



## The Role of Social Interaction in Developing Trust and Cooperation from a Social Psychology Perspective

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### Abstract

*This research study looks at how social interaction affects the development of trust and cooperation in organizational environments based on a quantitative research methodology drawing on the theory of social psychology and management. The importance of trust and cooperation as described in prior scholarship has not been denied; however, there is little empirical literature characterizing the systematic organization and process of social interaction to have direct and indirect impacts on the behavior of cooperation. A sample of 200 respondents, selected by stratified random sampling among the members of completed validated Likert-scale measures created to measure social interaction, trust, and cooperation. In the data analysis, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and mediation were embraced to probe the direct and the indirect relationships between the variables. Findings showed that social interaction is a strong predictor of trust and that trust, in interaction with social interaction is a significant predictor of cooperative behavior; trust proved to be a partial mediator, increasing the effects of social interaction on cooperation. These data provide strong quantitative support to the interaction-trust-cooperation mechanism, thus highlighting the fundamental role of relational processes in organizational performance. The current research has both theoretical and practical implications: theoretically, the research confirms the mediational value of the trust in the organizational cooperation as empirically reliable; on the practical level, the research indicates that managers should design and facilitate meaningful social interaction as a strategic asset to develop the trust and encourage the collaboration, as well as, enhance the effectual performance of teams with the aim of building strong organizational cooperation. The development of trust via systematized contact in an ever more complex and interconnected work place becomes a critical force behind the development of sustainable collaboration and organizational robustness.*

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## Introduction

The social interaction is one of the basic elements of the social structure of humans which helps people to create relations, exchange information, and construct normative systems that regulate collective behavior (Okumdi & Akporaro, 2022). In the social psychology, communication is not a direct form of interactions; it is the core processes of how trust and collaboration are established in groups (Redhead & Power, 2022). After publishing the reliability, intentions, and consistency of other people in the behavior, through repeated social interaction, individuals build the base of interpersonal trust (Long et al., 2022). This type of trust forms the core of the

operations of social groups and helps in taking actions in a unified direction towards common goals (Beery et al., 2023). Trust in its broadest sense refers to the anticipation that other people will behave with honesty, ability and goodwill in their social dealings. It emerges as a result of ongoing interaction and personal experience with others which enables one to identify patterns of behavior and expect the consequences of collaborative efforts (Lal et al., 2023). Reputation, social norms and organizational culture are also social and cultural variables, which shape the development of trust (Gubbins & Dooley, 2021). The social relationship trust minimizes uncertainty, promotes communication, and enhances the chances of cooperative behavior (Muliadi et al., 2024). Cooperation, in its turn, is the behavioral expression of the trust in action, where people or groups of people should cooperate to reach some common goals (Kashef et al., 2021). Cooperation is not just a coordination but also a dependence and ability to make others prosperous (Park et al., 2022). The social interaction is the main source whereby the cooperative norms are passed, put to test and enforced. The higher the level of trust and cooperative engagement, the communities, as well as, organizations, which are characterized by frequent and significant interactions.

Although the role of social interaction has been noted to be crucial in the development of trust and cooperation, there still exists serious gaps in the knowledge of the specific mechanisms that connect the two constructs. Most of the previous works have concentrated on direct relationship between interaction and cooperation without investigating the mediator role of trust (Meng et al., 2023). Furthermore, much of the research done has been qualitative or case studies, which restricts the extrapolation of the research results (Rahman et al., 2021). These relationships need to be empirically confirmed through quantitative methods to establish the strength and direction of the relationship and therefore, produce more convincing and generalizable results (Ma et al., 2022). This quantitative research study will fill in the existing gaps by ascertaining the role of social interaction with trust and, by extension, cooperative behavior. Using strict statistical tests, the paper presents empirical data on the causal mechanisms by which interaction will influence group processes, thus making a contribution to the efforts in social psychology (Liu et al., 2021). Social interaction is now the most important aspect of the building of trust and cooperation in an increasingly complex and globalized society in which social relations are mediated by both offline and online social media (Babaei et al., 2024).

Online and offline communication balances perceptions of trustworthiness, has an impact on group cohesion, and collaborative performance (Shengyao et al., 2024). The observations in this research can be used in practice to build evidence-based interventions that can increase the performance of teams, their integration with the community as well as fostering social harmony and hence expanding the use of social psychological theory to the real-world environment (Alsheyadi et al., 2024). This study illustrates the need to develop meaningful social interactions as a tool to develop some degree of trust and facilitating cooperation. Through the quantitative importance of making these relationships, the study is not only able to add value to the theoretical knowledge but also provide practical information on how more cooperative and trustful social set ups may be cultivated (Xin et al., 2023; Chavez et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2021). These contributions highlight both theoretical and practical importance of the study of social interaction as a predictor of human behavior in groups.

