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Personnel F

**Beyond quid pro quo: Good soldiers and characteristics of their helping behaviours.**

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**Beyond quid pro quo: Good soldiers and characteristics of their helping behaviours.**

Personnel Review

## Abstract

**Purpose** – Good soldiers are people who engage in citizenship behaviours “to do good” instead of “to look good”. The purpose of this article is to explore the motivations behind and the specific characteristics of behaviours of the good soldiers in the context of work using social exchange theory (SET) as a theoretical framework.

**Design/methodology/approach** – 47 dyadic interviews with 94 individuals from three organisations where good soldiers are most likely to be observed were conducted.

**Findings** – Data analysis revealed that good soldiers are driven by concern for others and generalised reciprocity, but not expectations of self-benefits. Their actions were further found to be discretionary, reactive and proactive, and associated with different levels of self-sacrifice.

**Practical implications** – The findings of this study point human resources (HR) practitioners’ attention towards qualitatively unique acts of good soldiers. An assumption is made that awareness of such behaviours can help organisations to stimulate individual self-motivation, so that the quality of helping behaviours could be improved.

**Originality/value** - Arguing for a fundamental rethink of the psychological foundations underpinning helpful behaviours, this paper departs from predominantly individualistic view on work motivation and reinforces the other-oriented, altruistic dimension of SET. In doing so, it addresses the lack of conceptual and theoretical clarity on differently motivated helping and extends the existing limited research evidence in this area. It further addresses a need for a comprehensive understanding of other-oriented behaviours and accounts for vital - yet neglected – features of such acts.

**Keywords:** organisational citizenship behaviours, citizenship motives, altruism, help, social exchange theory

**Article classification:** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

The willingness to ‘walk the extra mile’ is vital in the employer–employee relationship. This is linked to the interest in the scholarly community paid to Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCBs; e.g., Chênevert *et al.*, 2015; Kao, 2017). OCBs are employees’ discretionary actions that aim to promote the effective functioning of the organization (Organ *et al.*, 2006) and helping is one of its mostly studied dimensions (Chou and Stauffer, 2016). Since different parties in employment relationships display variation in terms of their motivations when helping others (Kim *et al.*, 2018), a distinction has been made between good soldiers and good actors (Donia *et al.*, 2018; Snell and Wong, 2007). Good soldiers seek to help other people and the organisation because of their prosocial or altruistic motives (Rioux and Penner, 2001). In contrast, good actors are more likely to help “at strategic times and in strategic ways” (Grant and Mayer, 2009, p. 901) to create favourable impression (Bowler *et al.*, 2019) or to gain other self-benefits (Lavelle, 2010).

Given that good soldiers are perceived as highly valuable from a HR perspective (Clarkson, 2014), surprisingly little empirical research has been conducted to understand their behaviours and motivations in depth. This may be associated with scholarly attempts to analyse most helping behaviours as part of wider reciprocal interactions (Han *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, majorly investigated through the lense of SET (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2017), helping is mostly based on the principle that people “reap the seeds that they sow” (Meacham *et al.*, 2017, p. 1479). In this article, the notion of SET is extended to emphasise its other-oriented dimensions where any benefits in the process of help are valued as symbols of concern for others as opposed to expectations of returns (see: Colbert *et al.*, 2016). This view is subsequently used as a basis to unpack the motives behind and specific characteristics of helping behaviours exerted by good soldiers in the context of work. The findings from qualitative interviews with

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2  
3 94 individuals from three organisations contribute to the existing limited empirical evidence in  
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5 this area and offer a number of theoretical and practical implications.  
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8 First, the study contributes to answering the calls of Ocampo *et al.* (2018) to engage in  
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10 an in-depth exploration of different forms of OCBs to gain more clarity on overlapping  
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12 concepts. By distinguishing between differently motivated helping behaviours and pointing out  
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14 to their unique characteristics, this study contributes to untangling the related inconsistent  
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16 findings in the domain. In doing so, it re-emphasises the relatively unanswered call of Organ  
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18 *et al.* (2006) for consistency in using specific versus broad labels (i.e. altruistic help versus  
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20 help) with critical implications for theory development, research design and enhanced  
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22 communication among scholars. Finally, the findings of this study reinforce the somewhat  
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24 neglected other-oriented dimension to SET. By drawing attention to concern for other  
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26 organisational stakeholder and imprecise multilateral exchanges between employees, insights  
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28 into how the theory can provide a viable explanation of helping behaviours exerted by good  
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30 soldiers are given.  
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35 Practically, the findings of this study point HR attention towards the unique nature of  
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37 helping behaviours exerted by good soldiers. If practitioners are not aware that some people  
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39 are primarily concerned with others as opposed to self, they will likely fail to understand how  
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41 such actions could play an important role in organisations. This has further implications for  
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43 recruitment, rewards and promotion decisions – critical aspects of HR practice with  
44  
45 implications for the organisational ability to meet business needs through managing its human  
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47 capital. The reported research is an initial step in the direction of aiding HR practitioners in  
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49 playing a role in recognising and maximising the value of good soldiers in their organisations.  
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54 In the sections to follow, theoretical rationale and empirical basis for the current study  
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56 are outlined. The research design and method are presented and justified. The interview data is  
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3 analysed and the main findings are discussed in light of their theoretical and practical  
4 contributions. The discussion is concluded with directions for future research.  
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## 8 **2. Social exchange theory and the principles of workplace help**

