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Digitalization and Trust in Intra- and Inter-Organizational Relationships: A Systematic
Literature Review of Trust Mechanisms

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Abstract

Trust is a central governance mechanism in intra- and inter-organizational relationships, enabling cooperation, knowledge transfer, and coordination under conditions of uncertainty. As digitalization increasingly reshapes organizational coordination and control, however, its implications for trust remain fragmented and insufficiently understood, particularly in headquarters-subsidary relationships within multinational enterprises.

This thesis addresses this gap through a systematic literature review of 132 peer-reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2025 and identified through Scopus and Web of Science in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The review examines how digitalization influences trust, how its effects differ across cognitive, affective, and institutional trust dimensions, and under what conditions trust is strengthened or weakened.

The findings show that digitalization operates through competing mechanisms that can simultaneously strengthen and undermine trust. Transparency, process standardization, and shared data primarily reinforce cognitive and institutional trust, whereas perceptions of surveillance, algorithmic opacity, and reduced interpersonal interaction are particularly detrimental to affective trust. However, these effects are highly contingent and often overlap across trust dimensions, making trust outcomes dependent on implementation and organizational context rather than on technology alone.

The thesis contributes to the literature by synthesizing existing research into a mechanism-based understanding of how digitalization reshapes trust and by deriving implications for headquarters–subsidiary relationships in multinational enterprises. The findings suggest that managers should not treat digital systems solely as tools for efficiency and control, but also consider how they influence perceptions of transparency, fairness, autonomy, and relational interaction.

Zusammenfassung

Vertrauen stellt einen zentralen Governance-Mechanismus in intra- und interorganisationalen Beziehungen dar und ermöglicht Kooperation, Wissenstransfer sowie Koordination unter Bedingungen von Unsicherheit. Gleichzeitig verändert die zunehmende Digitalisierung die Art und Weise, wie Organisationen koordiniert und gesteuert werden. Die Auswirkungen dieser Entwicklung auf Vertrauen sind bislang jedoch nur fragmentarisch erforscht und insbesondere im Kontext von Headquarters-Tochtergesellschafts-Beziehungen multinationaler Unternehmen unzureichend verstanden.

Diese Arbeit schließt diese Forschungslücke durch eine systematische Literaturanalyse von 132 begutachteten wissenschaftlichen Studien, die zwischen 2000 und 2025 veröffentlicht und gemäß den PRISMA-2020-Richtlinien in den Datenbanken Scopus und Web of Science identifiziert wurden. Untersucht wird, wie Digitalisierung Vertrauen beeinflusst, wie sich diese Effekte zwischen kognitiven, affektiven und institutionellen Vertrauensdimensionen unterscheiden und unter welchen Bedingungen Vertrauen gestärkt oder geschwächt wird.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Digitalisierung über konkurrierende Mechanismen wirkt, die Vertrauen gleichzeitig stärken und schwächen können. Transparenz, Prozessstandardisierung und gemeinsam genutzte Daten fördern insbesondere kognitives und institutionelles Vertrauen, während Wahrnehmungen von Überwachung, algorithmische Intransparenz und verringerte zwischenmenschliche Interaktion insbesondere das affektive Vertrauen beeinträchtigen. Gleichzeitig sind diese Effekte stark kontextabhängig und überschneiden sich häufig zwischen den verschiedenen Vertrauensdimensionen, sodass die Vertrauensentwicklung stärker von der Implementierung und dem organisatorischen Kontext als von der eingesetzten Technologie selbst abhängt.

Die Arbeit leistet einen Beitrag zur Forschung, indem sie bestehende Erkenntnisse zu einem mechanismusbasierten Verständnis darüber zusammenführt, wie Digitalisierung Vertrauen verändert, und daraus Implikationen für Headquarters-Tochtergesellschafts-Beziehungen in multinationalen Unternehmen ableitet. Die Ergebnisse verdeutlichen, dass Unternehmen digitale Systeme nicht ausschließlich als Instrumente zur Steigerung von Effizienz und Kontrolle betrachten sollten, sondern auch deren Auswirkungen auf Wahrnehmungen von Transparenz, Fairness, Autonomie und zwischenmenschlicher Interaktion berücksichtigen müssen.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Motivation

Trust is a central concept in organizational, intra-organizational, and inter-organizational research. In relationships between firms, business units and network partners, trust enables cooperation under conditions of uncertainty, interdependence and incomplete information. It reduces perceived vulnerability and supports exchange between actors who depend on one another but cannot fully control each other's actions (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998). This is particularly important in complex organizational settings such as alliances, supply chains, platform ecosystems, and multinational corporations, where actors must coordinate across boundaries, geographical distance, and different institutional environments.

In multinational enterprises, trust plays a particularly important role in headquarters–subsidiary relationships. Although headquarters and subsidiaries formally belong to the same corporate group, their relationship is often characterized by distance, information asymmetry, local autonomy, and potential tensions between global integration and local responsiveness. Headquarters need reliable information, compliance with corporate standards, and alignment with strategic objectives, while subsidiaries require sufficient autonomy to adapt to local markets and institutional conditions. Trust therefore becomes an important governance mechanism that supports cooperation, knowledge transfer, and the implementation of organizational practices across units (Kostova, 1999; Kostova and Roth, 2002).

At the same time, organizations are increasingly shaped by digitalization. Digital technologies such as enterprise resource planning systems have transformed how organizations coordinate activities and exercise control. These systems increase the availability of data, enable real-time visibility, standardize processes, and support more integrated forms of decision-making (Davenport, 1998; Bharadwaj et al., 2013). In multinational corporations, digital systems are often used to connect headquarters and subsidiaries through shared reporting structures, standardized processes, and centralized data infrastructures.

However, the implications of digitalization for trust are not straightforward. On the one hand, digital technologies may strengthen trust by increasing transparency, improving information quality, reducing uncertainty, and making partner behavior more predictable. Standardized digital systems can create reliability and consistency, thereby supporting cognitive and institutional forms of trust. On the other hand, the same technologies may also undermine trust when they are experienced as intrusive monitoring, excessive control, or a reduction of local autonomy. Digitalization can also reduce direct interpersonal interaction, which may weaken affective trust and relational closeness. This creates a central tension: digital systems can support coordination and trust, but they can also intensify control and surveillance.

This tension is especially relevant in headquarters–subsidiary relationships. Digital technologies allow headquarters to access more detailed and timely information about subsidiary activities, which can improve coordination and reduce information asymmetry. Yet increased visibility may also be interpreted by subsidiaries as a sign of distrust or as an attempt to centralize control. As a result, digitalization may reshape not only how organizations operate, but also how trust is built, maintained, or eroded across organizational boundaries.

1.2 Problem Statement

Although both trust and digitalization have received considerable attention in management, organization, and information systems research, their intersection remains fragmented. Trust has been widely studied in inter-organizational relationships, including alliances, joint ventures, buyer–supplier relationships, and networks. This literature has shown that trust supports cooperation, knowledge sharing, performance, and relationship quality (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998). In parallel, research on digitalization has examined how digital technologies transform organizational processes, coordination, governance, and control (Davenport, 1998; Yoo, Henfridsson and Lyytinen, 2010; Kellogg, Valentine and Christin, 2020).

However, these two research streams are often examined separately. Studies on trust do not always account for the specific ways in which digital systems reshape visibility, monitoring, standardization, and data-based decision-making. Conversely, studies on digitalization often focus on efficiency, coordination, or technological implementation without systematically examining the

consequences for trust. As a result, there is limited integrated understanding of how digitalization affects trust in inter-organizational relationships.

The headquarters–subsidiary context makes this problem especially important. Multinational corporations increasingly rely on global digital systems to coordinate dispersed units, monitor performance, and standardize processes. Yet the literature directly examining digitalization and trust in HQ–subsidiary relationships remains limited. Therefore, broader research on trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships is needed to identify transferable mechanisms and develop a more systematic understanding of how digitalization may affect trust in multinational settings.

This thesis addresses this gap by conducting a systematic literature review of research on digitalization and trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships, with particular attention to headquarters–subsidiary relationships. Rather than assuming that digitalization has a uniform effect, the thesis focuses on the mechanisms through which digital technologies strengthen, weaken, or reshape different forms of trust.

1.3 Research Objectives

The aim of this thesis is to synthesize existing research on the relationship between digitalization and trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships and to derive implications for headquarters–subsidiary relationships in multinational enterprises.

More specifically, the thesis has three main objectives.

First, it seeks to identify the mechanisms through which digitalization influences trust. This includes both trust-enhancing mechanisms, such as transparency, standardization, shared data, and improved coordination, and trust-reducing mechanisms, such as surveillance perception, reduced autonomy, algorithmic opacity, and weakened interpersonal interaction.

Second, the thesis aims to examine how digitalization affects different dimensions of trust. Trust is not treated as a single uniform construct. Instead, the analysis distinguishes between cognitive trust, affective trust, and institutional trust. This distinction is important because digitalization may strengthen some forms of trust while weakening others. For example, digital systems may support

cognitive trust by increasing reliability and predictability, while simultaneously making affective trust more fragile by reducing relational interaction.

Third, the thesis seeks to explain why digitalization produces different trust outcomes across different settings. Instead of focusing only on broad contextual categories such as industry or governance mode, the thesis adopts a mechanism-based perspective. This allows for a more fine-grained understanding of the conditions under which digitalization is likely to strengthen or undermine trust.

By addressing these objectives, the thesis contributes to a more integrated understanding of trust in the digital era. It also provides a conceptual basis for understanding how multinational corporations can implement digital systems in ways that support, rather than damage, trust between headquarters and subsidiaries.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the research problem and objectives, this thesis is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How does digitalization influence trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships?