## **Method**

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design, aimed at examining the relationships between social interaction, trust, and cooperation among participants. The quantitative approach was selected to provide empirical evidence of the strength and direction of these relationships, allowing for statistical testing of hypotheses. Specifically, the study used a cross-sectional survey method, in which data were collected at a single point in time to assess participants' perceptions of social interaction, trust, and cooperative behavior. The correlational design is suitable for this study because it facilitates the identification of patterns and predictive relationships between independent and dependent variables without manipulating the variables themselves.

## **Population and Sample**

The population in this study consisted of organizational employees who were actively involved in teamwork and group-based activities within their respective workplaces. These individuals were chosen because their daily tasks required frequent social interactions, making them suitable for examining patterns of trust and cooperation. From this population, a total of 200 participants were selected as the study sample. This number was considered sufficient to ensure reliable statistical analysis, particularly for examining relationships and mediation effects among the key variables. A stratified random sampling technique was used to obtain a balanced representation of participants from different categories, including gender, age, and department. This approach ensured that the views and experiences of employees from various organizational levels and backgrounds were included. By using stratified random sampling, the study minimized potential bias in participant selection and improved the representativeness of the sample. This allowed the results to reflect a broader and more accurate picture of how social interaction influences trust and cooperation within organizational settings.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire that contained three main sections focusing on the key variables: social interaction, trust, and cooperation. The section on social interaction measured how often participants interacted with their peers, the quality of those interactions, and how meaningful they perceived them to be. The trust section assessed participants' perceptions of the reliability, honesty, and goodwill of others in their social groups using a 5-point Likert scale. The cooperation section focused on participants' self-reported behaviours related to teamwork and their willingness to engage in collective efforts or shared responsibilities. Each part of the questionnaire was designed to capture both the frequency and the depth of these social processes, ensuring that the data accurately reflected the participants' interpersonal dynamics and collaborative tendencies.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection process was conducted over a two-week period. Prior to data gathering, formal permission and ethical clearance were obtained from the relevant institutional review authority. Participants were fully informed about the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study. They were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. Each participant provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. To accommodate varying levels of accessibility,

the questionnaires were distributed in two formats: online via a secure digital platform and offline in printed form. Participants who preferred the digital version received a survey link, while others completed printed copies administered by the research team. This approach ensured that all participants had an equal opportunity to take part in the study regardless of their access to technology. Clear instructions were provided with each questionnaire to ensure accurate and thoughtful responses. Participants were encouraged to ask questions or request clarification if any item was unclear. After the data were collected, all responses were carefully reviewed for completeness and accuracy, and incomplete submissions were excluded from further analysis. All completed questionnaires were handled with strict confidentiality. Printed forms were securely stored in locked cabinets, while electronic responses were saved in encrypted, password-protected files. These measures ensured the security, integrity, and confidentiality of all data collected throughout the research process.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process involved several stages to ensure that the relationships between the main variables were thoroughly examined and accurately interpreted. First, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and responses for each variable. This included computing the mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution to provide an overview of the general trends in social interaction, trust, and cooperation among participants. These measures helped describe the data set and identify any variations or patterns within the responses. Next, correlation analysis was carried out to explore the relationships between the three main variables. The correlation coefficients were used to determine the strength and direction of associations, allowing the researcher to see whether increases in social interaction were accompanied by increases in trust and cooperation. This stage provided an initial understanding of how closely related the variables were before conducting more complex analyses. Following this, multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the predictive effects of social interaction on trust and cooperation. This analysis made it possible to determine how much social interaction contributed to the development of trust and cooperative behavior while accounting for other demographic factors such as age and gender. It provided a clearer picture of the extent to which social interaction served as a significant predictor of both trust and cooperation within the study.

### **Result and Discussion**

The analysis aimed to identify the relationships among social interaction, trust, and cooperation, as well as to determine the extent to which trust serves as a mediating factor between the other two variables. The data were analysed using several statistical techniques, beginning with descriptive statistics to summarize the overall responses, followed by correlation analysis to assess the strength and direction of relationships among variables. Multiple regression analysis was then applied to evaluate the predictive effects of social interaction on trust and cooperation, while mediation analysis was conducted to test whether trust functioned as an intermediary variable linking social interaction and cooperation. This systematic analytical process provided a clear foundation for understanding the underlying dynamics between these key constructs, and the results of each step are presented in the following section.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Social Interaction	200	4.12	0.56	2.0	5.0
Trust	200	3.95	0.62	2.0	5.0
Cooperation	200	4.05	0.58	2.0	5.0

The descriptive statistics show that participants generally reported high levels of social interaction, trust, and cooperation, with means above 3.9 on a 5-point scale. The standard deviations indicate moderate variability in responses, suggesting some differences in participants' perceptions of these variables.

Table 2. Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3
Social Interaction	1		
Trust	0.62	1	
Cooperation	0.55	0.68	1

Social interaction is positively correlated with trust ( $r = 0.62, p 0.001$ ) and cooperation ( $r = 0.55, p 0.001$ ). Trust is also positively correlated with cooperation ( $r = 0.68, p 0.001$ ). These correlations suggest that higher levels of social interaction are associated with higher trust and cooperative behavior among participants.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p
Social Interaction	0.71	0.08	0.62	8.88	0.0001
Constant	0.95	0.32		2.97	0.004

Social interaction significantly predicts trust ( $\beta = 0.62, p 0.0001$ ), explaining 38% of the variance in trust. This indicates that participants with higher social interaction scores tend to report higher trust in their peers.

