthiness					-0.01	-0.13
Perceived integrity pre-test * Source * SC – Source Identification					0.05	0.59
Source * Valence * SC – Expertise					0.15	1.02
Source * Valence * SC – Trustworthiness					-0.06	-0.36
Source * Valence * SC – Source Identification					0.30	2.20*

Note. SC = Source Credibility. Model 1: $R^2 = .48$, $\Delta R^2 = .47$, $F(6, 258) = 40.14$, $p < .001$, $OP = 1.00$; Model 2: $R^2 = .53$, $\Delta R^2 = .49$, $F(21, 243) = 13.02$, $p < .001$, $OP = 1.00$; Model 3: $R^2 = .55$, $\Delta R^2 = .49$, $F(31, 233) = 9.24$, $p < .001$, $OP = 1.00$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

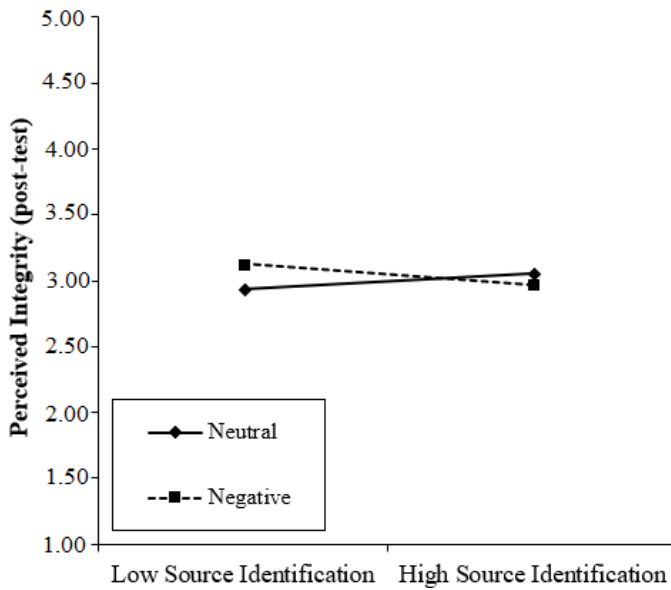


Figure 6. Interaction effect of Valence with Source Identification on Perceived Integrity (post-test).

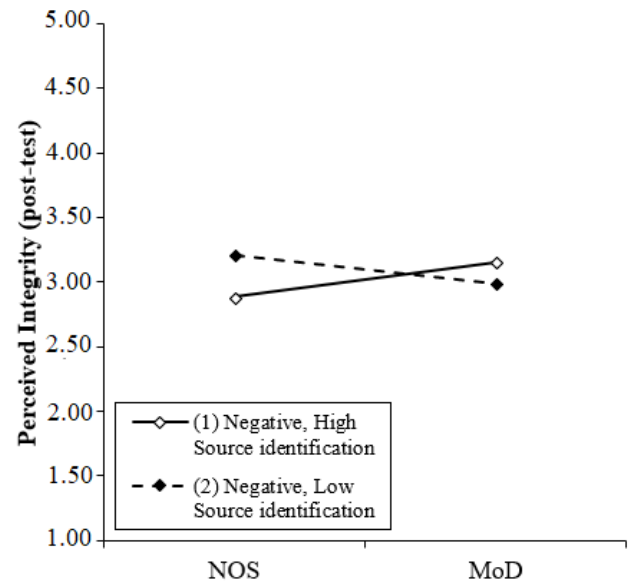


Figure 7. Significant slope differences for Perceived Integrity (post-test) with Source, Valence, and Source identification.

integrity (post-test) in case of a negative news article ($t = -2.21, p = .03$). In contrast, the extent to which someone identifies with the source appears to make no difference for the level of perceived integrity (post-test) when the news article is neutral ($t = 1.52, p = .13$). This finding is in line with hypothesis 6, which only stated an effect of source credibility in case of a negative news article.

The regression analysis also showed a significant three way interaction between source, valence and the identification with the source ($B = 0.30, t = 2.20, p = .03$)³⁰. Consequently, a slope difference test was done (Dawson, 2015), which found a significant slope difference between lines 1 and 2 ($t = 2.43, p = .02$) (Figure 7)³¹. This finding means that the level of perceived integrity after reading a negative news article decreases, as people identify more with the NOS-source. The opposite is true in case of the MoD-source, although the difference between high and low identification is smaller. Consequently, hypothesis 6 is partially rejected in case of the MoD-source, but partially confirmed in case of the NOS-source.

Next, the influence of the valence of the article on perceived integrity (post-test) and trust, and of the source of information on source credibility and trust was analyzed using four independent T-tests. Contrary to what was expected in hypothesis 4, no significant differences

³⁰ Be aware that this interaction concerns the identification with the source (i.e. NOS-journalist or MoD-spokesperson) and *not* the identification with the MoD as an organization.

³¹ No other significant slope differences were found for the simple slopes with and between the neutral condition.

were found for the effect of the valence of the news article on the perceived integrity (post-test) ($t(263) = -0.09, p = .93, OP = .06$) and trust ($t(262) = 0.22, p = .82, OP = .05$).

Furthermore, the tests showed a significant difference between the sources regarding source credibility for both trustworthiness ($t(263) = 4.14, p < .001, OP = .98$) as well as expertise ($t(263) = -4.06, p < .001, OP = .98$). Citizens find a source from the NOS more trustworthy ($M = 3.31, SD = 0.61$), than a source from the MoD ($M = 3.02, SD = 0.53$). Similarly, they also identify more with the NOS-source ($M = 3.33, SD = 1.55$) than with the MoD's spokesperson ($M = 2.88, SD = 1.62$) ($t(263) = 2.31, p = .02, OP = .63$)³², which is consistent with hypothesis 5. However, at the same time they do believe that a source from the MoD has more expertise ($M = 3.16, SD = 0.52$) than a source from the NOS ($M = 2.89, SD = 0.55$) (Figure 8), which is in contrast with hypothesis 5. Furthermore, a multiple regression analysis showed a relation between the trustworthiness of a source and trust ($B = 0.16, t = 3.09, p < .01$) and between the interaction of trustworthiness and identification with the source on trust ($B = -0.10, t = -2.23, p < .03$; Figure 9)³³ (Table 5). Based on this interaction, it appears that the trustworthiness of the source only has a positive influence on trust if citizens do not identify strongly with the source. If citizens do identify strongly with the source, the effect of the trustworthiness of the source on trust is less pronounced. This is partially in line with hypothesis 5, since source credibility was expected to influence trust. However, there appears

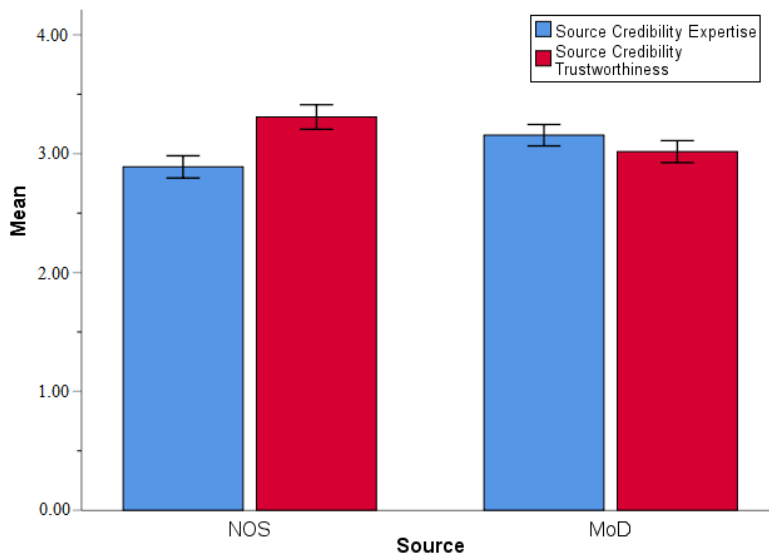


Figure 8. Differences between Sources of Information regarding Source Credibility Expertise and Trustworthiness.

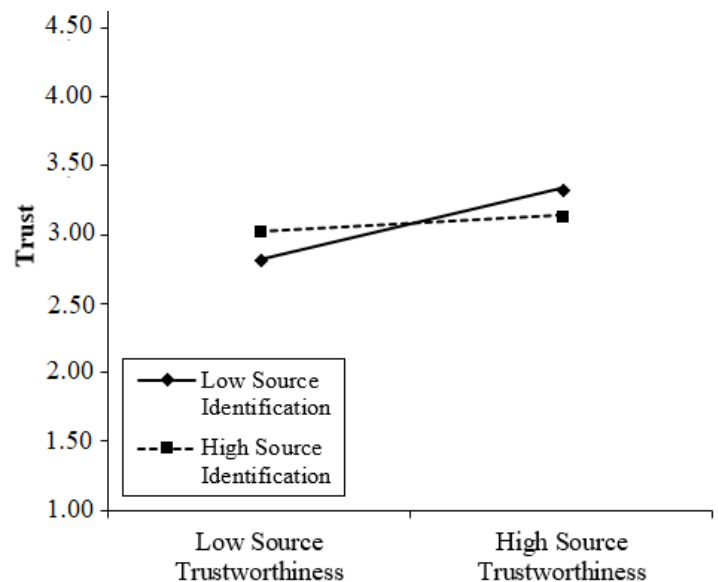


Figure 9. Interaction effect of Source Trustworthiness and Identification on Trust.