RQ2: How do the effects of digitalization differ across cognitive, affective, and institutional trust?

RQ3: Under what conditions does digitalization strengthen or weaken trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships, and what implications can be derived for headquarters–subsidiary relationships?

These questions reflect the thesis’s focus on mechanisms, trust dimensions, and contingencies. The first research question addresses the general relationship between digitalization and trust. The second research question examines whether different types of trust are affected differently. The third research question focuses on the conditions that explain variation in trust outcomes and connects the broader findings on trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships to the headquarters–subsidiary context.

1.5 Contribution of the Study

This thesis makes three main contributions.

First, it contributes theoretically by integrating two streams of literature that are often examined separately: research on trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships and research on digitalization in organizational contexts. By bringing these streams together, the thesis shows that digitalization does not simply act as a technical or efficiency-oriented process. Instead, it reshapes the foundations of trust by changing how information is shared, how behavior is made visible, and how control is exercised. The thesis therefore contributes to a more nuanced understanding of trust in digitally mediated organizational relationships.

Second, the thesis contributes by adopting a mechanism-based perspective. Rather than treating digitalization as a single broad phenomenon, the review identifies specific mechanisms through which digital technologies influence trust. These include transparency, standardization, shared data, monitoring, algorithmic opacity, and power asymmetry. This approach helps explain why similar technologies may produce different trust outcomes across contexts. It also allows the thesis to move beyond a simple positive-versus-negative view of digitalization and instead conceptualize it as a source of both trust-building and trust-eroding dynamics.

Third, the thesis contributes to research on headquarters–subsidiary relationships by identifying implications from the broader intra- and inter-organizational literature. Since direct research on digitalization and trust in HQ–subsidiary relationships remains limited, the thesis highlights this as an important research gap. At the same time, it shows how findings from related contexts, such as alliances, buyer–supplier relationships, and platform ecosystems, can inform understanding of trust dynamics in multinational corporations. In particular, the thesis suggests that digital systems may strengthen system-based forms of trust while also creating risks for relational trust and subsidiary autonomy.

The study also has practical relevance. For managers, the findings highlight that digitalization should not be treated only as a technological or efficiency project. Digital systems also function as governance mechanisms that influence how trust is built and maintained. Managers implementing digital tools in inter-organizational or headquarters–subsidiary contexts should therefore pay

attention to how transparency, monitoring, standardization, and data use are perceived by organizational actors. The thesis suggests that successful digitalization requires balancing efficiency and control with autonomy, fairness, and continued relational interaction.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical background of the study. It defines trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships, discusses the main dimensions of trust, and explains the relevance of trust in headquarters–subsidiary contexts. The chapter also introduces digitalization in organizational settings and reviews theoretical perspectives relevant to the study, including relational governance, social exchange theory, information processing theory, transaction cost economics, and institutional theory.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the systematic literature review. It explains the research design, database selection, search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, screening process, data extraction, coding approach, and method of analysis. The chapter also explains how the review follows PRISMA 2020 principles and how large language models were used as a supportive tool during the coding process.

Chapter 4 presents the descriptive results of the review. It provides an overview of the included studies, including their temporal distribution, research contexts, relationship types, geographical and industry distribution, methodological approaches, conceptualizations of trust, and types of digitalization examined in the literature.

Chapter 5 presents the main findings of the thesis. It identifies the mechanisms through which digitalization influences trust, distinguishes between trust-enhancing and trust-eroding mechanisms, and analyzes how digitalization affects cognitive, affective, and institutional trust. The chapter also examines the contingent and tension-driven nature of the digitalization–trust relationship.

Chapter 6 discusses the findings in relation to the theoretical background and research questions. It develops the conceptual framework of trust in the digital era, outlines theoretical and managerial implications, discusses the limitations of the study, and suggests directions for future research.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by summarizing the main findings and contributions. It highlights the central argument that digitalization does not uniformly strengthen or weaken trust, but rather reconfigures its foundations by shifting trust toward systems, data, and formalized processes while creating new risks for relational forms of trust.

2. Theoretical Background

This chapter develops the theoretical foundation for examining how digitalization influences trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships. The thesis focuses on the intersection of two major research streams: the literature on trust and governance in intra- and inter-organizational relationships, and the literature on digitalization as a force transforming organizational coordination, control, and information exchange. Since the direct literature on digitalization and trust in headquarters–subsidiary relationships remains limited, this chapter draws on broader literature on trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships to build the conceptual basis for the systematic literature review.

The chapter is structured in four parts. First, it introduces trust as a central governance mechanism in intra- and inter-organizational relationships. This includes the concept of trust, its main dimensions, and its relevance for cooperation, knowledge transfer, control, and organizational outcomes. Particular attention is given to the distinction between cognitive, affective, and institutional trust, as these dimensions form an important basis for the later analysis.

Second, the chapter discusses digitalization in organizational contexts. It explains how digital technologies such as enterprise systems, data-sharing tools, digital platforms, dashboards, and algorithmic control systems transform coordination and governance. Rather than treating digitalization as a purely technical process, the chapter emphasizes its organizational implications, particularly its role in increasing transparency, standardization, visibility, and monitoring.

Third, the chapter introduces the theoretical perspectives used to interpret the relationship between digitalization and trust. Relational governance and social exchange theory help explain how trust develops through repeated interaction, reciprocity, and informal coordination. Information processing theory provides a lens for understanding how digital technologies reduce uncertainty by increasing information availability and processing capacity. Transaction cost economics explains the role of formal governance, monitoring, and control in managing opportunism and uncertainty. Institutional theory highlights how rules, norms, legitimacy, and institutional distance shape trust and the acceptance of organizational practices, especially in multinational contexts.

Finally, the fourth part of the chapter synthesizes these perspectives to identify the research gap addressed by this thesis. Existing research shows that trust, digitalization, and governance are closely connected, but their interaction remains insufficiently integrated. In particular, it remains unclear through which mechanisms digitalization strengthens or weakens trust, how these effects differ across trust dimensions, and what this means for headquarters–subsidiary relationships in multinational enterprises.

Overall, this chapter provides the conceptual basis for the systematic literature review by clarifying the key constructs, theoretical lenses, and unresolved questions that guide the analysis.

2.1 Trust in Intra- and Inter-Organizational Relationships

2.1.1 Concept and Dimensions of Trust

Trust is crucial in intra- and inter-organizational relationships where independent actors coordinate without hierarchical authority amid uncertainty. Such relationships - including alliances, joint ventures, and networks - face incomplete information, goal misalignment, and opportunism (Williamson, 1985; Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998). Trust facilitates cooperation, lowers transaction costs, and improves coordination.

Research shows that trust improves exchange performance in interorganizational relationships (Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998). It may also support information sharing and long-term collaboration by enabling relational routines through which firms combine and exchange knowledge (Dyer and Singh, 1998). Building trust across boundaries is harder than within organizations, as ties are often weaker.

Within multinational corporations, headquarters-subsidiary (HQ-subsidiary) relationships represent a particularly important form of internal organizational interaction. Although subsidiaries are formally part of the same organization, they often operate with significant autonomy and are embedded in diverse local institutional environments (Kostova and Roth, 2002). As a result, HQ–subsidiary relationships share many characteristics with inter-organizational exchanges, including coordination challenges, information asymmetries, and potential conflicts of interest.

Trust is vital here due to geographic, cultural, and institutional gaps between headquarters and subsidiaries. These distances increase uncertainty and hinder direct control (Kostova, 1999). Trust enables knowledge transfer, goal alignment, and effective practice implementation across units.

At the same time, HQ-subsidiary relationships are inherently shaped by a tension between control and autonomy. Headquarters typically seek to ensure consistency and compliance with corporate standards, while subsidiaries require flexibility to respond to local market conditions (Ghoshal and Nohria, 1989). This tension creates a context in which trust is both necessary and fragile: excessive control may undermine it, while insufficient control may increase the risk of opportunism.

Overall, trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships is an important governance tool for coordination in situations of uncertainty and interdependence. In HQ-subsidiary relationships, trust is particularly significant given distance and the need to balance control with autonomy, yet there is limited empirical research on this topic.

2.1.2 Trust, Control, and Governance

The relationship between trust and control has long been debated in inter-organizational governance research. From a transaction cost perspective, formal control mechanisms such as contracts and monitoring are used to safeguard exchanges against opportunism and uncertainty (Williamson, 1985). This logic contributed to the view that trust and formal control may function as substitutes, whereby higher levels of trust reduce the need for formal control and vice versa.

However, later research challenges this substitution view and suggests that trust and control can also function as complementary mechanisms. Rather than replacing one another, formal control structures may foster trust by increasing transparency, reducing uncertainty, and clarifying expectations (Poppo and Zenger, 2002). Conversely, trust may support the functioning of formal control mechanisms by encouraging cooperative behaviour and making control arrangements more acceptable within the relationship.

Distinguishing between formal and informal governance is important. Formal governance encompasses contracts, procedures, and monitoring, all using explicit rules (Dekker, 2004). In

contrast, informal governance depends on norms, shared values, and trust, with most relationships blending both approaches.

In the context of multinational corporations, the governance of HQ-subsidary relationships often reflects a hybrid model that combines formal control and relational trust. Headquarters typically implement formal mechanisms such as reporting systems, key performance indicators, and standardized processes to achieve alignment across units (Martinez and Jarillo, 1989). At the same time, effective coordination requires trust to enable knowledge sharing, local adaptation, and commitment beyond formal requirements.