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11 SET is based on the assumption that human behaviour is the result of an exchange where the  
12 ultimate aim is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Since workplace helping behaviours  
13 are predominantly investigated from a perspective of SET, they are often portrayed as a process  
14 of negotiated exchanges between the parties (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2017) based around the  
15 assumptions *I do it for you = you do it for me* (Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2015). This, however,  
16 appears somewhat paradoxical in the context of good soldiers who are concerned with the  
17 welfare of others rather than self-benefits (Donia *et al.*, 2015).  
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29         Importantly, while the norm of reciprocity lies at the heart of SET (e.g., Ahmad *et al.*,  
30 2019, p. 100), what seems to be somewhat discarded as important is the fact that it does not  
31 necessarily provide the only universal principle of exchange (see: Cropanzano and Mitchell,  
32 2005). The seminal work of Meeker (1971) implies that other exchange principles may include  
33 rationality (maximising own gains), equity (receiving what one deserves on the basis of input),  
34 competition and rivalry (maximising own gains at an absolute cost), and altruism (helping  
35 another person). The principle of reciprocity can be further divided into generalised and  
36 balanced types (Willer *et al.*, 2012). Whereas balanced reciprocity is characterised by a *quid*  
37 *pro quo* approach to the exchange, generalised reciprocity has more altruistic orientation which  
38 is not concerned over the timing and the content of the exchange, potential returns are not  
39 stipulated in advance, and the acts of support are mainly ingrained in trust in the exchange  
40 partner (Baker and Bulkley, 2014). It is demonstrated in Table 1 below how the same behaviour  
41 at visual level (A helps B) can vary significantly when the underlying principles of help (i.e.,  
42 motives) are examined.  
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-----Insert Table 1 about here -----

Although helping behaviours guided by the balanced reciprocity principle of SET are undoubtedly important in employment relationships (Koster and Sanders, 2006; Sanders and Schyns, 2006), the approach adopted in this study is based on the premise that other rules are viable as well and they will uniquely contribute towards specific characteristics of resultant helping behaviours. Consistently, an alternative view on SET that recognises other rules should not be neglected if fertile ground for theory development is to be provided. This is particularly vital given that in situations when people expect reciprocation, potential breach of a 'deal' can subsequently sully the effectiveness of such arrangements (Conway and Briner, 2005). Moreover, the changing and often indeterminate needs of the contemporary organisation (Grant *et al.*, 2009) mean that the conditions are often unfavourable to building a stable pattern of cooperation based on explicit reciprocal deals. Consistently, there exists a strong rationale to consider complementary principles of SET and the characteristics of differently motivated behaviours. Given the focus of this paper is placed on helping behaviours exerted by good soldiers, this study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

*What motivates helping behaviours exerted by good soldiers in the context of work?*

*What are the specific characteristics of helping behaviours exerted by good soldiers in the context of work?*

### **3. Methodology**

A qualitative research strategy was adopted. Since the logic of theoretical sampling lie in the selection of information-rich cases which can be studied in depth (Morse and Clark, 2019), the choice of data samples was hoped to enable the researcher to impute the theoretical aspects of the research. To inductively explore the research questions guiding this study, a focus was therefore placed on organisational contexts in which good soldiers are most likely to be

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2  
3 observed. The choice of organisations from public and non-profit sectors in England was based  
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5 on the principle that organisations coming from such environments are likely to render what  
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7 was being studied is “transparently observable” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 537). This is because the  
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9 value of such organisations lies in achievement of social purposes for which no revenue stream  
10  
11 is readily apparent (Word and Sung, 2015) whereas their organisational members perceive  
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13 careers as vehicles for social change (Drucker, 2006). Such organisations are also characterised  
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15 by collectivistic culture based on the tenets of altruism as opposed to individualistic cultures  
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17 emphasising individual gains (Lemmon and Wayne, 2015). While at face value the explored  
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19 organisations came from similar backgrounds, actually each of these cases was placed in  
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21 unique contexts which revealed in-depth contextual information regarding the researched  
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23 phenomenon.  
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28 A major Community Services Provider and a well-established Academic Institution  
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30 were directly approached by the researcher. A Public School was accessed after a referral made  
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32 by one of the Community Services Provider’s employees. All organisations agreed to take part  
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34 in the study. The location of organisations in the North of England geographically presented  
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36 practical access to a representative sample of interviewees across a region which, it can be  
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38 argued, reflects the rich diversity of England as a whole.  
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### 42 *3.1. Respondents*