³² Based on the Source Credibility IOS Scale (i.e. Source Identification).

³³ This interaction effect was exploratively tested, because of possible intergroup bias (Ariyanto et al., 2007). Hence, it could be interesting to see if the extent to which someone identifies with the source affected how the source's reliability is assessed. Additionally, factor analysis loaded these subconstructs on the same factor.

Table 5.

Regression analysis with Trust as dependent variable.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	t	B	t	B	t
Predictors						
Source	0.14	1.55	0.12	1.28	0.12	1.28
SC – Expertise	-0.08	-1.76	-0.08	-1.69	-0.08	-1.69
SC – Trustworthiness	0.19	3.75***	0.16	3.13**	0.16	3.09**
SC – Source Identification	-0.02	-0.39	0.01	0.12	0.00	0.05
Interaction-effects						
SC – Expertise * SC – Trustworthiness			-0.01	-0.18	-0.01	-0.19
SC – Expertise * SC – Source Identification			-0.01	-0.37	-0.01	-0.33
SC – Trustworthiness * SC – Source Identification			-0.10	-2.27*	-0.10	-2.23*
Three way interaction-effects						
SC – Expertise * SC – Trustworthiness * SC – Source Identification					0.01	0.21

Note. SC = Source Credibility. Model 1: $R^2 = .05$, $\Delta R^2 = .04$, $F(4, 259) = 3.64$, $p < .01$, $OP = .85$; Model 2: $R^2 = .08$, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $F(7, 256) = 3.14$, $p < .01$, $OP = .95$; Model 3: $R^2 = .08$, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $F(8, 255) = 2.75$, $p < .01$, $OP = .94$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

to be no significant difference in the effect of the source on general trust in the integrity of the MoD ($t(262) = -0.15$, $p = .88$, $OP = .05$). This was confirmed by the multiple regression analysis (Table 5). Therefore, although parts of hypothesis 5 were confirmed, the hypothesis as a whole is rejected.

At last, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the multivariate influence of trustor's propensity, perceived integrity, benevolence, ability, identification with the MoD, and of the source and valence of the news article on trust. Table 6 shows an overview of the results of this analysis. Model 1 proved to be a strong model with a good fit, significantly explaining 73.20% of the variance ($R^2 = .73$, $F(10, 252) = 68.78$, $p < .001$, $OP = 1.00$).

Contrary to what was expected in hypotheses 1 and 2, no significant effects were found for the predictors trustor's propensity and identification with the organization on trust (Table 6). However, perceived integrity (pre-test and post-test), benevolence, and ability all added significantly to the prediction of trust ($p < .001$), which is in line with hypotheses 3a, b, and c. Hence, a positive relation exists between the perceived integrity, ability, or benevolence of the MoD is and the level trust of citizens have in the integrity of the MoD. Here, ability seems to be the most important predictor, as it has the highest regression coefficient.

Table 6.

Regression analysis with Trust as dependent variable.

	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Model 1			.73*
Valence	-0.03	-0.62	
Source	0.00	0.10	
TP – Honesty	0.01	0.21	
TP – Trusting Stance	0.03	1.09	
Identification	0.02	0.50	
Identification (IOS)	0.03	0.99	
Perceived integrity pre-test	0.15	4.57*	
Perceived integrity post-test	0.14	3.75*	
Benevolence	0.10	3.68*	
Ability	0.26	7.84*	

Note. TP = Trustor's propensity; IOS = Inclusion of Other in the Self.

* $p < .001$.

Additional analyses

Additional regression analyses further examined the correlations found in Table 3. First, the negative correlations between age and (the antecedents of) trust were explored (Table 7). Consistent with the smallest correlation in Table 3, age seems to be least coherent with benevolence ($F(1, 260) = 5.69, p < .05, OP = .63$). Next, in response to the (high) correlations of the antecedents of trust with each other, the relations of identification with the organization, benevolence and ability with perceived integrity (post-test) were specified. A significant, positive relation with perceived integrity (post-test) was found ($R^2 = .59, F(4, 258) = 91.72, p < .001, OP = 1.00$) (Table 8).

Since the valence of the news article was meant to be a subtle form of spin of the transparency of the news article, the effect of the valence on the perceived transparency of the news article was measured as a kind of extra manipulation check. The valence of the article did not appear to make a difference for how the transparency of the news article was perceived (Neutral: $M = 2.82, SD = 0.62$ vs. Negative: $M = 2.80, SD = 0.67; p = .80, OP = .06$).

At last, a regression analysis was conducted to check whether the perceptions of the experimental manipulations (i.e. source credibility and transparency) had any influence on each

other. A significant, positive relation was found between the perceived transparency of the news article ($R^2 = .27$, $F(7, 257) = 13.39$, $p < .001$, $OP = 1.00$) and the trustworthiness ($B = 0.14$; $t = 3.48$; $p = .001$) or expertise ($B = 0.25$; $t = 6.41$; $p < .001$) of a source.

Table 7.

Regression analysis with Age as predictor and (the Antecedents of) Trust as dependent variables.

	Age		
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	R^2
Identification	0.00	-0.09	.00
Identification (IOS)	0.01	1.49	.01
Benevolence	-0.01	-2.38*	.02*
Ability	-0.01	-3.75**	.05**
Integrity (post-test)	-0.01	-3.26**	.04**
Trust	-0.01	-4.10**	.06**

Note. IOS = Inclusion of Other in the Self.

* $p < .05$; ** $p \leq .001$.

Table 8.

Regression analysis with Perceived Integrity (post-test) as dependent variable.

	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
Identification	0.12	2.82*
Identification (IOS)	0.04	0.92
Benevolence	0.12	3.69**
Ability	0.36	11.02**

Note. IOS = Inclusion of Other in the Self.