Monitoring and coordination play key roles in this interplay. On one hand, monitoring raises accountability and combats information asymmetry. On the other hand, excessive or intrusive monitoring may signal distrust and undermine relational dynamics (Das and Teng, 1998). Coordination mechanisms relying on participation, communication, and mutual adjustment, however, often foster trust by encouraging fairness and inclusion.

Overall, the relationship between trust and control is best understood as dynamic and context-dependent. Depending on how governance mechanisms are designed and implemented, they may either reinforce trust or contribute to its erosion. This duality is especially relevant in the context of digitalization, where new forms of monitoring and coordination reshape the balance between trust and control.

2.1.3 Trust and Organizational Outcomes

Trust has been consistently linked to a range of positive organizational outcomes in both intra- and inter-organizational contexts. One of its primary effects is the facilitation of cooperation, as trust reduces concerns about opportunistic behavior and enables actors to engage in mutually beneficial exchanges (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998). In inter-organizational relationships, this is particularly important for sustaining long-term partnerships and aligning strategic objectives.

Trust also plays a crucial role in knowledge transfer, especially in complex and tacit domains. The transfer of knowledge across organizational boundaries often involves uncertainty and requires a willingness to share valuable information. Higher levels of trust have been shown to enhance both the willingness to share knowledge and the effectiveness of its transfer (Kogut and Zander, 1992; Szulanski, 1996). In multinational corporations, this is particularly relevant for the diffusion of practices and capabilities between headquarters and subsidiaries.

In terms of performance, trust contributes both directly and indirectly. Directly, trust can improve efficiency by reducing the need for extensive monitoring and negotiation. Indirectly, it enhances performance through improved cooperation, learning, and coordination (Dyer and Singh, 1998). Empirical studies have demonstrated that higher levels of inter-organizational trust are associated with better relational performance in interfirm relationships (Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998).

At the same time, trust influences compliance and resistance within organizations. When actors perceive governance mechanisms as fair and legitimate, trust increases the likelihood of voluntary compliance with organizational rules and decisions (Kostova and Roth, 2002). In contrast, low levels of trust may lead to resistance, opportunistic behavior, or symbolic compliance, where formal requirements are met without genuine commitment.

Overall, trust can be seen as a key enabling condition for effective organizational functioning, particularly in complex and distributed settings such as multinational corporations. Its impact on cooperation, knowledge transfer, performance, and compliance highlights its central role in shaping organizational outcomes. This makes trust a critical lens for understanding how changes in governance mechanisms - such as those introduced by digitalization - affect organizational effectiveness.

2.2 Digitalization in Organizational Contexts

Digitalization has fundamentally transformed how organizations operate, coordinate, and interact both internally and across organizational boundaries. It refers to the integration of digital technologies into organizational processes, leading to changes in how information is generated,

shared, and used for decision-making (Bharadwaj et al., 2013). Rather than being limited to technological upgrades, digitalization entails broader organizational changes that affect structures, routines, and governance mechanisms.

In organizational contexts, digital technologies enable increased data availability, real-time communication, and process automation. These changes enhance efficiency and coordination but also alter how control is exercised and how relationships between organizational actors are structured (Yoo, Henfridsson and Lyytinen, 2010). As a result, digitalization plays a central role in shaping both operational processes and relational dynamics within and between organizations.

The following sections outline key types of digital technologies used in organizations, their role in control and coordination, and their relevance in intra- and inter-organizational relationships.

2.2.1 Digital Technologies in Organizations

Organizations employ a wide range of digital technologies to support coordination, decision-making, and control. Among the most prominent are enterprise systems, data visualization tools, and digital platforms.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems are among the most important forms of digital integration within organizations. ERP systems standardize processes and centralize data across functions such as finance, operations, and supply chain management, thereby enabling consistent reporting and coordination across units (Davenport, 1998). In multinational corporations, ERP systems are often implemented globally to ensure alignment between headquarters and subsidiaries.

In addition, organizations increasingly rely on dashboards and data visualization tools, which provide real-time insights into performance indicators and operational metrics. These tools support decision-making by making complex data accessible and transparent, allowing managers to monitor activities and outcomes across different organizational units.

Another key category includes data-sharing systems, which facilitate the exchange of information across organizational boundaries. Such systems enable collaboration by providing shared access

to data, documents, and workflows, thereby supporting joint decision-making and coordination between actors.

Finally, digital platforms have emerged as an important organizational form, enabling interactions between multiple actors within ecosystems. Platforms structure exchanges through standardized interfaces and rules, allowing organizations to coordinate activities at scale (Yoo, Henfridsson and Lyytinen, 2010). In this sense, platforms extend digitalization beyond individual organizations to broader networks of actors.

These technologies help organizations become more digitally integrated, influencing how information is shared and how coordination takes place.

2.2.2 Digitalization as Control and Coordination

Beyond specific technologies, digitalization can be understood as a set of mechanisms that transform how organizations exercise control and achieve coordination.

One of the most important mechanisms is transparency. Digital systems increase the visibility of activities, performance, and processes by making data accessible in real time. This reduces information asymmetry and enables more informed decision-making, while also making actions more observable to other actors.

A closely related mechanism is standardization. Digital technologies often require standardized formats, procedures, and workflows. Standardization facilitates coordination across organizational units (Davenport, 1998).

Digitalization also enables more advanced forms of monitoring, as organizations can track activities, outputs, and behaviors through digital traces. Monitoring increases accountability and allows for more precise performance evaluation, but it may also intensify perceptions of surveillance.

More recently, organizations have adopted algorithmic control, where decision-making processes are partially or fully embedded in digital systems. Algorithms can assign tasks, evaluate performance, and enforce rules, thereby shaping behavior through automated mechanisms

(Kellogg, Valentine and Christin, 2020). This form of control differs from traditional hierarchical control, as it operates through data-driven and often opaque processes.

Together, transparency, standardization, monitoring, and algorithmic control are key ways digitalization changes how organizations are governed. These mechanisms interact with each other and influence how coordination and control are managed.

2.2.3 Digitalization in Intra- and Inter-Organizational Relationships

Digitalization is increasingly important in inter-organizational relationships, where coordination must occur across firm boundaries. Through digital integration, organizations can share data, align processes, and coordinate activities in ways that were previously difficult or impossible.

One key development is the emergence of digitally integrated inter-organizational systems, which enable real-time information exchange between partners. These systems reduce coordination costs and improve efficiency by facilitating seamless communication and data sharing across organizations.

In multinational corporations, digitalization is particularly evident in the implementation of shared systems between headquarters and subsidiaries, such as global ERP platforms and reporting tools. These systems allow headquarters to access standardized data from subsidiaries, increasing visibility and enabling centralized coordination. At the same time, they create new dependencies between units, as subsidiaries must align their processes with centrally defined systems (Davenport, 1998).

Beyond hierarchical relationships, digitalization also supports the development of platform-based ecosystems, where multiple organizations interact through shared digital infrastructures. Platforms enable coordination at scale by standardizing interactions and providing rules for participation, thereby reshaping traditional inter-organizational relationships (Yoo, Henfridsson and Lyytinen, 2010).

Digitalization changes intra- and inter-organizational relationships by introducing new ways to integrate, coordinate, and control activities. These changes matter for trust because they affect how information is shared, how behavior is monitored, and how organizations relate to each other.

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives

To analyze the impact of digitalization on trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships, this study draws on multiple theoretical perspectives. The selection of these perspectives is informed by the literature review, which indicates that relational governance and social exchange theory, information processing theory, and transaction cost economics are among the most frequently applied lenses in this research domain, complemented by institutional theory to account for contextual variation.

No single theory explains all aspects of how trust develops or changes in digital environments. By combining different perspectives, we can better understand how digitalization changes governance, affects uncertainty, and shapes relationships in headquarters–subsidiary settings.

2.3.1 Relational Governance and Social Exchange Theory

Relational governance perspectives emphasize that trust, shared norms and long-term relational ties can coordinate inter-organizational exchanges. In this vein, Dyer and Singh's (1998) relational view highlights effective governance and knowledge-sharing routines as key sources of interorganizational competitive advantage. Rather than relying solely on formal contracts and monitoring, organizations develop informal governance structures based on mutual expectations, reciprocity, and commitment. These relational mechanisms are particularly important in environments characterized by uncertainty and interdependence.

Closely related, social exchange theory explains how trust emerges and evolves through repeated interactions between actors. According to this perspective, relationships are built through ongoing exchanges in which parties evaluate the costs and benefits of cooperation, gradually developing trust and commitment over time (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961). Trust is therefore not static but develops dynamically through interaction and experience.

In intra- and inter-organizational contexts, including HQ-subsidary relationships, relational governance enables coordination beyond formal control mechanisms. It facilitates cooperation, supports knowledge sharing, and reduces the need for extensive monitoring. However, relational governance depends on continued interaction and communication, which may be altered in digitally mediated environments where interpersonal contact is reduced.

2.3.2 Information Processing Theory

Information Processing Theory (IPT) provides a useful framework for understanding why digital technologies matter for organizational coordination. Galbraith's (1974) information-processing view argues that organizations must process information to cope with uncertainty and coordinate interdependent tasks. From this perspective, organizational effectiveness depends on the fit between information-processing requirements and the organization's information-processing capacity, which can be increased through mechanisms such as information systems, lateral relations, and other coordination arrangements.

Digital technologies significantly increase organizations' information processing capacity by enabling real-time data collection, sharing, and analysis. Systems such as ERP platforms, dashboards, and data-sharing tools allow organizations to access and process large volumes of information, thereby reducing uncertainty and improving decision-making.