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44 Participants within cases were selected using purposeful convenience sampling with different  
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46 levels of management engagement in recruiting participants between the organisations. The  
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48 HR director of Community Services Provider sent a generic email to all staff explaining the  
49  
50 research and asking to consider taking part in the study. The researcher subsequently followed  
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52 up with an email and contacted interested participants to arrange interviews. In the Public  
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54 School, having discussed requirements for a varied sample with the researcher, the Head  
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56 Principle approached staff personally to introduce the researcher. In the Academic Institution,  
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3 the researcher was given permission to contact staff with no further engagement from the  
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5 Director of Research. The decision of each individual whether to participate in the research  
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7 project remained voluntary.  
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10 94 participants (Community Services, n= 32; Public School, n=32; Academic  
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12 Institution, n=30) agreed to participate in this study, a total of 94 participants. Of the  
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14 respondents, 59 were females and 35 were males. The average age was 42, the average time  
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16 spent in current position was 4 years, and the average organisational tenure was 9 years.  
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18 Participants occupied various roles representing different levels of organisational hierarchies.  
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20 Such a purposefully selected sample reflects a more general composition of the explored  
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22 organisations. Ethical approval was obtained prior to the commencement of fieldwork and  
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24 informed consent was received from all participants.  
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### 29 3.2. *Dyadic interviews*

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32 Dyadic interviews are a specific type of an interview where two participants are interviewed  
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34 together (Morgan *et al.*, 2013). The author conducted a total of 47 dyadic interviews with 94  
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36 individuals at the three research sites. At that point theoretical saturation was reached and no  
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38 new data emerged. Each interview was conducted face-to-face in meeting rooms at the  
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40 premises of the companies and lasted approximately an hour. The process of data collection  
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42 was carried over a 6 months period in 2016.  
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46 Interview questions were broadly structured around the perceptions and experiences of  
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48 helping behaviours deemed to be exerted by an employee to benefit a colleague as an end in  
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50 itself (thus reflecting the existing conceptualisations of good soldiers). Participants were asked  
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52 about their experiences as observers, recipients, and actors, respectively. Although an interview  
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54 agenda was used to maintain consistency (Appendix 1), respondents were encouraged to  
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3 engage in more complex discussions relating to the themes that they perceived to be most  
4 important which was in line with the inductive nature of the study.  
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8 The dyadic format of an interview facilitated interactions among participants that  
9 generated particularly rich data – often probed by research participants in addition to the  
10 interviewer. To reduce the risk of socially desirable responses (especially in the presence of an  
11 interview partner), most questions were asked in an indirect way. Additionally, careful  
12 selection of dyads based on the level of acquaintance (Morgan *et al.*, 2016) appears to have  
13 provided participants with a sufficient level of comfort of discussions where they felt secure  
14 enough to disagree on some issues.  
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### 23 3.3. Data analysis

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26 Template Analysis was used to analyse interview transcripts (King and Brooks, 2017). A  
27 coding template was developed on the basis of a subset of data, and was subsequently applied  
28 to further data, revised in the light of each transcript to form a final version of the template  
29 which served as the basis for interpretation of the data set and for the writing up of findings.  
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31 The codes were defined in light of the research questions and were organised hierarchically  
32 into meaningful clusters and diagrammatical representations. The combination of these two  
33 strategies allowed for the examination of the data without losing sight of the big picture as well  
34 as each individual voice.  
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## 45 4. Findings

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48 Careful examination of participants' perceptions of the acts of help exerted by good soldiers  
49 shed more light on the motivations guiding such behaviours as well as their more specific  
50 characteristics. This is summarized in a graphic model below (see Figure 1).  
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57 -----Insert Figure 1 about here-----  
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#### 4.1. Motivations of good soldiers

Research interviews revealed that the acts of help exerted by good soldiers are “genuinely for the good of other people” (Imogen) and such people help out because they “care for them and worry about how they must feel (...)” (Kate). The recalled representative responses suggest that good soldiers’ goals stem from concern for others as opposed to other aspects of the situation. Compared to an “altruistic motivation” (Tamara) or “altruistic spirit” (Laura), concern for other organisational recipient emphasises the other-oriented nature of such behaviours. This finding is in line with the existing literature where concern for others is the key characteristic distinguishing good soldiers from good actors (Grant and Mayer, 2009; Snell and Wong, 2007). While most commonly reported was concern felt for one’s colleagues, concern for organisational customers was also found to characterise the acts of good soldiers. This was particularly evident in the Community Services Provider and the Public School. Respondents commonly suggested that even if an individual helps a colleague, what often motivates them to act is “genuinely being nice to the client so they have got better lives” (Harriet). The motivating power of concern for customers is also well illustrated in the following representative extract from a conversation between the Public School employees:

*Kate: To me it’s all about the end result. The end result is getting a good deal for children.*

*Dan: The reason why we are all working in school, whether it’s on the reception, the dining room, or you do the admin job like I do - it is because you want the children to do well, and you are all working towards the same aim.*

*Kate: We will never let the kids down.*

Concern for others was also found to be embroiled in more complex considerations. For instance, some participants found it problematic to decide when a given act is performed with the welfare of another in mind and when it is concern with self-interests – especially in the context of in-role behaviors. The following extract from a conversation between the two managers is an interesting example of such a confusion. Here, Noah disregards any behaviour that helps him do his job as a manager as associated with being a good soldier because it directly

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3 relates to his professional goals. In contrast, Kristina holds a broader view and argues that even  
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5 though it may help her complete the requirements of her role, she genuinely wants to help the  
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7 other person:  
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11 *Noah: I don't think as managers you can work in an area where you are completely*  
12 *altruistic. Everything has an end gain in a way. As managers we know the people that*  
13 *will be causing trouble, we head off and ask before they get there. And I think it's to*  
14 *make my life easier. (...) I don't always do it just to help them, there's always an end*  
15 *gain because this is work. So if I help people, I help them because I don't want them to*  
16 *go off sick or be stressed, I want them to have their job done quicker. So at work there's*  
17 *always another behaviour. I don't think I am helpful just for helpful sake, I think it's*  
18 *just part of my make up as a manager (...)*

19  
20 *Kristina: But if someone was in that position where they say 'I am really struggling*  
21 *with this', would you see that you are doing this to help yourself rather than genuinely*  
22 *wanting to help them because you are caring? The people that I manage, I think that I*  
23 *help because I genuinely care. I don't want to see them struggling.*  
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26 Participants' responses suggest that perceptions of the nature of the actions exerted by  
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28 good soldiers differ and depend on individuals' own interpretations. However, as long as an  
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30 individual feels that a given act is performed to genuinely benefit the other (i.e., is guided by  
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32 concern for other organisational recipient), the potential impact it may have on his/her  
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34 professional career may not necessarily mean that the agent cannot be identified as a good  
35  
36 soldier. Rather, it is the intention to benefit the other (for whom concern is felt) that constitutes  
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38 the core element of the definition of a good soldier – and not the automatic or inevitable  
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40 consequences.  
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44 Beyond concern for others, the acts of good soldiers were described to be motivated by  
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46 generalised reciprocity, i.e. an investment in the collective welfare but without expectation of  
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48 an instrumental direct benefit (see: Willer *et al.*, 2012). Participants' answers clearly  
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50 emphasised that such behaviours are not based on direct reciprocal agreements and the  
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52 assumption *I do it for you = You do it for me* but are guided with more general settlements that  
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54 may come with benefits which are imprecise, generic, and do not stem from any particular  
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56 person:  
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3 *Brad: There's an element of 'If I'm doing this, hopefully in the future, people will come*  
4 *and help me'. And it's that sort of thing of someone saying – 'I'm going to give more to*  
5 *help us overall and hopefully it will come back'.*  
6

7 Similar views are reflected in the work of Hsiung *et al.* (2012, p. 260) who suggested that  
8 generalised reciprocity “helps people transcend self-serving motivations” and Clarkson (2014,  
9 p. 265) who added that it “seems more altruistic in its nature, insofar as there is no real tracking  
10 of the exact value of the exchange (...) [and it] does not preclude the situation where  
11 reciprocation does not occur”. This is in opposition to direct reciprocal transactions which,  
12 concomitantly with the interview progress, led participants to question the other-oriented  
13 nature of apparently altruistic behaviours:  
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24 *Kath: The way you've helped him... I think it's altruistic.*

25 *Mark: If the situation was reversed, he would do the same thing for me. That is why I*  
26 *would question how you would call it because there is a lot of mutual support in there.*  
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29 Direct reciprocity was therefore perceived as disregarding behaviours as altruistic in  
30 contrast to more indirect and multilateral exchanges where “you're not giving it back to the  
31 recipient, you're giving it out to somebody else” (Ivy). Additionally, while the acts of good  
32 soldiers were found to be ingrained in wider exchanges, the importance of not being motivated  
33 by expectations of returns was emphasised. It was succinctly explained by Luke who suggested  
34 that good soldiers “would give out help selflessly without expecting anything in return” or  
35 Louise who concluded, “You would want to help somebody through without really much  
36 thought of what you can get out of it. You would just want to help them”.  
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#### 48 *4.2. Characteristics of good soldiers' helping behaviours* 49