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

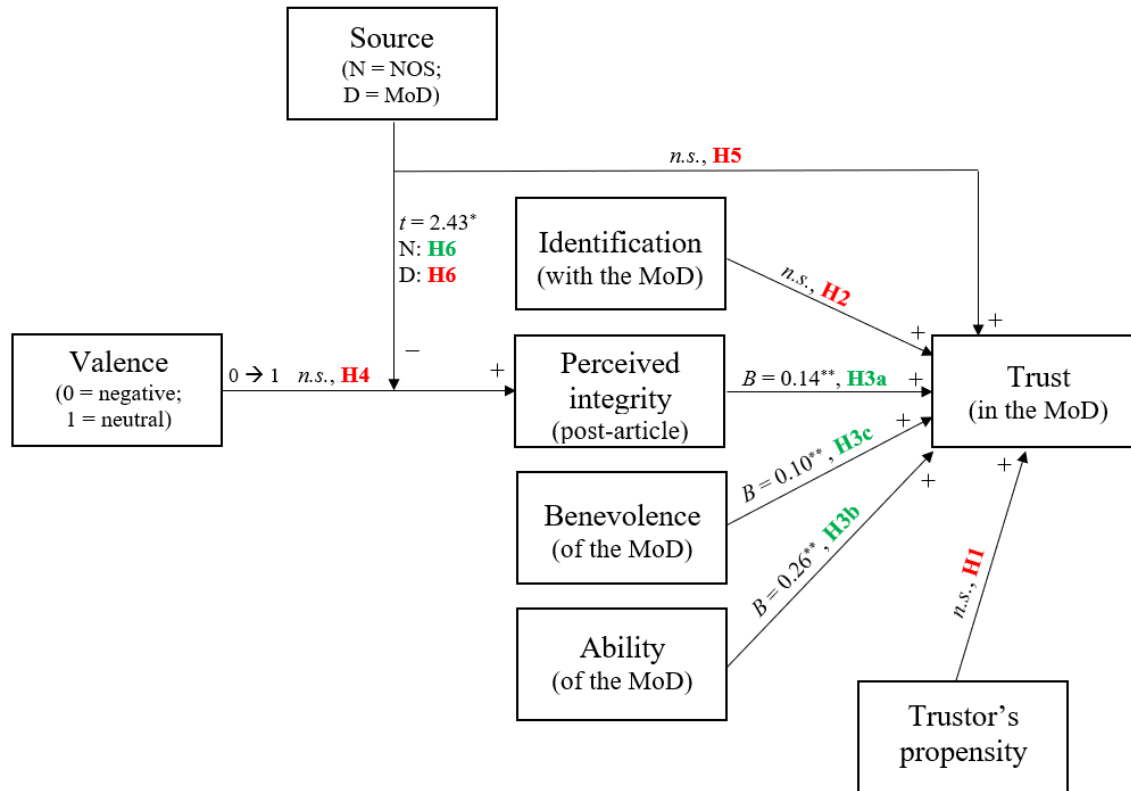


Figure 10. Overview of the outcomes of the current study in relation to the hypotheses. Valence = manipulation of Content of Information; Source = Source of information; n.s. = no significant relation; green = hypothesis confirmed; red = hypothesis rejected.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to find out how communication about integrity violations of an organization towards citizens might influence citizens' trust in an organization's integrity. For this purpose, this study focused on the public integrity of the Netherlands' Ministry of Defense. The goal was to gain more insight about the process citizens use to determine whether an organization (i.e. the Ministry of Defense) is trustworthy and has integrity, and about the way a source of information and transparency about integrity violations, and integrity itself have an impact on this process. To this end, the current study tested several hypotheses using a questionnaire including experimental manipulations of the valence and source of information (i.e. four fake news articles). Figure 10 provides an overview of the general outcomes in relation to the hypotheses. Overall, the valence and source of the information about integrity violations did not appear to influence the level of trust citizens had in the integrity of the Ministry of Defense. This contradicted hypotheses 4 and 5. Similarly, hypotheses 1 and 2 were rejected, as identification with the Ministry of Defense and trustor's propensity did not appear to matter for the level of trust. However, the perceived integrity (post-test), benevolence, and ability of the Ministry of Defense did have a positive relation with trust, confirming hypotheses 3a, b and c.

Lastly, hypothesis 6 appeared to be true in case of the NOS-source³⁴. This means that source identification, which is an element of source credibility, indeed negatively influenced the level of perceived integrity after reading a negative news article. In the following paragraphs, the results of the present study will be discussed in further detail.

Findings and theoretical implications

Trustor's propensity did not seem to influence the level of trust citizens have in the Ministry of Defense. This is the opposite of what was predicted in hypothesis 1. The initial thought to explain this discrepancy concerned the type of organization that was examined in the current study. Earlier studies mainly used commercial companies as leading subjects (Gefen, 2000; McKnight et al., 2002), whereas the present study focused on a governmental organization. Since the focus of commercial and governmental organizations differ (i.e. making profit versus the prosperity of the country) it could be argued that citizens might be more suspicious towards commercial-like organizations in general, leading trustor's propensity to play a bigger role in the decision to trust such organizations than in the decision to trust governmental organizations. Therefore, the previously established theory might have been misapplied in the current situation. However, Bélanger and Carter (2008) did find that disposition to trust also positively influenced the trust one has in the government. Nevertheless, the difference in results between the present study and that of Bélanger and Carter (2008) might also be due to the cultural difference³⁵, as there might be cross-cultural effects involved in the effect of trustor's propensity (Gefen, 2000).

An additional explanation could be that the current study did not fulfill the boundary condition Gill, Boies, Finegan and McNally (2005) deemed necessary to find a relation between trustor's propensity and (the intention to) trust. That is, in order for trustor's propensity to correlate with (the intention to) trust, it must concern a weak situation (i.e. information about trustworthiness is ambiguous). The news article and context in which the present study took place might have created a clear image among participants about whether the Ministry of Defense could be trusted or not. In this case, trustor's propensity would have been left out of the equation. Lastly, Gefen (2000) states that the effect of trustor's propensity on trust is most distinct at the beginning of the relationship, when parties are unfamiliar with each other and before beliefs about integrity, benevolence, and ability can be established. However, the

³⁴ This leaves the first part of hypothesis 6 out of consideration, as it did not seem to matter whether the perceived integrity prior to the news article was positive or negative.

³⁵ The study of Bélanger and Carter (2008) was conducted in the United States, while the present study took place in the Netherlands.

Ministry of Defense has existed since before participants were born³⁶ and all participants were 18+ years old, meaning that they all probably had common knowledge about the Ministry of Defense based on the news, politics or education. Hence, it is very unlikely that participants were still at the initiation phase of their ‘relationship’ with the Ministry of Defense.

The results did not indicate any relation between identification with the organization (i.e. the Ministry of Defense) and the level of trust citizens have in the integrity of the Ministry of Defense, causing the second hypothesis to be rejected. According to Ole Borgen (2001) strong identification with an organization is a trust-generating mechanism. However, in the current study, participants scored relatively low overall on the construct ‘identification’, suggesting a weak identification with the Ministry of Defense. This could indicate that, in the present context, identification with the Ministry of Defense is not a trust-generating mechanism, as there is no strong identification, and therefore has no influence on the level of trust citizens have in the Ministry of Defense.

A positive relation did appear between perceived integrity (post-test), ability, and benevolence with trust, confirming hypotheses 3a, b, and c. The higher the belief that the Ministry of Defense is able to deal with integrity issues, handles in the best interest of Dutch citizens or is perceived to be an integer organization, the higher citizens’ level of trust in the actual integrity of the Ministry of Defense. This corresponds with the model established by Mayer et al. (1995). Furthermore, additional analyses showed that identification with the organization, benevolence, and ability – all antecedents of trust – are positively connected to perceived integrity to some extent. Together with the positive relation (and high correlations) of perceived integrity, benevolence, and ability with trust, this leads one to question the heterogeneity of these constructs. Consequently, it is argued that, instead of antecedents of trust, these concepts are dimensions of trust. This statement is reinforced by the high proportion of variance (i.e. > 73%) explained in trust by perceived integrity (pre- and post-test), benevolence, and ability. Identification with the organization is, however, a separate construct, since it is the least significant predictor of perceived integrity (post-test)³⁷, no significant predictor of trust, and it has no extraordinarily correlations with either of the aforementioned constructs. This can be explained by the fact that the extent to which someone identifies with another or with something (e.g. an organization) largely depends on that person’s characteristics, like one’s demographics (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), one’s affective orientation (Chory-Assad &

³⁶ The oldest participant was 76, while the Ministry of Defense was founded in 1928 (Geschiedenis, 2018). The several Defense Forces exist even longer, with the Naval Force finding its origin in 1488.

³⁷ Compared to Benevolence and Ability in the same model (Table 8).

Cicchirillo, 2005), or one's own involvement with the topic³⁸. On the contrary, trust is more likely to be influenced by external factors (e.g. Hoff & Bashir, 2015; Lee & Chung, 2009).

The valence of the news article, contrary to hypotheses 4, did not influence the perceived integrity of or the level of trust in the Ministry of Defense. Reason for this could be that the manipulation of the valence was not strong enough. Although the data showed there was a significant difference between the interpreted negativity of the negative article and the neutral article, still numerous people got the manipulation check incorrect. Moreover, the study on which the hypothesis was based used balanced and positive messages (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2011), instead of neutral and negative ones. In addition, Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2014) state that results of studies examining the relation between transparency and trust are ambiguous (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2014). It might be possible that the coloring of information does not have such a big impact on how transparent a message is judged to be as Grimmelikhuijsen (2011) claims. This is also indicated by the explorative results of the additional analysis in the present study, as the valence of the news article did not influence the perceived transparency of the article. Other ways to shape the transparency of a message might be more progressive. For example, by using (one of) the dimensions mentioned by Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2014) (i.e. information disclosure, clarity, and accuracy) in an experimental manipulation³⁹. Aside from these explanations, however, it should also be noted that the power of the discussed result is very low, which, in itself, is cause for reasonable doubt about the trustworthiness of this result.

Hypothesis 5 is partially confirmed, as citizens indeed found the NOS-source more trustworthy than the source from the Ministry of Defense. Additionally, they also seemed to identify more with the NOS-source. However, citizens did seem to think that someone from the Ministry of Defense possesses more expertise about the topic that is discussed in the news article than a NOS-journalist. This is in line with Birnbaum and Stegner (1979) whom state that expertise depends on factors like experience, which is self-evident for employees of Defense as they work in the context the news article was about. An explanation for the higher trustworthiness of a NOS-source might be that the arguments used to advocate the expertise of the NOS-source were in fact arguments for the trustworthiness of the NOS-source. For, ultimately, being an expert in getting facts on the table and being objective also represents the

³⁸ Such as academic achievement at school (Voelkl, 1997).