In inter-organizational relationships, IPT highlights the importance of information flows for coordination across boundaries. Digitalization enables greater transparency and more efficient communication, which can support alignment between headquarters and subsidiaries. At the same time, increased information-processing capacity may also lead to more intensive monitoring and data-driven control, altering relational dynamics.

Thus, IPT provides a crucial lens for understanding how digitalization reshapes coordination mechanisms and influences the conditions under which trust is built or challenged.

2.3.3 Transaction Cost Economics

From a transaction cost perspective, uncertainty, bounded rationality, and opportunism create the need for governance mechanisms that reduce exchange hazards (Williamson, 1985). Trust is often

discussed in later inter-organizational research as a relational mechanism that may reduce perceived risk and the need for costly monitoring.

To address these challenges, organizations implement governance mechanisms such as contracts, monitoring, and hierarchical control. The choice of governance structure depends on factors such as uncertainty, asset specificity, and the risk of opportunistic behavior. Higher levels of uncertainty and risk typically lead to increased reliance on formal control mechanisms.

Within this framework, trust is often viewed as an alternative to formal control. When trust is high, organizations may reduce monitoring and rely more on relational coordination. Conversely, when trust is low, more extensive control mechanisms are required.

In digitally mediated environments, TCE is particularly relevant for understanding how digital technologies affect governance. By increasing transparency and enabling detailed monitoring, digitalization reduces information asymmetry but may also intensify control and surveillance. This creates a tension in which mechanisms designed to reduce uncertainty may simultaneously undermine trust.

2.3.4 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory emphasizes the role of formal and informal institutions in shaping organizational behavior and establishing legitimacy. Institutions include regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and shared expectations that influence how organizations operate and interact (North, 1990; Scott, 1995).

In inter-organizational relationships, institutional environments affect how trust is formed and maintained. Institutional trust arises from confidence in systems, rules, and structures that ensure predictable and acceptable behavior (Zucker, 1986). In multinational corporations, differences in national institutional environments can create challenges for coordination and trust-building between headquarters and subsidiaries (Kostova, 1999).

Digitalization interacts with institutional contexts in important ways. On the one hand, digital systems can standardize processes and promote consistency across organizational units, thereby strengthening institutional forms of trust. On the other hand, implementing standardized systems

across diverse institutional environments may create tensions if local norms and practices are not adequately taken into account.

Institutional theory, therefore, provides an important perspective for understanding how the effects of digitalization on trust may vary across contexts, particularly in globally distributed organizations.

2.4 Synthesis and Research Gap

Building on the preceding sections, this chapter has outlined the key concepts of trust, the role of digitalization in organizational contexts, and the theoretical perspectives used to explain governance in intra- and inter-organizational relationships. This section synthesizes the main insights from the literature and identifies the key gaps that motivate this study.

2.4.1 What We Know

Existing research provides strong evidence that both trust and digitalization play central roles in shaping intra- and inter-organizational relationships.

First, prior studies consistently show that trust is a critical enabler of organizational outcomes, including cooperation, knowledge transfer, and performance (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998). Trust facilitates coordination under uncertainty and reduces the need for costly monitoring and control mechanisms.

Second, the literature demonstrates that digitalization significantly transforms organizational processes and governance structures. Digital technologies increase transparency, enable real-time data exchange, and support standardized processes, thereby enhancing coordination across organizational units (Bharadwaj et al., 2013; Yoo, Henfridsson and Lyytinen, 2010).

Third, prior research highlights that governance mechanisms - particularly the balance between trust and control - are central to managing inter-organizational relationships. Both formal mechanisms (e.g., monitoring, contracts) and informal mechanisms (e.g., trust, relational norms) are necessary, and their interaction shapes relationship outcomes (Poppo and Zenger, 2002; Dekker, 2004).

Taken together, the literature establishes that trust, digitalization, and governance are deeply interconnected. However, the way in which these elements interact remains insufficiently understood, particularly in the context of multinational corporations and headquarters-subsidary relationships.

2.4.2 What Is Missing

Despite the growing body of research, several important gaps remain.

First, existing findings are fragmented across disciplines and theoretical perspectives. Studies draw on different lenses - such as relational governance, transaction cost economics, and information systems research - without integrating their insights into a coherent framework. As a result, the overall understanding of how digitalization affects trust remains scattered.

Second, there is a lack of mechanism-based explanations. While many studies identify correlations between digitalization and trust, fewer explicitly explain *how* specific features of digital technologies - such as transparency, monitoring, or standardization - shape trust dynamics. This limits the ability to systematically compare findings across studies.

Third, there is a limited focus on HQ-subsidary relationships. While intra- and inter-organizational trust has been widely examined in alliances, networks, and platforms, comparatively few studies directly address multinational corporations, where hierarchical structures coexist with interdependence and local autonomy.

Finally, the literature provides inconsistent evidence regarding the direction of digitalization's effects on trust, and it remains unclear to what extent these findings can be transferred to HQ-subsidary relationships. Some studies highlight positive effects, such as increased transparency and coordination, while others point to negative consequences, including surveillance, reduced autonomy, and weakened interpersonal relationships. However, the conditions under which digitalization strengthens or undermines trust remain unclear.

2.4.3 Research Gap and Contribution

In response to these gaps, this study provides a systematic and integrative analysis of how digitalization influences trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships. Particular attention is given to headquarters-subsidary contexts as a theoretically important but underexplored setting.

First, the study contributes by offering a systematic literature review that consolidates fragmented findings across disciplines and theoretical perspectives. By applying a structured review methodology, it provides a comprehensive overview of existing research on digitalization and trust.

Second, the study adopts a mechanism-based perspective, focusing on how specific features of digitalization - such as transparency, standardization, monitoring, and algorithmic control - affect trust. This approach enables a more fine-grained understanding of the processes through which digitalization shapes relational dynamics.

Third, the study integrates different dimensions of trust - including cognitive, affective, and institutional trust - with different forms of digitalization. This allows for a more nuanced analysis of how digital technologies influence distinct aspects of trust rather than treating trust as a uniform construct.

Finally, the study discusses the implications of the findings for headquarters-subsidary relationships, thereby addressing an underexplored area in the literature. By relating the findings to multinational corporations, the study contributes to a better understanding of how digitalization may affect trust in complex, geographically dispersed, and institutionally diverse organizational settings.

This study aims to go beyond fragmented findings by building a clearer understanding of how digitalization affects trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships and under what conditions these effects occur.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine how digitalization influences trust in intra- and inter-organizational contexts, and to derive implications for headquarters–subsidiary relationships.

A systematic literature review is a structured method for identifying, selecting, and analyzing existing research. It is particularly suitable for this topic, as prior studies on trust and digitalization are spread across different disciplines, including management, information systems, and organizational research. These studies often apply different definitions and perspectives, making it difficult to draw clear conclusions without a structured synthesis, particularly when considering their applicability to multinational corporations.

To ensure transparency and rigor, this study follows the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. This framework provides a clear process for identifying, screening, and selecting relevant studies.

The review is conducted as a qualitative, interpretive synthesis rather than a meta-analysis. Due to the heterogeneity of the included studies in terms of research design, context, and measurement approaches, quantitative aggregation is not appropriate. Instead, the study applies a structured coding process and thematic analysis to identify key patterns and mechanisms linking digitalization and trust.

Parts of the coding process were supported by large language models (LLMs). However, all outputs were systematically reviewed, validated, and interpreted by the author to ensure consistency and reliability.

This research design allows for a systematic and transparent review of the literature, while also addressing the complex relationship between digitalization and trust.

3.2 Search Strategy

3.2.1 Databases

The literature search was conducted using two major multidisciplinary academic databases: Scopus and Web of Science Core Collection (WoS).

These databases were selected due to their broad coverage of high-quality, peer-reviewed journals across disciplines relevant to this study, including management, international business, and information systems. Using both databases reduces the risk of missing relevant studies and increases the robustness of the review.

3.2.2 Development of Search Strategy

The search strategy was developed in a structured, iterative manner in line with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). It was based on three conceptually derived clusters reflecting the core dimensions of the research questions:

- Trust
- Digitalization
- Intra- and inter-organizational context

This cluster-based approach ensured both theoretical alignment with the research objective and a balance between comprehensiveness and precision.

Trust cluster

The trust cluster was designed to capture both explicit and implicit conceptualizations of trust in organizational research. In addition to the general term 'trust,' it was decided to include commonly used dimensions such as cognitive, affective, and institutional trust, as well as relational formulations such as interorganizational and relational trust. The term 'confidence' was included to capture studies in which trust is discussed implicitly.

Digitalization cluster

The digitalization cluster aimed to capture a broad range of technologies relevant to organizational coordination and control. Initial pilot searches showed that narrow information systems terminology excluded important streams such as digital monitoring and platform governance. Therefore, the cluster included terms such as digital transformation, enterprise systems, digital platforms, data sharing, and algorithmic control.

Purely technical or engineering-oriented terms (e.g., IoT, cyber-physical systems) were intentionally excluded to avoid capturing studies without organizational relevance.

Inter-organizational context cluster

The third cluster focused on governance-based relationships across organizational boundaries. It included headquarters–subsidiary relationships, strategic alliances, joint ventures, franchising networks, and inter-firm networks.

To account for variation in terminology, flexible Boolean structures were used (e.g., (headquarters AND subsidiar*)), allowing for different formulations without relying on exact phrases.

3.2.3 Search Strings and Filters

Searches were conducted using database-specific syntax (e.g., TITLE-ABS-KEY in Scopus and TS= in Web of Science), applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords.