Table 4. Regression Predicting Cooperation from Social Interaction and Trust

Predictor	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p
Social Interaction	0.25	0.09	0.20	2.78	0.006
Trust	0.55	0.08	0.50	6.88	0.0001
Constant	0.85	0.28		3.04	0.003

Both social interaction and trust are significant predictors of cooperation. Trust ( $\beta = 0.50, p 0.0001$ ) has a stronger influence on cooperation than social interaction ( $\beta = 0.20, p = 0.006$ ). The model explains 55% of the variance in cooperation, indicating that trust partially mediates the relationship between social interaction and cooperation.

Table 4. Mediation Analysis (Trust as Mediator)

Path	Effect	SE	t	p
Social Interaction → Trust	0.71	0.08	8.88	0.0001
Trust → Cooperation	0.55	0.08	6.88	0.0001
Social Interaction → Cooperation (direct)	0.25	0.09	2.78	0.006
Social Interaction → Cooperation (indirect via Trust)	0.39	0.06	6.50	0.0001

The indirect effect of social interaction on cooperation through trust is significant (0.39,  $p < 0.0001$ ), confirming partial mediation. This indicates that social interaction promotes cooperation both directly and indirectly by increasing trust.

### **The Importance of Social Interaction in Building Trust and Cooperation**

The findings of this study underscore an undeniable truth in organizational and management scholarship: trust and cooperation do not emerge in a vacuum but are forged through structured and repeated social interaction. This resonates with long-standing observations in social psychology (Adams & Omar, 2024) and organizational studies, yet the contribution here lies in quantitatively establishing the mediating force of trust within organizational settings. What is particularly salient is the implication that management practices aimed at stimulating cooperation cannot bypass the foundational role of interactional processes. Instead, organizations must intentionally design opportunities for meaningful encounters that serve as the bedrock upon which trust can flourish (Feltman, 2024; Rowe, 2024; Malhotre & Vasrani, 2024).

A critical implication is that social interaction is not merely incidental but managerial capital. In knowledge-intensive firms, interaction serves as a conduit for tacit knowledge exchange (Santos et al., 2023) and the diffusion of organizational routines (Ngo, 2021). By empirically linking interaction to trust and subsequently to cooperation, this study demonstrates that managers who undervalue the relational infrastructure of their organizations risk undermining long-term cooperative capacity. These echoes Ray et al. (2023) work on social capital but extends its managerial relevance: in organizational contexts, interactional density is not an abstract societal asset but a resource that can be mobilized for productivity, innovation, and resilience. Reductive to treat all interaction as uniformly beneficial. The managerial challenge lies in discerning quality over quantity of interaction. Research has consistently shown that trust formation depends less on frequency than on the perceived authenticity, openness, and fairness embedded within exchanges (Kim et al., 2023).

Indeed, superficial or instrumental interactions can produce cynicism rather than trust. Thus, management systems that prioritize transactional encounters without cultivating deeper relational quality are unlikely to achieve the cooperative dividends this study identifies. Leaders must therefore design environments that privilege dialogue, reciprocal recognition, and shared meaning-making. The findings invite reflection on the strategic role of trust as a mediator in organizational cooperation. Trust reduces transaction costs, enhances adaptability in volatile environments and enables strategic alliances to endure despite uncertainty (Manfredi & Capik, 2022; Xue & Li, 2023; Philsoophian, et al., 2021). This study's demonstration of trust as a mechanism through which interaction fosters cooperation lends weight to the argument that organizational performance is inseparable from relational governance structures.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that social interaction is a foundational driver of trust and cooperation within organizational contexts, confirming that relational processes are not peripheral but central to management practice. The findings empirically establish that frequent, meaningful, and high-quality interactions foster trust, which in turn mediates cooperative behavior among individuals and teams. This underscores the strategic significance of interactional dynamics, positioning them as a form of managerial capital that can be deliberately cultivated to enhance

organizational performance, resilience, and collaborative advantage. From a practical perspective, managers must recognize that fostering trust and cooperation cannot rely solely on formal structures, policies, or transactional oversight. Instead, intentional design of opportunities for interpersonal engagement through team-building, mentorship, cross-functional collaboration, and inclusive communication practices is essential. Trust emerges not as an abstract virtue but as a measurable outcome of sustained social interaction, which in turn facilitates cooperation and collective goal achievement. The study also illuminates the nuanced role of trust as a mediator. While social interaction directly contributes to cooperation, the indirect pathway through trust amplifies its effect, reinforcing the need for management strategies that deliberately cultivate relational depth, integrity, and transparency. Importantly, this implies that managerial neglect of interactional quality, even in high-frequency contexts, may diminish cooperative potential and compromise organizational effectiveness.

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