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51 Helping behaviours exerted by good soldiers were further reported to vary on several  
52 dimensions. First, respondents considered the acts of good soldiers only as those which are  
53 discretionary. In other words, individuals need to exercise their own judgement and choice to  
54 be seen as good soldiers, as opposed to being coerced to do something by others:  
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3 *Gail: One of our colleagues didn't feel well and everyone was really worried about her.*  
4 *And the other colleague was sweet, he drove her to the hospital where he waited with her*  
5 *till her husband got there. And that's quite an example [of a good soldier] as he didn't*  
6 *have to... he had his own work to be fair. So people just go out of their way because they*  
7 *want to.*  
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10 It was suggested that if individuals are told what to do they only appear to be good  
11 soldiers but, in reality, they are “more reluctant” (Henry) and “have less enthusiasm” (Fiona)  
12 to help. Such examples reflect the basic assumptions behind Self-Determination Theory (Ryan  
13 and Deci, 2000) which posits that felt autonomy results in higher internalised motivation to  
14 perform a given task (Grant and Berg, 2012). Interestingly, it should be noted that many helping  
15 behaviours under the label of OCBs migrated “from discretionary to required” (Turnipseed and  
16 Wilson, 2009, p.201) and can stem either from personal values and initiatives or from external  
17 pressures or rewards. In fact, a growing body of research suggests that compulsory citizenship  
18 is prevalent in organisations (e.g., Liu *et al.*, 2019) and has negative impact on employees’  
19 wellbeing (Bolino *et al.*, 2013). In contrast, the findings of the current study clearly suggest  
20 that the acts of good soldiers do not fall down under this category and they need to originate  
21 from own will.  
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38 The degree of self-sacrifice that characterises the behaviours of good soldiers is another  
39 theme that emerged during the interview process. The examples of helping provided by  
40 respondents started with simple acts of kindness that do not bring significant costs to the actor  
41 (such as making someone a cup of tea). Further examples included bigger projects that involved  
42 “putting themselves [the actors] on the line of fire to benefit others” (Kevin) and were often  
43 associated with “a massive pain” (Beth). It therefore sounds as if good soldiers engage in  
44 behaviours that lie on a continuum from acts that involve hardly any sacrifice to behaviours  
45 that require significant costs to the actor. The results of the current study therefore chime with  
46 the existing tendency in the literature to accept that those who altruistically support others are  
47 prepared to sacrifice their own energy and time perhaps more than others (Bergeron *et al.*,  
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3 2013; Moon *et al.*, 2008). However, self-sacrifice was not found to be a necessary component  
4 of behaviours exerted by good soldiers. This is in opposition to the commonly held view in the  
5 management literature where altruistic help is evaluated based on the extent to which it  
6 decreases the actor's immediate benefits (Li *et al.*, 2014).  
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13 While most examples of behaviours exerted by good soldiers involved an individual  
14 taking his/ her initiative and actively seeking to benefit another person ("Some people actually  
15 offer to do something for you before you even know you've needed it!", Donna), participants'  
16 responses suggest that, in some instances, such acts may be reactive in nature. When asked if  
17 good soldiers are common in his workplace, Simon confidently said that "if you ask people,  
18 they do support you" whereas Theresa concluded that "it is just the sort of [her] initial reaction  
19 if they ask for help". Therefore, in contrast to the existing assumptions that only reactive  
20 behaviours could be altruistic (Spitzmuller and Van Dyne, 2013), it is concluded that behaviour  
21 of good soldiers stems both from own initiative and from being asked for support. This finding  
22 further directs our attention to scholars who emphasise the importance of proactive behaviours  
23 as critical determinants of organisational success (e.g., Bergeron *et al.*, 2014). The results from  
24 this study demonstrated that reactive behaviours are as important and their potential impact on  
25 organisations should not be underestimated (see also: Lee *et al.*, 2019).  
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43 The characteristics of the reported altruistic behaviours were common across the  
44 explored organizations. It was emphasised that the nature of altruistic behaviours exerted by  
45 employees was influenced by "the kind of company we are" (Gail), "organizational  
46 philosophy" (Susan) and "ethos of an organization" (Daniel) in all three research sites. This is  
47 further aligned with the underlying assumptions behind the sampling strategy for this study,  
48 i.e. seeking organisations predominantly characterised by collectivistic culture based on the  
49 tenets of altruism as opposed to individualistic cultures emphasising individual gains (see also:  
50 De Clercq *et al.*, 2019).  
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3 Finally, no matter what the characteristics of the reported behaviours, respondents in  
4 all three organizations jointly agreed that these are “very important” (Derek) or “a major  
5 reason” (Anna) for staying with the company. Indeed, altruistic help was compared to an  
6 essential part of organizational life that is necessary for its survival:  
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13 *Jane: We are like a ship and by doing it [helping] you keep the ship floating. If you were*  
14 *not doing it, it would not float, it would just go under.*  
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19 The above statements reflect a wider trend in the existing literature where the importance  
20 of altruistic helping behaviours in the workplace context is acknowledged (e.g., Clarkson,  
21 2014) and a need for the businesses to move from working for economic gains to a more holistic  
22 approach encompassing altruistic values is emphasised (Bhaskar and Mishra, 2019). However,  
23 more research is needed to understand the detailed implications of altruistic help exerted by  
24 good soldiers.  
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## 32 33 **5. Discussion**