³⁹ A more specific suggestion for how such an experimental manipulation might look like can be found in the section regarding future research.

journalists' intent to communicate assertions he considers most valid⁴⁰. In any case, the two primary dimensions of source credibility showed to be two distinct concepts and cannot be merged into one. This separation of the two dimensions of source credibility might also be cause for a third explanation for the absence of a direct effect of valence on perceived integrity (post-test) and trust discussed in the previous paragraph. Since there are two sources in the neutral and negative conditions, which both highlight a different element of source credibility, it might be possible that these opposites⁴¹ cancel out any potential effect of the valence on perceived integrity and trust.⁴²

Even though the source appeared to matter for source credibility and source credibility appeared to have a relation with trust, the source did not directly influence the perceived integrity or level of trust citizens had in the integrity of the Ministry of Defense. So, the second part of hypothesis 5 is rejected. However, this might be due to the manipulation, since just a small majority had the source of information correct. This could be explained by the fact that the news articles were made to look as if they were posted on the NOS-website, which could have led participants to assume that the place the article was posted, was also the source of the information provided in the article. However, this was not the case for all the articles. Additionally, Hovland et al. (1953) acknowledged that "the impact of a message probably depends also upon the particular publication or channel through which it is transmitted" (p. 19). This statement was further elaborated by Kiousis (2001). That is, credibility cannot be allocated to the source alone, but is also related to other aspects, like the way via which the source is communicating (i.e. medium), or how the source formulates its message (i.e. writing style)⁴³ (Kiousis, 2001). Consequently, it is possible that one of these aspects played a bigger role in how participants perceived the source than the source itself. And hence, that the relation between source credibility and trust might originate from these aspects (medium and writing style) instead of the source itself. Source credibility may also have had an effect on the direct relationship between source and trust in a different way. That is, similar to the explanation for the absence of an effect of valence on trust, the two distinct elements of source credibility might have canceled out any potential effect. Regardless, further research is necessary to determine

⁴⁰ Trustworthiness as defined by Hovland et al. (1953).

⁴¹ The NOS-source in which the trustworthiness is highest, but the expertise is lowest, against the MoD-source in which the expertise is highest, but the trustworthiness is lowest.

⁴² A suggestion for how to further examine this possibility can be found under 'limitations and future research'.

⁴³ The latter is different from the current experimental manipulation 'valence', as it is more about complicated versus simplistic writing style than about a positively or negatively formulated message.

whether there really is no relation between the source of information and the trust in the integrity of an organization, because the power of the concerned analysis turned out to be very low.

Furthermore, additional analyses revealed that both components of source credibility have a positive relation with how the transparency of the news article is perceived. That is, when the credibility of the source of information increases, the perceived transparency of the news article also increases (or vice versa). This is in line with study of Fussell Sisco and McCorkindale (2013), who found a strong correlation between transparency and credibility.

No interaction effect on perceived integrity (post-test) was found which incorporated the perceived integrity prior to the article, leaving the first part of hypothesis 6 contradicted. However, the perceived integrity prior to the news article did appear to significantly contribute to the prediction of the perceived integrity of the Ministry of Defense after reading the news article. Although they did pass the multicollinearity test, based on the high correlation between the two constructs it could be argued that this significant relation exists because the constructs are identical. This statement is reinforced by the fact that no effects were found for analyses with the difference between the pre- and post-test.

The second part of hypothesis 6 is partially confirmed. That is, the results showed that the level of perceived integrity after reading a negative news article decreased as identification with the NOS-source⁴⁴ increased, whereas, in the same case, perceived integrity increased as identification with the Ministry of Defense-source increased⁴⁵. Meaning that in case of the NOS-source the hypothesis was true, but in case of the Ministry of Defense-source the hypothesis was contradicted. It is likely that this outcome for the NOS-source is linked to the outcome of the fifth hypothesis, as the NOS-source was perceived as more trustworthy and, hence, in that respect can be seen as a more credible source. Furthermore, the increase in the level of perceived integrity when participants identify with the Ministry of Defense-source might be the result of a defensive process. People who identify strongly with a group seem to engage more in identity-protective strategies compared to 'low identifiers' when their group is confronted with a threat (Zebel, Doosje, & Spears, 2009). This effect was also found for nonsocial external objects (e.g. a commercial brand) that are threatened, provided that such an object is part of one's self-concept. For individuals tend to interpret this as a threat to the self, leading to similar defensive responses (Lisjak, Lee, & Gardner, 2012). Likewise, Ploeger and Bisel (2013) found that people who highly identify with their organization engage in "increased

⁴⁴ Identification with the source is an element of source credibility.

⁴⁵ No significant effects were found in case of the neutral news article.

linguistic defensiveness and defensive sensegiving on behalf of their organization” (p. 18) when their organization is involved in ethical wrongdoing. Consequently, it might be possible that participants who scored high on identification with the organization tried to defend the ethical image of the organization (i.e. the Ministry of Defense) (Ploeger & Bisel, 2013). Combined with a stronger resistance to attitude change after receiving negative information from high identifiers (Lisjak et al., 2012), this ‘ethical sensegiving’ could be a reason for the absence of a decrease in the level of perceived integrity (post-test) and, possibly, for the small increase.

At last, additional analyses revealed that age appears to have a negative, significant relation with benevolence, ability, perceived integrity after the news article, and trust. Hence, when the age increases, the scores on benevolence, ability, perceived integrity, and trust decrease. This is contrary to the results of earlier studies, where trust remains constant or increases as age increases (Christensen, & Lægreid, 2005; Sutter & Kocher, 2007). An initial thought on how to explain this result was the possibility that elderly might be more cynical and, therefore, are more careful to trust the government. However, Rubenson, Blais, Fournier, Gidengil, and Nevitte (2004) refute this statement. A more plausible explanation could be the combination of the prevalence of negative news over positive news and the difference between the memory of the elderly versus youngers. That is, elders remember negative events better than young people do (St. Jacques & Levine, 2007). During the time that was spent on the current study there have been mostly negative articles in the news about the Ministry of Defense (e.g. Effting & Feenstra, 2017; “Rekenkamer oordeelt”, 2018). This, in combination with the fact that negative events have a more pronounced effect than positive ones (Kampen et al., 2006), and that elders appear to remember negative events better than young people, could be an explanation for the relation found in the current study. Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that the power of this finding was below the usual .80. Nevertheless, it remains a remarkable finding and further research needs to be done to fully explain the cause of this negative relation.

Limitations and future research

Further research should take the strengths and limitations of the current study into account. First, the current study was conducted in a period during which integrity, especially from the Ministry of Defense, was a so-called ‘hot topic’. Many news articles about misconducts and undesirable behaviour within the Ministry of Defense were published. This might have caused participants to have a (negatively) coloured vision, or contributed to any suspicion participants might have about the authenticity of the news articles, as they might have

been following the topic closely. Furthermore, Carr et al. (2014) state that the topic of information in a news article could elicit different reactions among for instance cynics and sceptics. Hence, the results of the present study should not be generalized beyond the context of the Ministry of Defense or bullying as undesirable behaviour. As government cynics might react less critical to non-governmental organizations committing an integrity violation and/or people's reactions might be more fierce when it concerns, for instance, sexual intimidation (instead of bullying) as undesirable behaviour.

In light of the current attention that the Ministry of Defense's integrity is getting in the media, it could be interesting to conduct a similar study in the future that focuses more on participants' general opinion of the organization prior to an experiment as a predictor for trust. Reason being that opinions can change over time, among others due to news (Reynolds & McCombs, 2002), contrary to trustor's propensity, which is a result of an individual's own experiences (Gefen, 2000). Furthermore, the limitation of integrity being a 'hot topic' is coincidentally also a strength of the current study as it reinforces the relevance of the examined subject, and hence the study.

Second, the news article may not be representative for all forms of journalism, as it was a visualization of an online news article, published by NOS. Although the choice of this news medium was deliberate, it could have influenced the data if participants had a predetermined opinion about the NOS as medium (Carr et al., 2014). Additionally, non-online forms of journalism could elicit other results, because Internet news is perceived as more credible than television news, but newspapers still appear to be more credible than both Internet and television news (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Kioussis, 2001). In order to minimize the influence of a particular news medium and to enhance the richness of data in the future, further research could use a variety of news outlets in which multiple media is tested (e.g. online news, TV broadcasts via videos, pictures of paper articles, (non-)journalist blogs).

Additionally, the manipulation check did not show a very strong interpretation of the valence of the news article among participants. Therefore, further research is needed to (dis-)confirm the results above and clarify the exact influence of the valence of an article. Also, the reliability of the main and subconstructs of 'Trustor's Propensity' were relatively low, which means the results concerning the trustor's propensity should be handled carefully when used in further research.

The results of this study are somewhat ambiguous. This can be attributed to the attempt to create insight into the way trust-related variables impact citizens' process of establishing trust in an organization, by combining various trust-related variables into one research model.