The final search strings combined the three concept clusters using Boolean operators. Full search strings for both databases are provided in Appendix I - Search strings.

The following filters were applied:

- publication period: 2000–2025
- document type: peer-reviewed journal articles
- language: English

The timeframe reflects the emergence and increasing relevance of digitalization in organizational contexts since the early 2000s.

3.2.4 Iterative Refinement and Validation

The search strategy was refined through multiple pilot searches. These tests helped identify cases where the search was either too narrow (missing relevant terminology) or too broad (capturing technical or irrelevant studies). Adjustments were made to improve alignment with the research scope.

The final search strategy was validated by:

- confirming that key seminal works appeared in the results,
- checking the presence of leading journals in the field,
- comparing results across databases,
- and ensuring that the search results aligned with the theoretical focus of the study.

This step-by-step, transparent process ensures that study selection can be repeated and is based on solid theory.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure consistency and transparency in study selection, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied throughout the screening process in line with PRISMA 2020 guidelines.

3.3.1 Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they met all of the following criteria:

- Focus on trust: The study explicitly conceptualizes, measures, or theorizes trust (e.g., cognitive, affective, institutional, or inter-organizational trust).
- Digitalization component: The study examines digital technologies, digital transformation, or digital control mechanisms with organizational implications. This includes, for example,

enterprise systems (ERP, TMS), digital platforms, data-sharing systems, or algorithmic control.

- Intra- and inter-organizational context: The study focuses on relationships across organizational boundaries, such as headquarters–subsidiary relationships, strategic alliances, joint ventures, franchising networks, or inter-firm networks.
- Academic scope: The study is grounded in management, organization, international business, or related disciplines and contributes to understanding organizational or governance processes.
- Formal requirements
 - peer-reviewed journal article
 - published in English
 - published between 2000 and 2025
 - full text available for analysis

3.3.2 Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they met any of the following criteria:

- Irrelevant use of trust: Trust is mentioned only incidentally without a substantive analytical focus.
- Non-relevant context: consumer trust (B2C), e-commerce, or user trust studies; intra-team or interpersonal trust without an inter-organizational dimension
- Purely technical focus: Studies focusing on technical aspects of digital systems (e.g., system architecture, encryption, or algorithm design) without organizational or relational implications.
- Outside the theoretical scope: Studies from domains such as healthcare, education, or public administration lack a clear intra- or inter-organizational governance focus.

- Non-eligible publication types: Conference papers, book chapters, books, editorials, and other non-peer-reviewed publications.

3.3.3 Application of Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied across all stages of the screening process (title, abstract, and full-text screening).

A conservative screening approach was adopted, particularly in the early stages. Studies were excluded only when irrelevance was clearly evident. Ambiguous or borderline cases were retained for further assessment at later stages. This approach reduces the risk of prematurely excluding potentially relevant studies and is consistent with best practices in systematic literature reviews.

During abstract screening, particular attention was paid to three core dimensions aligned with the research objective:

- the presence of an intra- or inter-organizational context,
- the role of digital technologies or systems,
- and the relevance of trust or governance mechanisms.

Studies that did not meet these criteria were excluded. When relevance was uncertain, studies were retained for full-text review to ensure a comprehensive and robust selection process.

3.4 Screening Process

The screening process followed the PRISMA 2020 framework, consisting of identification, deduplication, screening, and eligibility assessment.

3.4.1 Identification and Deduplication

The initial database search yielded 592 records, including 234 from Scopus and 358 from the Web of Science Core Collection.

The datasets were merged, and duplicates were identified using DOI and title matching. In total, 143 duplicate records were removed, resulting in 449 unique records for further screening.

3.4.2 Title Screening

All records were first assessed at the title level. A conservative screening approach was applied, meaning that studies were excluded only when irrelevance was clearly evident from the title. Titles that were ambiguous or only partially aligned with the research scope were retained for further review.

At this stage, 96 records were excluded, while 353 records were retained for abstract screening.

3.4.3 Abstract Screening

The remaining records were evaluated based on their abstracts using the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The assessment focused on whether studies addressed (1) an intra- or inter-organizational context, (2) a digital or technological component, and (3) trust or governance mechanisms.

Studies that did not meet these criteria were excluded. In cases of uncertainty, studies were retained to avoid premature exclusion.

As a result, 160 studies were included for full-text assessment.

3.4.4 Full-Text Screening and Final Sample

In the final stage, full-text versions of the remaining studies were assessed in detail. This allowed for a more precise evaluation of their theoretical focus, level of analysis, and relevance to the research questions.

Following full-text screening, 132 studies were included in the final sample, while the remaining studies were excluded.

3.4.5 PRISMA Flow Summary

The overall screening process is summarized in the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Figure 1 – PRISMA Flow Diagram). In total, 592 records were identified, 143 duplicates were removed, and 449 records were screened. The final sample consists of 132 studies.

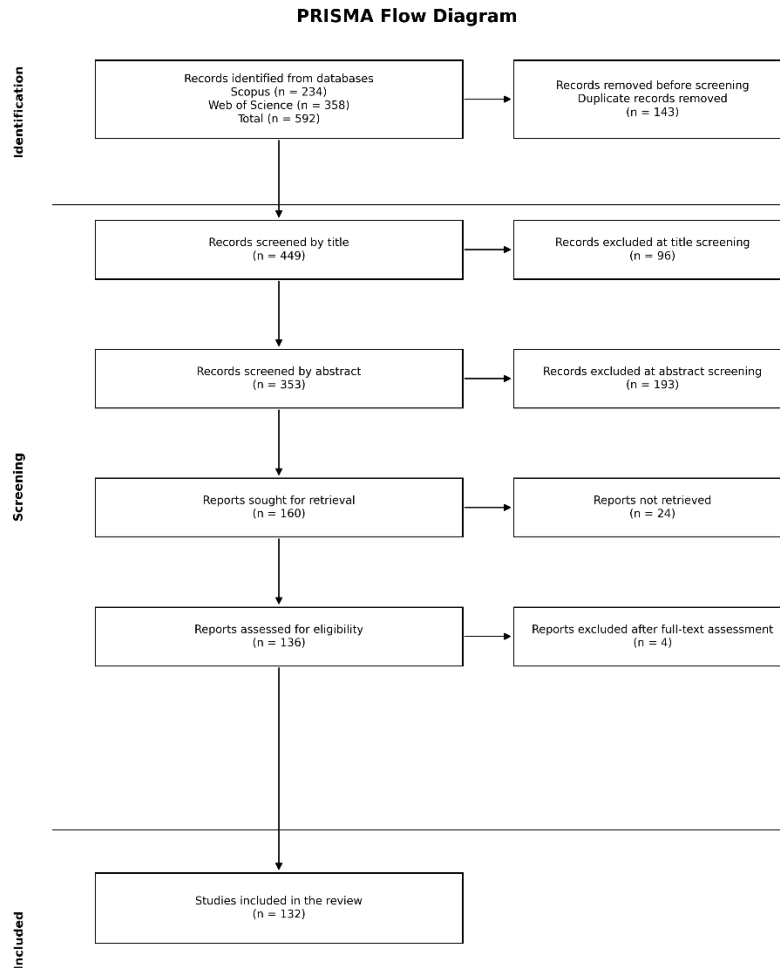


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process

3.5 Data Extraction and Coding

Data extraction and coding were conducted using a structured approach to systematically capture relevant information from the included studies.

A coding framework was developed based on the study's research questions and theoretical background. The framework included variables related to the study context, the type of digitalization, the conceptualization of trust, the mechanisms linking digitalization and trust, and reported outcomes. The coding structure was implemented in a spreadsheet, enabling consistent organization and comparison across studies.

The coding process followed a hybrid approach, combining deductive and inductive elements. Deductive categories were derived from existing literature, including established distinctions such as cognitive, affective, and institutional trust, as well as governance and control mechanisms. At the same time, additional themes and mechanisms were identified inductively during the coding process, allowing the analysis to capture patterns emerging from the data.

For each study, relevant information was extracted and recorded directly in the coding table. This included descriptive information (e.g., context, method, sample), as well as analytical categories such as digitalization characteristics, trust dimensions, and mechanisms influencing trust.

Parts of the data extraction process were supported by large language models (LLMs), which helped structure and summarize information from the full texts. The use of LLMs was limited to supportive tasks in the extraction and structuring of information; all eligibility assessments, interpretive judgments, and final coding decisions remained the sole responsibility of the author. The use of LLMs enabled more efficient processing of a large number of studies.

However, all extracted information was systematically reviewed, validated, and refined by the author. Coding decisions were made by the author to ensure conceptual consistency and alignment with the research objectives. Where necessary, original articles were re-examined to confirm interpretations and resolve ambiguities.

Using structured coding, repeated refinement, and author checks provided both depth and rigor in the data extraction process.

3.6 Data Analysis Approach

The analysis followed a qualitative, multi-step approach combining descriptive analysis and thematic synthesis to identify patterns in the relationship between digitalization and trust.

First, a descriptive analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the included studies. This included examining the distribution of studies across time, disciplines, research methods, and organizational contexts. The descriptive analysis helped to situate the literature and identify general trends in how trust and digitalization have been studied.

Second, a thematic analysis was applied to the coded data to identify recurring patterns and relationships. The analysis focused on understanding how different forms of digitalization influence trust in intra- and inter-organizational settings. Particular attention was given to identifying:

- mechanisms through which digitalization affects trust,
- differences across types of trust (e.g., cognitive, affective, institutional),
- and conditions under which digitalization strengthens or weakens trust.

The analysis followed an iterative process, moving back and forth between individual studies and the emerging patterns. This allowed for refinement of categories and ensured that identified themes were grounded in the data.