### 34 35 *5.1. Theoretical implications*

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37 Interest in helping behaviours at work has grown significantly in the past years (e.g., Podsakoff  
38 *et al.*, 2014). While some scholars called for further research investigating a range of such  
39 behaviours as one general phenomenon (Bolino and Grant, 2016) rather than dichotomising  
40 self-interested and other-oriented behaviours (De Dreu, 2006), others (Homberg and Costello,  
41 2019; *Schott et al.*, 2019; Szulc, 2019) started to recognise that there are benefits of adding an  
42 extra level of specificity. The findings of this research further emphasise the latter calls and  
43 demonstrate that other-oriented behaviours are unique in motives and characteristics. By  
44 seeking to provide greater clarity to other-oriented help, this article contributes to advancing  
45 our knowledge about good soldiers and their behaviours.  
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3 This study is considered as an initial attempt to empirically distinguish which principles  
4 of exchange characterise helping behaviours exerted by good soldiers. More specifically,  
5 altruistic and generalised reciprocity dimensions of SET were supported and reinforced as a  
6 viable explanation of such acts. Whereas a conventional view on SET heavily relies on  
7 addressing the relationships among employees in terms of outcomes for the self (e.g., “Will  
8 exchanges with others result in favourable outcomes for me?”), the findings of this study  
9 demonstrate that the relationships among employees could be addressed in terms of outcomes  
10 for others (e.g., “Are those I am in relationship with receiving favourable outcomes?”; also see  
11 Kamdar *et al.*, 2006, p. 850) and therefore call for future research to pay more attention to the  
12 principles of SET that go beyond simply reciprocity.  
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26 Focusing on other-oriented motivations appears particularly important given that a  
27 number of prominent scholars argue that it is the behaviour that matters and not intentions or  
28 motives (e.g., Grant, 2013; Li *et al.*, 2014). Indeed, whether helping behaviour is driven by  
29 altruistic or egoistic motives seems to be often disregarded even if labels of altruism or altruistic  
30 help are used to describe them (e.g., Carmeli *et al.*, 2005; Chuang *et al.*, 2019; Koster and  
31 Sanders, 2006). Such trends may potentially stem from suggestions that research should focus  
32 on the dynamics that may be common across multiple behaviours (Crant, 2000; Parker, 2000).  
33 However, the position taken in this study is based on the argument that if underlying  
34 motivations behind the acts of help are disregarded, what may appear as a gain in extensional  
35 coverage (i.e., breadth) may lead to being surpassed by losses in precision (i.e., depth). This,  
36 in turn, has implications for future research design in a way that it warns against the danger of  
37 mistaking opportunistic behaviours exerted by good actors with the acts of good soldiers.  
38 Without an appropriate level of specification we would not be able to fully understand the  
39 nature of help governed by concern for others and the associated long-lasting benefits they may  
40 bring (Bergeron *et al.*, 2013).  
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## 5.2. Practical implications

Practically, increased managerial awareness of people who act as good soldiers should facilitate capitalising on the power and advantages of such behaviours. By recognising that employees might use helping behaviours to benefit others or as a strategic tool to obtain self-benefits, HR can work to ensure that the acts of help are exerted with good overall intentions and not “merely as a means to look good” (Long *et al.*, 2015, p. 492). Training supervisors to pay attention to employees who help out of dubious intentions may be a fruitful strategy (Halbesleben *et al.*, 2010).