There were no studies found in which these variables all have been taken together before. Possible additional variables that could be included in a future, more elaborate model, visualizing the process that precedes the decision whether an organization can be trusted, are additional demographics (e.g. SES), or a person's pre-existing opinion about the government or the Ministry of Defense.

Despite the ambiguity, the high amount of participants ensures the representativity of the results. Furthermore, the age range of the participants is quite large (i.e. 18-76), which means that this research does not only represent the behaviour of students, but also that of elderly.

Other possible future issues could concern variations in the message content⁴⁶, or the difference between native citizens and citizens with other nationalities (and/or temporary stay, like international students). Future research should also examine more elaborately the effect of the transparency of a message on the perceived integrity of and trust in an organization. Information disclosure could, for instance, be manipulated by explaining a certain situation very elaborately in one message, while keeping vague about the exact details of that same situation in another message. Another suggestion is to manipulate 'clarity', by describing the topic of one message in complex jargon, and the other message in simple, easy understandable words and concepts⁴⁷. Furthermore, it is recommended to do some additional research to the extent to which source credibility influences or inhibits the direct effect of the valence or source of information on perceived integrity (post-test) and trust. A suggestion for such a study is by comparing the effect of two sources: one source that is trustworthy and has expertise (e.g. an objective scientist) and another source that possesses neither (e.g. an unexperienced blogger who is known to write anything that might earn him some money)⁴⁸. At last, it could be interesting to further examine the relation of certain demographics (e.g. employment at the Ministry of Defense) with variables like source identification, identification with the organization, or trusting stance ('trustor's propensity').

Concluding remarks

So far, research has either concentrated on the antecedents of trust, the transparency of an organization or on the source (credibility) of information in relation to the level of trust in

⁴⁶ For example the alternative dimensions of transparency (i.e. information disclosure, clarity, and accuracy) (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2014) or the writing style (i.e. complicated versus simplistic) (Kioussis, 2001).

⁴⁷ Information disclosure and clarity are dimensions of transparency as stated by Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2014).

⁴⁸ Background stories of the sources could be provided to participants of the study to reinforce the intended image of the sources.

an organization. To the researcher's knowledge, no research has been done that combined these different trust-related aspects into one model.

Although not all initial assumptions were confirmed, the present study provides a first step in clarifying how these aspects are all interrelated. Overall, the perceived integrity (pre- and post-test), ability and benevolence of the Ministry of Defense are positively related to the level of trust in the integrity of the Ministry of Defense. Additionally, when the information about integrity violations of the Ministry of Defense is communicated by a trustworthy source (as perceived by citizens), this has a positive influence on citizens' trust in the integrity of the Ministry of Defense.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Factor analysis (all items)

Table 9.

Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis using Principal Axis Factoring and Varimax Rotation of all items.

	Factor												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
TrusProp_1									.67				
TrusProp_2									.38				
TrusProp_3									.61				
TrusProp_4										.61			
TrusProp_5										.64			
IntegPre_1		.37				.46							
IntegPre_2	.32					.55							
IntegPre_3	.43		.53										
IntegPre_4	.37		.50			.36							
IntegPre_5	.34		.56										
IntegPre_6	.44		.66										
IntegPre_7	.42		.61										
IntegPre_8	.50		.68										
SouCred_1							.71						
SouCred_2							.66						
SouCred_3.rev					.50								
SouCred_4					.57								
SouCred_5.rev					.34								
SouCred_6.rev							.51						
SouCred_7					.70								
SouCred_8					.66								
SouCred_9				.35			.33						
SouCred_10				.31			.42						
SouIden							.34						
Transp_1				.67									
Transp_2.rev				.59									
Transp_3				.66									
Transp_4				.50									
IntegPost_1	.47					.44		.36					
IntegPost_2	.50					.41							
IntegPost_3	.65							.40					
IntegPost_4	.65												
IntegPost_5	.52							.50					
IntegPost_6	.62							.42					

Trust in the integrity of the Ministry of Defense

IntegPost_7	.71			
IntegPost_8	.65		.44	
Benev_1	.36			.57
Benev_2	.44			.47
Benev_3	.50			.37
Ability_1	.76			
Ability_2	.67			
Ability_3	.57			.56
Ability_4	.69			
Ability_5	.76			
Trust_1	.64			
Trust_2	.70			
Trust_3	.68			
Trust_4	.73			
Trust_5	.59			
Trust_6	.58			
Trust_7.rev	.37			
Trust_8	.43	-.39		
Identi_1	.72			
Identi_2	.71			
Identi_3	.64			
Identi_4	.35	.40		.38
Identi_5	.75			
Identi_6.rev	.76			
IdentiCirk	.77			

Note. Rotation converged in 12 iterations.

Appendix B – Factor-analysis (Trustor’s Propensity)

Table 10.

Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis using Principal Axis Factoring and Varimax Rotation of the Trustor’s Propensity Scale.

	Factor	
	1	2
TrusProp_1	.78	
TrusProp_2	.36	
TrusProp_3	.56	
TrusProp_4		.67
TrusProp_5		.66

Note. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Appendix C – Factor-analysis (Perceived Integrity)

Table 11.

Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis using Principal Axis Factoring and Varimax Rotation of the Perceived Integrity Scale (Pre- and Post-test).

	Factor		
	1	2	3
IntegPre_1			.63
IntegPre_2			.62
IntegPre_3	.31	.58	.34
IntegPre_4		.52	.50
IntegPre_5		.57	.30
IntegPre_6	.33	.71	
IntegPre_7		.71	
IntegPre_8		.78	.39
IntegPost_1	.50		.50
IntegPost_2	.54		.55
IntegPost_3	.70	.33	
IntegPost_4	.63	.32	.36
IntegPost_5	.67		
IntegPost_6	.78		
IntegPost_7	.67		
IntegPost_8	.70	.42	

Note. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Appendix D – news articles



Defensie kwam eerder al naar buiten met nieuws over militairen die melding deden van ongewenst gedrag, zoals misbruik en pesten. Het lijkt alsof Defensie niet genoeg onderneemt om dergelijke incidenten te voorkomen. Recent kwam namelijk opnieuw een aantal militairen naar voren met meldingen gerelateerd aan pestgedrag, zo meldt Defensie.

Defensie laat weten dat het pestgedrag waar de betreffende militairen last van hadden vooral tot uiting kwam in de vorm van langere tijd genegeerd worden door hun leidinggevend. Ook werden ze vaak lastig gevallen door hun collega-militairen.

In een reactie laat een woordvoerder van Defensie weten het te betreuren dat deze situatie is voorgevallen en dat de zaak verder zal worden onderzocht. Wel geeft Defensie toe dat uit rapporten van eerdere onderzoeken naar dergelijke incidenten is gebleken dat meldingen niet altijd goed opgepakt zijn. De oprechtheid van deze reactie kan dus in twijfel worden getrokken.

De woordvoerder van Defensie benadrukt dat wanneer militairen last hebben van ongewenst gedrag, zij dit kunnen melden bij hun leidinggevend of bij het "Meldpunt Integriteit Defensie". De vraag is echter of militairen dat zullen doen. Eerder onderzoek door Defensie liet zien dat militairen huiverig zijn om melding te maken van ongewenst gedrag. In het verleden is namelijk gebleken dat, wanneer militairen melding maken, deze soms in de doofpot wordt gestopt. Dit zou een gegronde reden kunnen zijn voor wantrouwen vanuit de desbetreffende militairen.

Figure 11. Negative; source of the Ministry of Defense



Defensie kwam eerder al naar buiten met nieuws over militairen die melding deden van ongewenst gedrag, zoals misbruik en pesten. Recent kwam een aantal militairen naar voren met meldingen gerelateerd aan pestgedrag, zo meldt Defensie.

Defensie laat weten dat het pestgedrag waar de betreffende militairen last van hadden vooral tot uiting kwam in de vorm van langere tijd genegeerd worden door hun leidinggevend. Ook werden ze vaak lastig gevallen door hun collega-militairen.

In een reactie laat een woordvoerder van Defensie weten het te betreuren dat deze situatie is voorgevallen en dat de zaak verder zal worden onderzocht. Wel geeft Defensie toe dat uit rapporten van eerdere onderzoeken naar dergelijke incidenten is gebleken dat meldingen niet altijd goed opgepakt zijn.

De woordvoerder van Defensie benadrukt dat wanneer militairen last hebben van ongewenst gedrag, zij dit kunnen melden bij hun leidinggevend of bij het "Meldpunt Integriteit Defensie". De vraag is echter of militairen dat zullen doen. Eerder onderzoek door Defensie liet zien dat militairen huiverig zijn om melding te maken van ongewenst gedrag. In het verleden is namelijk gebleken dat, wanneer militairen melding maken, zij het gevoel hadden dat er weinig met hun melding werd gedaan.