The final stage of the analysis involved synthesizing the findings into a structured framework. This framework integrates digitalization characteristics, trust dimensions, and underlying mechanisms and serves as the basis for the results and discussion presented in subsequent chapters.

4. Descriptive Results

4.1 Overview of Included Literature

This chapter presents the descriptive results of the systematic literature review. While Chapter 3 explained how the studies were identified, screened, and selected, this chapter describes the characteristics of the final sample and provides an overview of how trust and digitalization have been studied in intra- and inter-organizational contexts.

The final sample consists of 132 studies published between 2000 and 2025. These studies were selected through a structured multi-stage screening process in line with the PRISMA-guided review approach described in the methodology chapter. The sample includes empirical qualitative, empirical quantitative, mixed-methods, conceptual, and review-based contributions. It therefore reflects a heterogeneous body of literature spanning different research contexts, methodological approaches, conceptualizations of trust, and forms of digitalization.

The temporal distribution of the included studies indicates that the intersection of digitalization and intra- or inter-organizational trust has gained increasing academic attention over time. In the early 2000s, only a limited number of studies addressed this topic, suggesting that research on trust in digitally mediated inter-organizational contexts was still in a formative stage. From approximately 2005 onwards, the number of publications began to increase more steadily, with a visible concentration of studies in the early 2010s. This suggests that the topic gradually became more established as digital systems, platforms, and data-sharing technologies became more relevant for organizational coordination.

Between 2013 and 2017, the number of studies remained relatively stable, indicating a period of consolidation rather than rapid expansion. A stronger increase can be observed from around 2018 onwards, with a particularly high concentration of studies in the period from 2021 to 2025. This recent growth suggests that the relationship between digitalization and trust has become increasingly important, likely reflecting the wider adoption of digital platforms, integrated information systems, monitoring technologies, and data-driven governance mechanisms in organizational relationships.

Overall, the publication trend shows that trust has long been an important topic in intra- and inter-organizational research, but its connection to digitalization has become more prominent only in recent years. The final sample of 132 studies therefore provides a suitable basis for analyzing how digitalization influences trust across different intra- and inter-organizational settings. Figure 2 presents the distribution of included studies by publication year.

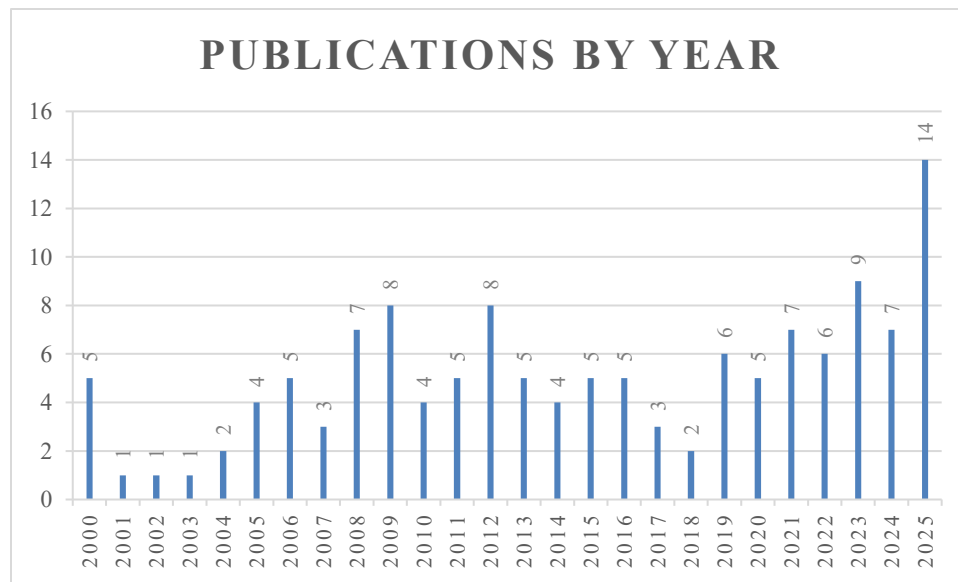


Figure 2. Distribution of included studies by publication year

4.2 Research Contexts and Empirical Settings

This section examines the contexts in which trust and digitalization are studied across the included literature. The aim is to identify the types of intra- and inter-organizational relationships that dominate the sample and to assess the extent to which existing research directly addresses headquarters–subsidiary relationships, which represent the focal context of this thesis. In addition, the section describes the geographical and industry settings of the reviewed studies in order to clarify the empirical scope of the literature.

4.2.1 Relationship Contexts

The reviewed studies cover a broad range of intra- and inter-organizational relationship contexts. The largest group of studies focuses on alliances and joint ventures ($n = 63$), followed by buyer–supplier relationships ($n = 41$). Together, these two categories account for the majority of the reviewed literature. This indicates that research on digitalization and trust is strongly concentrated

in collaborative inter-firm arrangements characterized by interdependence, information asymmetry, coordination challenges, and varying degrees of formal and relational governance.

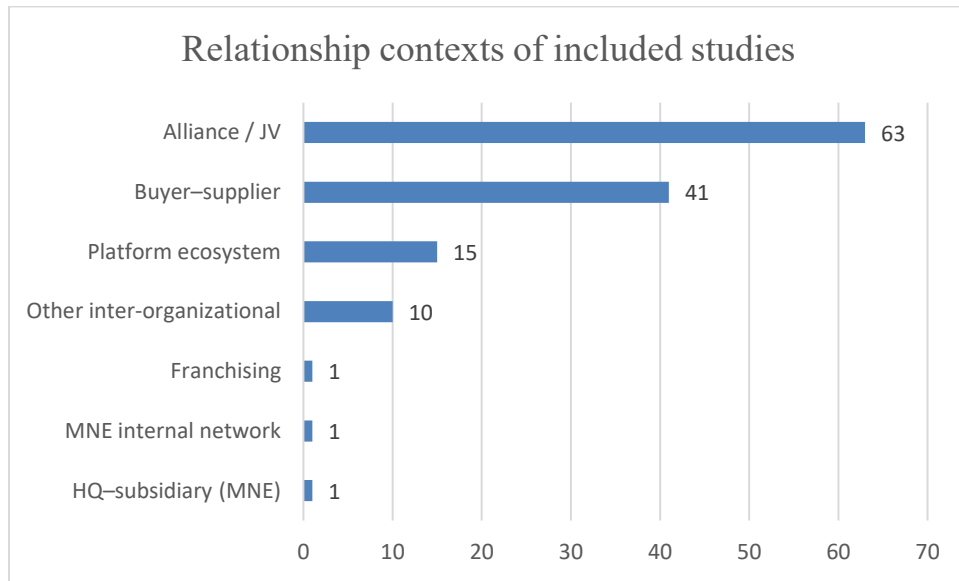


Figure 3. Distribution of included studies by relationship context

Strategic alliances and joint ventures represent the most prominent relationship context in the sample. In these studies, trust is commonly examined as a mechanism that supports cooperation, knowledge sharing, learning, and coordination between independent organizations. Because such relationships often involve uncertainty and mutual dependence, they provide important insights into how trust develops and how it can be supported or challenged by digital technologies.

Buyer-supplier relationships also form a major stream of research in the reviewed literature. These studies often examine trust in the context of supply chain integration, digital information sharing, process coordination, and inter-firm collaboration. In this context, digital technologies are frequently studied as tools that improve visibility, enable data exchange, and support coordination between partners. At the same time, they may also introduce new forms of monitoring and control.

Another important group of studies focuses on platform ecosystems ($n = 15$). These studies examine trust in settings where multiple actors interact through shared digital infrastructures, standardized interfaces, and platform-based governance mechanisms. This stream is particularly relevant for understanding how digitalization changes the basis of trust by shifting coordination from direct interpersonal relationships toward more system-mediated forms of interaction.

Other intra- and inter-organizational contexts account for a smaller but still relevant part of the sample ($n = 10$). These studies include broader or less clearly specified forms of intra- and inter-organizational collaboration. In contrast, franchising ($n = 1$), MNE internal networks ($n = 1$), and direct headquarters–subsidiary relationships ($n = 1$) are only marginally represented.

Overall, the sample is dominated by broader inter-organizational relationship contexts rather than direct studies of headquarters–subsidiary relationships. This supports the need to derive implications for HQ–subsidiary settings from adjacent contexts such as alliances, buyer–supplier relationships, supply chains, and platform ecosystems.

4.2.2 Geographical Distribution of Studies

The geographical distribution of the reviewed studies shows a concentration in a limited number of countries and regions, alongside a considerable share of studies that do not specify a particular country context or adopt a broader geographical scope.

The United States is the most prominent country context in the sample ($n = 23$), followed by China ($n = 12$), Sweden ($n = 9$), Australia ($n = 8$), the United Kingdom ($n = 8$), and the Netherlands ($n = 8$). Other countries represented with several studies include Finland ($n = 5$), Germany ($n = 5$), Taiwan ($n = 5$), France ($n = 3$), Switzerland ($n = 3$), and Europe as a broader regional category ($n = 3$). Global studies also account for a small part of the sample ($n = 3$).

A wide range of countries appear only sporadically in the reviewed literature. These include Canada ($n = 2$), Hungary ($n = 2$), Japan ($n = 2$), as well as Croatia, Denmark, Ghana, India, Iran, Italy, Korea, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Türkiye, Vietnam, and various countries, each represented by one study. This indicates that while the topic has global relevance, empirical research remains unevenly distributed across regions.