To recognise good soldiers, management could further pay attention to the characteristics of helping behaviours exerted by their employees. Although judging behaviours as other-oriented is a subjective process (Kim *et al.*, 2018), it may be useful to look at the nature of situations in which helping behaviours are observed. The findings of this research suggest that good soldiers are likely to help others when they feel concern for their wellbeing or if they view it as part of wider multilateral exchanges where they can contribute to the greater good. Management could therefore question seemingly altruistic nature of help exerted by individuals if they do so predominantly in the presence of more influential colleagues or superiors (Bowler and Brass, 2006) or when other self-benefits, such as promotion, can be gained in the process (Hui *et al.*, 2000). To inform employees’ motives, practitioners can observe a change in the pattern of potential good soldiers in the presence of egoistic motives. For instance, it would be interesting to see how employees’ helping behaviours change (e.g., in frequency or span) once performance appraisals approach to indicate the underlying nature of these.

While it might be tempting from a HR perspective to directly encourage employees to behave as good soldiers, the findings of this study emphasise the discretionary nature of such behaviours. This implies that if members view such acts as coercion, then their voluntary component will be violated. Consistently, HR may look for indirect ways through which

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3 altruistic help can be encouraged. For instance, they may consider specific job redesign  
4 interventions that aim to foster interactions among employees with more opportunities for day-  
5 to-day acts of help. They can further signal that such behaviours are valued, for instance, by  
6 using symbolic rewards such as plaques or certificates. Such indirect ways to encourage  
7 altruistic help appear particularly relevant in the context of existing HR practices that seem to  
8 predominantly foster individualism narrowly defined in terms of self-interest (Bal and Dóci,  
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19 Indeed, the findings of the reported research provide some initial support suggesting that  
20 it is the collectivistic values that make us more concerned about the well-being of others (see  
21 also: Grant and Berg, 2012). In this case, it would appear natural to suggest that HR may  
22 consider introducing subtle and/or more significant changes in their environments to actively  
23 influence whether their employees tend to act more as good soldiers or as good actors.  
24 However, our knowledge about the factors which will either facilitate or inhibit employees'  
25 engagement in altruistic helping is still scant (see: Szulc, 2019). More research in this area  
26 would provide HR professionals with comprehensive information about how altruistic help  
27 unfolds in organizational contexts so that it could be used to the advantage of organizations  
28 and their members.

### 43 *5.3. Limitations and future research*

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45 As with all empirical research, the reported study is not without limitations. First, although it  
46 was not the intention of this research, questions about the scientific generalisation of the  
47 findings to other organisations, industries, or geographical regions may be raised. Since  
48 differences exist in how people perceive helpful behaviours across international boundaries  
49 and cultural viewpoints (Farh *et al.*, 2004), more research testing the findings from the current  
50 study in other cultures would be beneficial. Similarly, one may argue that the specific nature  
51 of the explored organisations may bias the sample in relation to helpful behaviours.  
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3 Nevertheless, such a selection allowed for developing particularly rich accounts of good  
4 soldiers and their behaviours. This practice revealed additional depth of information about the  
5 researched phenomenon which can be now applied to a wider range of contexts by what is  
6 known as theoretical generalisation. In the same time, it would be interesting for future research  
7 to test the proposed findings in larger scale samples and across sectors and industries.  
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14 In addition, it is acknowledged that it is not always possible to accurately assess  
15 motivations using qualitative inquiry or self-reported data. This is because individuals may  
16 simply not know what their ultimate motivation is, those who help out of egoistic concerns  
17 may attempt to hide their real motives, or individuals may over-report the extent to which they  
18 engage in desired behaviours – especially in the presence of an interview partner. While it is  
19 important to be aware of problems of this nature when interpreting the data gathered in this  
20 research, the aim of this study was not to measure the quantity of behaviours exerted by good  
21 soldiers nor how pure motivations behind such acts were. Rather, the goal was to provide an  
22 in-depth exploration of individuals' perceptions of the characteristics and motivations of the  
23 actions of good soldiers. The methods used in this research enabled insights into these  
24 interpretations to be achieved whereas the choice of dyadic interviews was particularly helpful  
25 in generating rich data. This is something that previous research on good soldiers has  
26 significantly underexplored and therefore an important contribution to the current literature.  
27 Management research would now benefit from further developing new ways of investigating  
28 good soldiers and their behaviours. This appears particularly relevant given that existing  
29 measures of altruistic help have been argued to represent somewhat limited content and only a  
30 minimalist assessment of underlying motivations (Sosik *et al.*, 2009). One way to overcome  
31 such problems may be to infer specific motivation from an individual's behaviour by observing  
32 it in systematically varied situations that isolate the potentials goals of the individual. Such an  
33 approach could be implemented in laboratory or longitudinal field-based settings.  
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Finally, this study considered the acts of good soldiers aimed only at specific individuals. However, existing literature differentiates between citizenship behaviours targeted at individuals and the organization (Spitzmuller *et al.*, 2008; Williams and Anderson, 1991). Indeed, the latter may be characterized by unique features and driven by specific mechanisms (see: Marinova *et al.*, 2010) that were not captured in the reported study. Consistently, to get a more comprehensive picture of good soldiers and their behaviours, future research should go beyond interpersonal help and explore the characteristics of behaviours aimed at benefiting the organization.