Figure 12. Neutral; source of the Ministry of Defense



Eerder was Defensie al in het nieuws vanwege militairen die melding deden van ongewenst gedrag, zoals misbruik en pesten. Het lijkt alsof Defensie niet genoeg onderneemt om dergelijke incidenten te voorkomen. Recent kwam namelijk opnieuw een aantal militairen naar voren met meldingen gerelateerd aan pestgedrag.

In een concept rapport dat de NOS in handen heeft gekregen staat dat de militairen langere tijd werden genegeerd door hun leidinggevend. Ook werden ze vaak lastig gevallen door collega-militairen.

Dergelijke situaties worden door Defensie betreurd. Uit de informatie die de NOS heeft bemachtigd blijkt dan ook dat de zaak verder zal worden onderzocht. Wel blijkt uit rapporten van eerdere onderzoeken naar dergelijke incidenten dat meldingen niet altijd goed opgepakt zijn. De oprechtheid van deze reactie kan dus in twijfel worden getrokken.

Wanneer militairen last hebben van ongewenst gedrag kunnen zij hier een melding van maken bij hun leidinggevend of bij het "Meldpunt Integriteit Defensie". De vraag is echter of militairen dat zullen doen. Uit navraag door de NOS blijkt dat militairen huiverig zijn om melding te maken van ongewenst gedrag. In het verleden is namelijk gebleken dat, wanneer militairen melding maken, deze soms in de doofpot wordt gestopt. Dit zou een gegronde reden kunnen zijn voor wantrouwen vanuit de desbetreffende militairen.

Figure 13. Negative; NOS-source



Eerder was Defensie al in het nieuws vanwege militairen die melding deden van ongewenst gedrag, zoals misbruik en pesten. Recent kwam een aantal militairen naar voren met meldingen gerelateerd aan pestgedrag.

In een concept rapport dat de NOS in handen heeft gekregen staat dat het pestgedrag waar de betreffende militairen last van hadden vooral tot uiting kwam in de vorm van langere tijd genegeerd worden door hun leidinggevend. Ook werden ze vaak lastig gevallen door hun collega-militairen.

Dergelijke situaties worden door Defensie betreurd. Uit de informatie die de NOS heeft bemachtigd blijkt dan ook dat de zaak verder zal worden onderzocht. Wel blijkt uit rapporten van eerdere onderzoeken naar dergelijke incidenten dat meldingen niet altijd goed opgepakt zijn.

Wanneer militairen last hebben van ongewenst gedrag kunnen zij hier een melding van maken bij hun leidinggevend of bij het "Meldpunt Integriteit Defensie". De vraag is echter of militairen dat zullen doen. Uit navraag door de NOS blijkt dat militairen huiverig zijn melding te maken van ongewenst gedrag. In het verleden is namelijk gebleken dat, wanneer militairen melding maken, zij het gevoel hadden dat er weinig met hun melding werd gedaan.

Figure 14. Neutral; NOS-source

Appendix E – Guidelines for correct answers of the manipulation checks
Table 12.

Correct scores for the manipulation checks.

News articles	Source ^a	Read	Negative judgments ^c	Interpretation of the valence ^d	Valence of information (more negative than usual)
		thoroughly (i.e. topic) ^b			
Negative – MoD	Communication from the MoD (1)	Bullying (1)	Yes (1)	Very negative (1)	Agree a lot (5)
				Negative (2)	Agree (4)
Negative – NOS	Journalists of the NOS (2)	Bullying (1)	Yes (1)	Very negative (1)	Agree a lot (5)
				Negative (2)	Agree (4)
Neutral – MoD	Communication from the MoD (1)	Bullying (1)	No (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree a lot (1)
				Positive (4)	Disagree (2)
					Neutral (3)
Neutral – NOS	Journalists of the NOS (2)	Bullying (1)	No (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree a lot (1)
				Positive (4)	Disagree (2)
					Neutral (3)

^a Sent in letter of reader (3) is always incorrect.

^b The topics ‘fraud’ (2) and ‘negotiations’ (3) are always incorrect.

^c I don’t know (3) is always correct.

^d Very positive (5) is always incorrect.

Appendix F – Questionnaire (online version)

Introductietekst

Beste deelnemer,

Bedankt voor het meedoen aan dit onderzoek. Deze vragenlijst is onderdeel van een onderzoek dat wordt uitgevoerd door de afdeling Psychology of Conflict, Risk and Safety van de Universiteit Twente. De gegevens en resultaten van het onderzoek worden anoniem behandeld, individuele antwoorden worden niet met derden gedeeld. De resultaten van dit onderzoek zullen uitsluitend gebruikt worden voor wetenschappelijke doeleinden. Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal ongeveer 15 minuten duren. U kunt op elk moment stoppen met uw deelname aan dit onderzoek, wanneer u niet meer verder wilt gaan.

Alvast bedankt voor uw tijd.

Door op >> te klikken verklaart u bovenstaande te hebben gelezen en verklaart u vrijwillig deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek.

Trustor's propensity

De volgende stellingen hebben betrekking op uw mening over de mens in het algemeen. Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Ik denk dat de meeste mensen zich over het algemeen aan hun beloftes houden.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik denk dat mensen meestal hun woorden kracht proberen bij te zetten met hun acties.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik denk dat de meeste mensen eerlijk zijn in hun omgang met anderen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Meestal vertrouw ik mensen tot ze mij een reden geven om ze niet te vertrouwen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Over het algemeen geef ik mensen het voordeel van de twijfel wanneer ik ze voor het eerst ontmoet.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Perceived integrity of MinDef - pre-test

De volgende stellingen gaan over hoe u tegen een organisatie aankijkt, in dit geval het Ministerie van Defensie. In deze vragenlijst wordt onder integriteit verstaan dat de woorden (of beloftes) van een organisatie ook overeenkomen met de daden van de organisatie. Dit kan betrekking hebben op:

- A.) het morele gedrag van werknemers (bv. respect hebben en tonen, geen fraude plegen)
- B.) de ethische cultuur binnen de organisatie (bv. bespreekbaarheid van standpunten of dilemma's, en aanspreekbaarheid van collega's op fouten)
- C.) het management m.b.t. het integriteitsbeleid van de organisatie (bv. handhaven van het beleid, toezicht houden op de regelgeving).

Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Ik vind de waarden (d.w.z. waar de organisatie voor staat) van het Ministerie van Defensie goed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik denk dat gezonde principes/uitgangspunten de acties en daden van het Ministerie van Defensie leiden.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik vind het Ministerie van Defensie een integere/betrouwbare organisatie.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik zou de handelingen en besluiten van het Ministerie van Defensie als moreel verantwoord bestempelen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik denk dat het Ministerie van Defensie een goed integriteitsbeleid heeft.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik denk dat het Ministerie van Defensie zorgvuldig het integriteitsbeleid uitvoert en naleeft.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik denk dat in geval van incidenten het Ministerie van Defensie deze zorgvuldig oppakt en afhandelt.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wat voor cijfer op een schaal van 1 (heel laag) tot 10 (heel hoog) geeft u het Ministerie van Defensie voor de integriteit van de organisatie?

Tekstje: eerste deel vragenlijst

Dit was het eerste deel van de vragenlijst. Nu volgt een nieuwsbericht. Lees het nieuwsbericht goed en aandachtig door. Houd het bericht in gedachten bij het invullen van het tweede deel van deze vragenlijst.

Nieuwsbericht 1 - Neg + Def



Defensie kwam eerder al naar buiten met nieuws over militairen die melding deden van ongewenst gedrag, zoals misbruik en pesten. Het lijkt alsof Defensie niet genoeg onderneemt om dergelijke incidenten te voorkomen. Recent kwam namelijk opnieuw een aantal militairen naar voren met meldingen gerelateerd aan pestgedrag, zo meldt Defensie.

Defensie laat weten dat het pestgedrag waar de betreffende militairen last van hadden vooral tot uiting kwam in de vorm van langere tijd genegeerd worden door hun leidinggevenden. Ook werden ze vaak lastig gevallen door hun collega-militairen.

In een reactie laat een woordvoerder van Defensie weten het te betreuren dat deze situatie is voorgevallen en dat de zaak verder zal worden onderzocht. Wel geeft Defensie toe dat uit rapporten van eerdere onderzoeken naar dergelijke incidenten is gebleken dat meldingen niet altijd goed opgepakt zijn. De oprechtheid van deze reactie kan dus in twijfel worden getrokken.