A notable number of studies do not specify a country context ($n = 8$), while others are coded as not applicable ($n = 6$), typically because they are conceptual, theoretical, or review-based contributions rather than empirical studies tied to a specific location. While such contributions are valuable for theory development, they provide limited insight into how national, cultural, or institutional differences influence trust dynamics.

Overall, the geographical distribution suggests that existing research is concentrated in economically advanced and digitally mature contexts, particularly the United States, China, Northern and Western Europe, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Emerging and developing economies are comparatively underrepresented, even though institutional distance, infrastructural differences, and uneven digital capabilities may significantly shape trust in digitally mediated organizational relationships. This limits the extent to which conclusions can be generalized to multinational enterprises operating across diverse institutional environments.

4.2.3 Industry Contexts

The reviewed studies cover a broad range of industries; however, the distribution across sectors is uneven. The largest identified industry group is industrial and manufacturing contexts ($n = 44$). These studies typically examine digitally enabled coordination, production systems, supply chain integration, and inter-firm collaboration. This reflects the central role of digitalization in industrial transformation and operational coordination.

The second major identified group focuses on digital and IT-related industries ($n = 19$), including information technology, telecommunications, software, and platform-based environments. In these contexts, digital technologies are often both the infrastructure through which relationships are coordinated and the object of organizational transformation. This makes them particularly relevant for examining how trust is shaped by digitally mediated interaction.

Other sectors are represented to a lesser extent. These include energy and utilities ($n = 6$), consumer and retail industries ($n = 5$), general or cross-industry settings ($n = 4$), public and social sector contexts ($n = 4$), healthcare and life sciences ($n = 3$), financial services ($n = 1$), and professional services ($n = 1$). The relatively limited representation of service industries suggests that current insights may be more strongly shaped by industrial, technological, and supply-chain-oriented settings.

For a substantial share of the sample, no specific industry group could be identified ($n = 45$). This may reflect the conceptual nature of some contributions, the use of generalized organizational samples, or insufficient information in the studies to assign a clear sectoral category. However, it also limits the ability to assess whether trust dynamics differ systematically across industries.

Overall, research on digitalization and trust is concentrated in industrial and technology-intensive contexts, while service-oriented sectors remain less visible. This suggests that the literature is particularly strong in settings where digital integration, process coordination, and intra- and inter-organizational data exchange are central. At the same time, the high number of studies without a clearly specified industry context indicates that sector-specific conclusions should be drawn cautiously.

4.2.4 Relevance to HQ–Subsidiary Context

A key objective of this review is to assess how extensively existing research addresses trust in headquarters–subsidiary relationships in the context of digitalization.

The analysis reveals that only one study directly investigates HQ-subsidiary relationships ($n = 1$). A small group of studies ($n = 14$) refers to this context only as background, without empirically examining it.

In contrast, the overwhelming majority of studies ($n = 117$) examine trust in intra- and inter-organizational governance contexts - such as alliances, ecosystems, or supply chains - which are indirectly transferable to the HQ-subsidiary setting but do not explicitly focus on it.

This distribution highlights a significant gap in the literature. While trust in digitally mediated intra- and inter-organizational relationships has been widely studied, its specific dynamics within hierarchical multinational structures remain largely underexplored.

4.3 Methodological Characteristics of the Literature

This section analyzes the methodological characteristics of the reviewed literature, focusing on study types, research methods, and units of analysis.

4.3.1 Study Types

The reviewed literature consists predominantly of empirical studies, with a clear emphasis on qualitative methods. Of the 132 articles, 57 are empirical–qualitative, 38 are empirical–

quantitative, and 4 employ mixed-methods designs. In addition, 29 studies are conceptual or theoretical, and 4 are review papers. The studies contributing to each category are listed in Appendix III.

This distribution indicates that research on trust in digital intra- and inter-organizational contexts is largely empirically grounded but methodologically unbalanced, with a strong preference for qualitative inquiry. The relatively high number of conceptual contributions suggests ongoing theory development, while the limited number of review studies indicates that the field remains fragmented and evolving, lacking extensive synthesis efforts.

4.3.2 Research Methods

In terms of specific research methods, the literature is clearly dominated by case study approaches (52 studies) and survey-based quantitative research (40 studies). In addition, 14 studies rely primarily on interviews, often as part of qualitative or case-based designs.

Other methods appear only marginally, including archival studies (4), experiments (2), simulation (1), design science (1), and systematic literature review (1). A notable share of studies (16) are classified as not applicable, largely corresponding to conceptual or theoretical papers. One additional study is classified as not measured, as it is based on conceptual discussion only. The studies contributing to each category are listed in Appendix III.

The frequent use of case studies shows that trust in intra- and inter-organizational settings is complex and often needs detailed, qualitative analysis. Surveys are also common, showing efforts to measure trust in larger groups.

However, the limited use of experimental and simulation-based methods suggests that the field has not yet extensively explored causal inference or controlled testing environments, which may represent an opportunity for future research.

4.3.3 Units of Analysis

The reviewed studies employ a diverse range of units of analysis, reflecting the multi-level nature of intra- and inter-organizational relationships. The majority of studies focus on the network or ecosystem level ($n = 60$) and the firm or organizational level ($n = 47$). These studies typically

examine trust dynamics in broader intra- and inter-organizational arrangements, such as digital platforms, ecosystems, supply chains, alliances, or firm-level collaborations.

A smaller number of studies adopt a dyadic perspective ($n = 17$), analyzing relationships between two organizational actors, such as partner dyads and, in a limited number of cases, headquarters–subsidiary pairs. This level of analysis is especially relevant for examining trust as a relational mechanism between two interdependent actors, but it remains less common than broader organizational or network-level approaches.

Only a very limited number of studies explicitly focus on the subsidiary level ($n = 2$). This finding further confirms that direct evidence on trust and digitalization in headquarters–subsidiary relationships is scarce. Finally, a small subset of studies examines trust at the individual level ($n = 6$), typically focusing on interpersonal trust between managers or employees within intra- and inter-organizational settings.

Overall, most studies focus on broader organizational and network levels, while there is considerably less attention to dyadic, subsidiary-level, and individual-level analyses. This suggests that the literature provides stronger insights into trust and digitalization in broader intra- and inter-organizational systems than in hierarchical multinational relationships such as headquarters–subsidiary ties.

4.3.4 Summary of Methodological Patterns

Taken together, the findings highlight several key methodological patterns. First, the field is dominated by qualitative, case-based research, indicating an exploratory orientation in which scholars seek to understand the complex mechanisms of trust in digital environments. Second, while quantitative survey-based studies are also well represented, truly large-scale datasets remain limited, suggesting constraints in data availability or measurement consistency.

Third, mixed-methods approaches are surprisingly rare, despite their potential to integrate depth and generalizability. Experimental, simulation-based, and design-oriented approaches are also only marginally represented, indicating that causal inference and controlled testing remain underdeveloped in the field.

Finally, the reviewed studies vary considerably in their units of analysis. Most studies focus on network/ecosystem and firm-level settings, whereas dyadic, subsidiary-level, and individual-level analyses are less common. This is particularly important for the present thesis, as it shows that direct evidence on headquarters–subsidiary relationships remains limited.

Overall, the methodological landscape reflects a field rich in insights but still developing in terms of methodological balance, causal testing, and direct evidence on multinational headquarters–subsidiary relationships.

4.4 Conceptualization and Operationalization of Trust

This section examines how trust is conceptualized and measured across the reviewed literature. Understanding these variations is important for interpreting the role of trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships.

4.4.1 Trust Dimensions

The reviewed studies reveal that trust is conceptualized in multiple ways, although not always consistently or explicitly.

The majority of studies focus on cognitive trust, which is based on perceptions of competence, reliability, and predictability. This form of trust dominates the literature, appearing in the large majority of cases.

A second group of studies conceptualizes trust as institutional trust, grounded in formal structures, rules, and governance mechanisms that provide assurance of expected behavior. This type of trust is particularly relevant in structured intra- and inter-organizational settings where formal mechanisms substitute or complement interpersonal relationships.

In contrast, affective trust, which is based on emotional bonds and interpersonal relationships, is only rarely addressed in the reviewed studies. This suggests that the literature places relatively limited emphasis on relational and emotional dimensions of trust.

Finally, a small number of studies adopt a mixed or unclear conceptualization of trust, either combining multiple dimensions without a clear distinction or referring to trust in a general sense

without specifying its underlying components. Overall, most studies focus on cognitive and institutional trust, while affective trust is less often examined. The studies contributing to each category are listed in Appendix III.

4.4.2 Measurement of Trust

In addition to conceptual differences, the reviewed studies also vary considerably in how trust is measured and operationalized.

Some studies rely on direct measures of trust, typically using survey-based instruments in which respondents assess trust levels through Likert-scale items. These approaches allow for explicit measurement of trust as a construct.

However, a substantial portion of the literature relies on indirect measures or proxies. In these cases, trust is inferred from related variables such as the level of information sharing, collaboration intensity, reduced monitoring or control mechanisms, or the willingness to engage in joint activities. While these indicators are associated with trust, they do not directly measure the construct.

Because of this, trust is measured in different ways across studies, making it harder to compare results and draw clear conclusions about its role.

4.5 Types and Roles of Digitalization

This section categorizes the forms of digitalization identified in the reviewed literature and describes their primary organizational roles. The analysis focuses on how digital technologies are conceptualized and applied in intra- and inter-organizational contexts, without yet interpreting their effects on trust.

4.5.1 Digitalization Categories

The reviewed studies reveal a strong concentration around two dominant categories of digitalization. First, a large proportion of studies (approximately 48%) examine collaboration platforms and shared digital tools, such as intranets, digital interfaces, and collaborative systems. These technologies facilitate interaction and information exchange among organizational actors.