## 6. Conclusions

This study has contributed to the theoretical and empirical knowledge about good soldiers, their motivations and the characteristics of their helping behaviours. It is hoped that a number of findings that emerged in this study will inspire practitioners and academics to take a fresh, beyond *quid pro quo* look at the nature of employee relations with further implications for the dominant HR practices.

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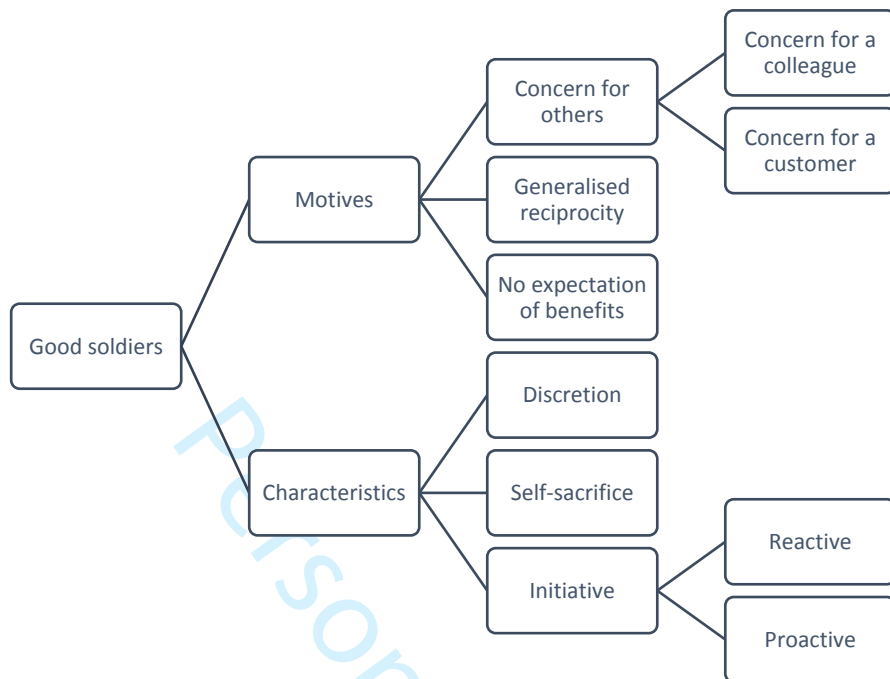
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**Table 1:** Principles of help

<b>Underlying principle</b>	<b>Rationality</b>	<b>Equity</b>	<b>Competition and rivalry</b>	<b>Balanced reciprocity</b>	<b>Generalised reciprocity</b>	<b>Altruism</b>
<b>What we see</b>	A helps B	A helps B	A helps B	A helps B	A helps B	A helps B
<b>What really happens</b>	A helps B because it will help A with A's personal interests	A helps B because A thinks B deserves help	A helps B because A believes it will enable A to win over C	A helps B because A needs B's help with something else	A helps B because C may (or may not) help A or B in the future	A helps B because A is concerned for B

Personnel Review

Figure 1: Good soldiers: Motives and characteristics



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**Appendix 1: Interview questions**

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5	<b>Introduction</b>
6	We will talk about behaviours performed to benefit a colleague as an end in itself.
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8	<b>Experiences as observers</b>
9	Do you see people in your company engaging in such behaviours?
10	If yes: What does it involve, can you give me some examples?
11	Why do you think they do it?
12	What might influence their decision?
13	If no: What do you think might have affected this?
14	Can you think of any experiences when your colleagues helped others just for the sake of helping?
15	Whom were they helping?
16	What were they helping them with?
17	What do you think affected their willingness to help? Why is this important?
18	How do you think they felt about it?
19	
20	If you think about your colleagues, are there any people that are more likely than others to
21	engage in such behaviours?
22	Why do you think it is so?
23	How would you describe these people (that person)?
24	
25	What do you think makes it easier for some and more difficult or challenging for others to engage
26	in such behaviours?
27	<b>Experience as recipients</b>
28	What is your experience of receiving help from others?
29	Can you distinguish when someone is helping you out of genuine motives or when they do it for
30	some other purposes?
31	
32	<b>Experience as actors</b>
33	Do you have a chance to engage in such help-giving behaviours?
34	Can you give me an example?
35	Who are you helping and what are you helping with?
36	What makes you help?
37	What stops you from helping?
38	How do you feel about it?
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40	<b>Concluding questions</b>
41	Is there anything else you would like to add?
42	Is there anything you would like to ask me?
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