De woordvoerder van Defensie benadrukt dat wanneer militairen last hebben van ongewenst gedrag, zij dit kunnen melden bij hun leidinggevenden of bij het "Meldpunt Integriteit Defensie". De vraag is echter of militairen dat zullen doen. Eerder onderzoek door Defensie liet zien dat militairen huiverig zijn om melding te maken van ongewenst gedrag. In het verleden is namelijk gebleken dat, wanneer militairen melding maken, deze soms in de doofpot wordt gestopt. Dit zou een gegronde reden kunnen zijn voor wantrouwen vanuit de desbetreffende militairen.

Nieuwsbericht 2 - Neg + NOS



Eerder was Defensie al in het nieuws vanwege militairen die melding deden van ongewenst gedrag, zoals misbruik en pesten. Het lijkt alsof Defensie niet genoeg onderneemt om dergelijke incidenten te voorkomen. Recent kwam namelijk opnieuw een aantal militairen naar voren met meldingen gerelateerd aan pestgedrag.

In een concept rapport dat de NOS in handen heeft gekregen staat dat de militairen langere tijd werden genegeerd door hun leidinggevenden. Ook werden ze vaak lastig gevallen door collega-militairen.

Dergelijke situaties worden door Defensie betreurd. Uit de informatie die de NOS heeft bemachtigd blijkt dan ook dat de zaak verder zal worden onderzocht. Wel blijkt uit rapporten van eerdere onderzoeken naar dergelijke incidenten dat meldingen niet altijd goed opgepakt zijn. De oprechtheid van deze reactie kan dus in twijfel worden getrokken.

Wanneer militairen last hebben van ongewenst gedrag kunnen zij hier een melding van maken bij hun leidinggevenden of bij het "Meldpunt Integriteit Defensie". De vraag is echter of militairen dat zullen doen. Uit navraag door de NOS blijkt dat militairen huiverig zijn om melding te maken van ongewenst gedrag. In het verleden is namelijk gebleken dat, wanneer militairen melding maken, deze soms in de doofpot wordt gestopt. Dit zou een gegronde reden kunnen zijn voor wantrouwen vanuit de desbetreffende militairen.

Nieuwsbericht 3 - Neut + Def



Defensie kwam eerder al naar buiten met nieuws over militairen die melding deden van ongewenst gedrag, zoals misbruik en pesten. Recent kwam een aantal militairen naar voren met meldingen gerelateerd aan pestgedrag, zo meldt Defensie.

Defensie laat weten dat het pestgedrag waar de betreffende militairen last van hadden vooral tot uiting kwam in de vorm van langere tijd genegeerd worden door hun leidinggevenden. Ook werden ze vaak lastig gevallen door hun collega-militairen.

In een reactie laat een woordvoerder van Defensie weten het te betreuren dat deze situatie is voorgevallen en dat de zaak verder zal worden onderzocht. Wel geeft Defensie toe dat uit rapporten van eerdere onderzoeken naar dergelijke incidenten is gebleken dat meldingen niet altijd goed opgepakt zijn.

De woordvoerder van Defensie benadrukt dat wanneer militairen last hebben van ongewenst gedrag, zij dit kunnen melden bij hun leidinggevenden of bij het "Meldpunt Integriteit Defensie". De vraag is echter of militairen dat zullen doen. Eerder onderzoek door Defensie liet zien dat militairen huiverig zijn om melding te maken van ongewenst gedrag. In het verleden is namelijk gebleken dat, wanneer militairen melding maken, zij het gevoel hadden dat er weinig met hun melding werd gedaan.

Nieuwsbericht 4 - Neut + NOS



Eerder was Defensie al in het nieuws vanwege militairen die melding deden van ongewenst gedrag, zoals misbruik en pesten. Recent kwam een aantal militairen naar voren met meldingen gerelateerd aan pestgedrag.

In een concept rapport dat de NOS in handen heeft gekregen staat dat het pestgedrag waar de betreffende militairen last van hadden vooral tot uiting kwam in de vorm van langere tijd genegeerd worden door hun leidinggevenden. Ook werden ze vaak lastig gevallen door hun collega-militairen.

Dergelijke situaties worden door Defensie betreurd. Uit de informatie die de NOS heeft bemachtigd blijkt dan ook dat de zaak verder zal worden onderzocht. Wel blijkt uit rapporten van eerdere onderzoeken naar dergelijke incidenten dat meldingen niet altijd goed opgepakt zijn.

Wanneer militairen last hebben van ongewenst gedrag kunnen zij hier een melding van maken bij hun leidinggevenden of bij het "Meldpunt Integriteit Defensie". De vraag is echter of militairen dat zullen doen. Uit navraag door de NOS blijkt dat militairen huiverig zijn melding te maken van ongewenst gedrag. In het verleden is namelijk gebleken dat, wanneer militairen melding maken, zij het gevoel hadden dat er weinig met hun melding werd gedaan.

Manipulatiechecks

Op welke wijze is de informatie uit het nieuwsbericht, in de media terecht gekomen?

- ☐ Door communicatie vanuit het Ministerie van Defensie
- ☐ Door journalisten van de NOS
- ☐ Door een ingestuurde brief van een lezer

Wat was het hoofdonderwerp van het nieuwsbericht?

- ☐ Pesten tussen militairen onderling
- ☐ Vermeende fraude bij politie en het Ministerie van Defensie
- ☐ Onderhandelingen over de CAO van Defensie personeel

Had u het gevoel dat er negatieve waardeoordelen over Defensie in het nieuwsbericht stonden?

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee
- ☐ Weet ik niet

Hoe schat u de toon van het nieuwsbericht in m.b.t. het Ministerie van Defensie?

- ☐ Heel erg negatief
- ☐ Negatief
- ☐ Neutraal
- ☐ Positief
- ☐ Heel erg positief

"Ik vond het nieuwsbericht negatiever geformuleerd dan andere nieuwsberichten die ik de laatste tijd heb gelezen".

Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met deze stelling:

- ☐ Heel erg oneens
- ☐ Oneens
- ☐ Neutraal
- ☐ Mee eens
- ☐ Heel erg mee eens

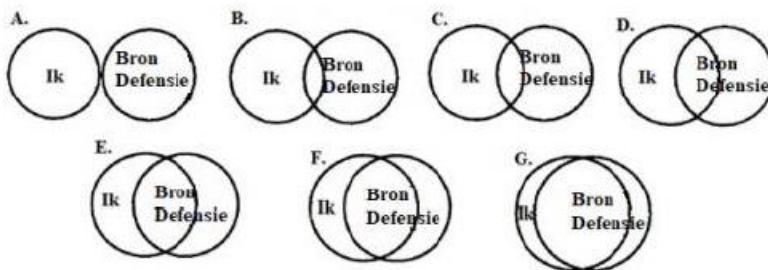
Source credibility Defensie

In het nieuwsbericht werd de informatie actief naar buiten gebracht door het Ministerie van Defensie. Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Eens	Heel erg mee eens
Defensie is een betrouwbare bron van informatie met betrekking tot dit onderwerp.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik heb vertrouwen in de bron.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron mist informatie over dit onderwerp.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik beschouw de bron als een expert op dit thema.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De mening van deze bron over dit onderwerp is van weinig waarde.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Defensie is een onbetrouwbare bron van informatie met betrekking tot dit onderwerp.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron heeft aanzienlijke kennis over de betrokken factoren.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron is goed geïnformeerd over dit onderwerp.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron is onpartijdig (unbiased).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron vertelt de waarheid.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Identification with source - Defensie

Welke van de onderstaande cirkelparen geeft het beste weer in welke mate u zich identificeert met de bron die de informatie heeft aangeleverd?



- ☐ A
- ☐ B
- ☐ C
- ☐ D
- ☐ E
- ☐ F
- ☐ G

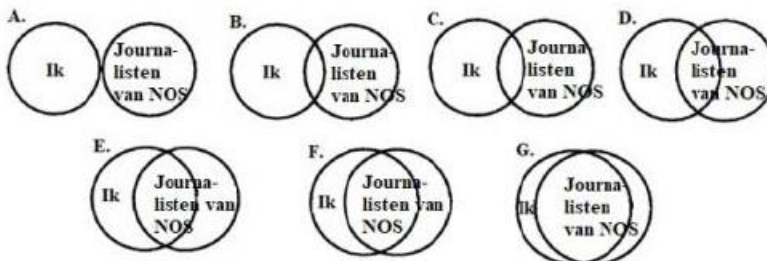
Source credibility NOS

In het nieuwsbericht werd de informatie verkregen door journalistiek onderzoek van de NOS. Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Eens	Heel erg mee eens
De NOS is een betrouwbare bron van informatie met betrekking tot dit onderwerp.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik heb vertrouwen in de bron.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron mist informatie over dit onderwerp.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik beschouw de bron als een expert op dit thema.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De mening van deze bron over dit onderwerp is van weinig waarde.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De NOS is een onbetrouwbare bron van informatie met betrekking tot dit onderwerp.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron heeft aanzienlijke kennis over de betrokken factoren.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron is goed geïnformeerd over dit onderwerp.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron is onpartijdig (unbiased).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
De bron vertelt de waarheid.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Identification with source - NOS

Welke van de onderstaande cirkelparen geeft het beste weer in welke mate u zich identificeert met de bron die de informatie heeft aangeleverd?



- ☐ A
☐ B
☐ C
☐ D
☐ E
☐ F
☐ G

Transparency

De volgende stellingen gaan over de transparantie en volledigheid van het nieuwsbericht. Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Er werd genoeg informatie in het nieuwsbericht gedeeld.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bij het lezen van het nieuwsbericht had ik het gevoel dat er belangrijke informatie achter werd gehouden.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik vond dat de situatie in het nieuwsbericht duidelijk en helder werd beschreven.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Het nieuwsbericht vertelt het hele verhaal over de voorgevallen situatie binnen het Ministerie van Defensie.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Perceived integrity of MinDef - post-test

De volgende stellingen gaan over hoe u tegen het Ministerie van Defensie aankijkt, met betrekking tot de integriteit van de organisatie. In deze vragenlijst wordt onder integriteit verstaan dat de woorden (of beloftes) van een organisatie ook overeenkomen met de daden van de organisatie. Dit kan betrekking hebben op:

- A.) het morele gedrag van werknemers (bv. respect hebben en tonen, geen fraude plegen)
- B.) de ethische cultuur binnen de organisatie (bv. bespreekbaarheid van standpunten of dilemma's, en aanspreekbaarheid van collega's op fouten)
- C.) het management m.b.t. het integriteitsbeleid van de organisatie (bv. handhaven van het beleid, toezicht houden op de regelgeving).

Trust in the integrity of the Ministry of Defense

Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

Na het lezen van het nieuwsbericht...

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
...vind ik de waarden van het Ministerie van Defensie goed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...denk ik dat gezonde principes/uitgangspunten de acties en daden van het Ministerie van Defensie leiden.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...vind ik het Ministerie van Defensie een integere/betrouwbare organisatie.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...zou ik de handelingen en besluiten van het Ministerie van Defensie als moreel verantwoord bestempelen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...denk ik dat het Ministerie van Defensie een goed integriteitsbeleid heeft.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...denk ik dat het Ministerie van Defensie zorgvuldig het integriteitsbeleid uitvoert en naleeft.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
...denk ik dat in geval van incidenten het Ministerie van Defensie deze zorgvuldig oppakt en afhandelt.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wat voor cijfer op een schaal van 1 (heel laag) tot 10 (heel hoog) geeft u het Ministerie van Defensie na het lezen van het nieuwsbericht voor de integriteit van de organisatie?

Benevolence of MinDef

De volgende stellingen gaan over uw verwachting van het Ministerie van Defensie. Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Ik ga ervan uit dat ik erop kan rekenen dat het Ministerie van Defensie rekening houdt met hoe haar omgang met integriteitsvraagstukken de Nederlandse maatschappij beïnvloedt.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik verwacht dat de intenties van het Ministerie van Defensie bij het afhandelen van integriteitsvraagstukken goedwillend zijn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Het Ministerie van Defensie handelt in mijn beste belang.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Trust in the integrity of the Ministry of Defense

Ability of MinDef

De volgende stellingen gaan over integriteit en integriteitschendingen. Hierbij kunt u denken aan fraude, vriendjespolitiek, pesten, seksuele intimidatie, etc.

Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Het management van het Ministerie van Defensie is competent in het omgaan met integriteitschendingen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Het Ministerie van Defensie begrijpt wat de impact is van integriteitschendingen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Het Ministerie van Defensie weet veel af van integriteit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Het Ministerie van Defensie weet hoe zij moet omgaan met integriteitvraagstukken.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Het Ministerie van Defensie is bekwaam als het gaat om het afhandelen van integriteitschendingen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Trust in integrity of MinDef

De volgende stellingen gaan over uw vertrouwen in het Ministerie van Defensie. Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Ik vertrouw erop dat het Ministerie van Defensie weloverwogen beslissingen maakt in het kader van haar integriteitsbeleid.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik heb er vertrouwen in dat het Ministerie van Defensie integriteitsvraagstukken (bv. afhandeling van incidenten, zoals ongewenst gedrag, of schendingen, zoals fraude en belangenverstrengeling) oplost zonder andere problemen te veroorzaken.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik heb er vertrouwen in dat het Ministerie van Defensie verantwoordelijkheid neemt voor de resultaten van haar beslissingen m.b.t. integriteitsvraagstukken.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik geloof dat het management van het Ministerie van Defensie adequaat reageert als zich een (mogelijke) schending van integriteit binnen Defensie heeft voorgedaan.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik heb het gevoel dat het Ministerie van Defensie open is in het communiceren van belangrijke besluiten, gebeurtenissen en/of uitkomsten van onderzoek die betrekking hebben op haar integriteit(beleid).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik heb er vertrouwen in dat integriteit binnen het Ministerie van Defensie als een belangrijke waarde wordt gezien.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik heb het gevoel dat het Ministerie van Defensie fouten zal proberen te verbergen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Na het lezen van het nieuwsbericht is mijn vertrouwen in het Ministerie van Defensie ...

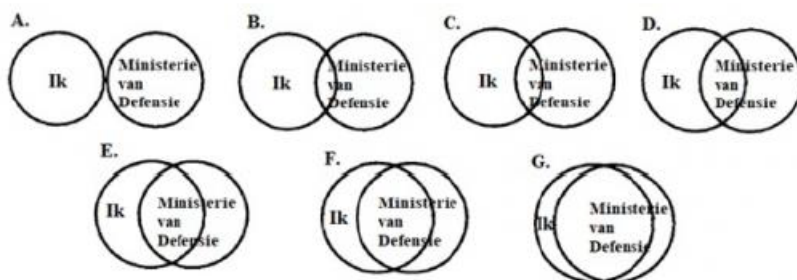
- ☐ Heel erg gedaald
- ☐ Gedaald
- ☐ Gelijk gebleven
- ☐ Gegroeid
- ☐ Heel erg gegroeid

Identificatie met MinDef

De volgende stellingen hebben betrekking op het Ministerie van Defensie in het algemeen.
Geef aan in hoeverre u het met de volgende stellingen eens bent.

	Heel erg oneens	Oneens	Neutraal	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Ik voel mij loyaal aan het Ministerie van Defensie.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik voel mij solidair/eensgezind met het Ministerie van Defensie.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Het Ministerie van Defensie is belangrijk voor mij.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik heb veel respect voor het Ministerie van Defensie en haar medewerkers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ik voel me (persoonlijk) betrokken wanneer het Ministerie van Defensie wordt bekritiseerd.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Het Ministerie van Defensie staat ver van mij af.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Welke van de onderstaande cirkelparen geeft het beste weer in welke mate u zich identificeert met het Ministerie van Defensie in het algemeen?



- ☐ A
- ☐ B
- ☐ C
- ☐ D
- ☐ E
- ☐ F
- ☐ G

Demografische vragen

Wat is uw leeftijd?

Wat is uw geslacht?

- ☐ Man
☐ Vrouw
☐ Anders, namelijk...

Wat is uw nationaliteit?

- ☐ Nederlands
☐ Duits
☐ Anders, namelijk...

Wat is uw hoogst genoten opleiding (huidig of afgerond)?

- ☐ Lagere school
☐ Middelbare school
☐ MBO
☐ HBO
☐ WO
☐ Anders, namelijk...

Werkt u (of heeft u ooit gewerkt) bij het Ministerie van Defensie?

Afsluiting vragenlijst

Dit is het einde van de vragenlijst. Bedankt voor uw deelname.

Dit onderzoek ging over de invloed van communicatie over (vermoedens van) integriteitschendingen (voorgevallen bij het Ministerie van Defensie) op het vertrouwen van burgers in het Ministerie van Defensie. Om dit goed te kunnen meten is er een nieuwsbericht geschreven. Hierin is de bron die de informatie aan het licht bracht gemanipuleerd (NOS vs. het Ministerie van Defensie zelf). Daarnaast is de inhoud van het artikel gemanipuleerd door de toon van het artikel te veranderen (negatief vs. neutraal).

Het nieuwsbericht in de vragenlijst is dus niet echt! Het artikel was uitsluitend bedoeld een situatie te schetsen, om de resultaten van dit onderzoek zo realistisch mogelijk te maken.

Wanneer u nog vragen of opmerkingen heeft met betrekking tot de vragenlijst of het onderzoek kunt u mailen naar: n.c.m.kuijsten@student.utwente.nl