Second, a similarly large group of studies (approximately 39%) focuses on data integration and interoperability, including integrated information systems that enable the sharing and consolidation of data across organizational boundaries. These systems are designed to ensure information consistency and support coordinated decision-making.

In contrast, other forms of digitalization are significantly less represented. Enterprise systems such as ERP, TMS, or CRM systems, as well as digital monitoring and tracking technologies, are explicitly addressed in only a small number of studies. Similarly, IT governance structures, standardization mechanisms, and shared service architectures appear only in a limited subset of the literature.

Overall, most studies see digitalization as an infrastructure that connects people and integrates information, rather than focusing on individual technologies. The studies contributing to each category are listed in Appendix III.

4.5.2 Digitalization Purposes

Across the reviewed studies, digital technologies are used for several recurring organizational purposes. The most prominent purpose is coordination, which appears in 130 studies, representing 98.5% of coded records. Digital tools are frequently employed to align activities, facilitate communication, and support collaboration across organizational units and organizational boundaries.

Closely related to coordination, knowledge integration and information sharing represent another central function of digitalization. This purpose appears in 109 studies, corresponding to 82.6% of coded records. Many studies emphasize the role of digital systems in enabling the exchange, consolidation, and joint interpretation of knowledge across organizational boundaries.

Efficiency is also a frequently observed purpose, appearing in 64 studies, or 48.5% of coded records. In these cases, digital technologies are used to streamline processes, reduce redundancies, accelerate communication, and improve operational performance.

Other purposes appear less frequently but remain important for interpreting the relationship between digitalization and trust. Transparency and visibility are identified in 20 studies,

representing 15.2% of coded records. These studies emphasize how digital systems make processes, actions, or performance metrics more observable. Risk management appears in 19 studies, or 14.4% of coded records, while control and compliance are identified in 13 studies, corresponding to 9.8%. Standardization appears explicitly as a primary purpose in only 4 studies, or 3.0% of coded records.

Overall, the findings suggest that digitalization is most commonly conceptualized as a tool for coordination and knowledge integration, while control-oriented uses represent only one of several co-existing functions. This is important because it shows that digitalization is not treated only as a mechanism of surveillance or formal control. Instead, most studies frame it primarily as an infrastructure for collaboration, information exchange, and operational alignment.

4.5.3 Digitalization Characteristics

Beyond types and purposes, the reviewed studies also indicate that digitalization varies along several key characteristics. These characteristics help explain why similar digital technologies may produce different organizational and relational effects.

The most frequently coded characteristic is the degree of automation, which appears in 109 records, corresponding to 82.6% of coded records. This indicates that many studies distinguish between technologies that support human decision-making and those that automate parts of coordination, monitoring, or control. The level of automation is important because it can influence whether digital systems are experienced as helpful support or as restrictive control.

Participation is the second most frequent characteristic, appearing in 86 records, or 65.2% of coded records. This refers to whether digital systems are imposed on organizational actors or developed with some degree of user involvement or co-design. Participation is particularly relevant for trust because systems that are introduced without consultation may be more likely to generate resistance, while participatory implementation may support acceptance and perceived fairness.

Visibility intensity appears in 59 records, representing 44.7% of coded records. This characteristic refers to the extent to which digital systems make activities, performance, or behavior observable. Higher visibility can support transparency and reduce information asymmetry, but it may also create perceptions of surveillance if actors feel excessively monitored.

Centralization is identified in 57 records, or 43.2% of coded records. This characteristic captures whether digital systems are centrally controlled, for example by headquarters or a dominant partner, or whether they allow for local adaptation. Centralization is especially important for headquarters–subsidiary relationships because centrally designed systems may support global alignment but may also reduce subsidiary autonomy.

System–task fit appears in 37 records, corresponding to 28.0% of coded records. This refers to the extent to which digital systems match the actual tasks, routines, and needs of the actors using them. Poor system–task fit may undermine trust by creating frustration, inefficiency, or perceptions that the system does not reflect local realities.

Less frequently coded characteristics include data granularity, which appears in 14 records, or 10.6%, and interpretability, which appears in 8 records, or 6.1%. Data granularity refers to the level of detail captured by digital systems, while interpretability concerns how understandable system outputs or algorithmic decisions are to users. Although these characteristics appear less often, they are relevant for understanding how digital systems influence perceptions of fairness, transparency, and control.

Overall, these characteristics show that digitalization is not uniform. Digital technologies differ not only in type and purpose, but also in how automated, visible, centralized, participatory, task-fitting, granular, and interpretable they are. These differences are important for the following chapter, where the analysis shifts from describing forms of digitalization to explaining how they influence trust.

4.6 Summary of Descriptive Patterns

The descriptive analysis reveals several clear patterns in how digitalization and trust are studied within intra- and inter-organizational contexts.

First, the literature is heavily concentrated on specific types of relationships. The majority of studies focus on alliances and joint ventures ($n = 63$) and buyer–supplier relationships ($n = 41$), which together account for most of the reviewed sample. Platform ecosystems also represent a notable, though smaller, subset ($n = 15$). In contrast, headquarters–subsidiary relationships within multinational enterprises are largely underrepresented, with only one study explicitly addressing

this context. (The studies contributing to each category are listed in Appendix III.) This indicates a significant gap between the dominant empirical settings in the literature and the specific focus of this thesis.

Second, the reviewed literature is methodologically diverse but uneven. Qualitative and case-based research is strongly represented, while survey-based quantitative studies also form an important part of the sample. However, mixed-methods, experimental, simulation-based, and design-oriented approaches remain rare. In terms of units of analysis, most studies focus on network/ecosystem and firm-level settings, while dyadic and subsidiary-level analyses are much less common. This suggests that the field provides rich contextual insights but remains limited in terms of causal testing, methodological balance, and direct evidence on headquarters–subsidiary relationships.

Third, the conceptualization of trust is uneven across studies. Cognitive trust is the most frequently examined dimension, appearing in the majority of the literature. Institutional trust is also present in a substantial number of studies, while affective trust is only rarely addressed. A small number of studies treat trust in a mixed or unspecified manner, without clearly distinguishing among its dimensions. Overall, this suggests that trust is often operationalized in a narrow or inconsistent way, with a strong emphasis on calculative, competence-based, and system-based aspects.

Fourth, digitalization is predominantly conceptualized in terms of coordination and information integration. Coordination appears as the dominant digitalization purpose ($n = 130$), followed by knowledge integration and sharing ($n = 109$) and efficiency ($n = 64$). This indicates that digitalization is primarily framed as an enabling infrastructure for collaboration, data exchange, and operational alignment. In contrast, explicitly control-oriented purposes, such as control and compliance ($n = 13$), appear less frequently as primary purposes, although they remain important for understanding possible trust-eroding effects.

Finally, the reviewed studies show that digitalization varies not only by type and purpose, but also by characteristics such as degree of automation, participation, visibility intensity, centralization, and system–task fit. These characteristics are important because they help explain why similar technologies may produce different relational effects across contexts.

Overall, the descriptive patterns show that the literature is concentrated around certain relationship contexts, trust dimensions, and digitalization purposes. In particular, direct research on headquarters–subsidiary relationships remains scarce, cognitive and institutional trust dominate over affective trust, and digitalization is mostly studied as a coordination and information-sharing infrastructure. Building on these descriptive insights, the following chapter moves beyond categorization to examine the mechanisms through which digitalization influences trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships.

5. Findings: Mechanisms Linking Digitalization and Trust

5.1 Mechanisms through which digitalization influences trust

This section addresses RQ1, which examines how digitalization influences trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships. Building on the coding of the reviewed studies, the findings reveal that digitalization affects trust through a set of recurring mechanisms that can either strengthen or undermine trust.

Importantly, the results show that digitalization does not exert a uniform effect. Instead, its influence on trust is multifaceted and often ambivalent, operating through both trust-enhancing and trust-eroding mechanisms. The following subsections outline these mechanisms and their interplay.

5.1.1 Trust-enhancing mechanisms

Through the reviewed studies, digitalization most frequently contributes to trust through mechanisms that reduce uncertainty, increase predictability, and align interpretations between organizational actors.

First, transparency and information visibility emerge as the most dominant mechanisms. Digital systems such as ERP platforms, reporting tools, and dashboards increase access to real-time and standardized information, thereby reducing information asymmetries between organizational actors, such as partners, buyers and suppliers, or headquarters and subsidiaries. This enhanced visibility allows actors to better understand one another's actions and intentions, thereby fostering trust.

Second, process standardization and reliability are central. By codifying procedures and workflows, digital systems create consistent and predictable interaction patterns. This predictability reduces ambiguity regarding expected behavior and decreases the perceived risk of opportunism, thereby strengthening confidence in partners.

Third, shared data and joint sensemaking represent another key mechanism. Digitalization provides a common data infrastructure that enables actors to interpret information based on the same underlying evidence. This shared informational basis facilitates alignment in understanding and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings or conflicting interpretations.

Fourth, accountability and procedural fairness contribute to trust when digital systems establish transparent rules and evaluation criteria. Clear and consistently applied procedures enhance perceptions of fairness and reduce concerns about arbitrary decision-making.

Fifth, coordination efficiency fosters trust by enabling faster, more synchronized interactions. Digital tools streamline communication and reduce delays, lowering the risk of conflict and improving the flow of collaboration.

Finally, competence signaling appears as a less frequent but conceptually relevant mechanism. The implementation of advanced digital systems can signal professionalism, capability, and organizational sophistication, thereby reinforcing confidence in the partner's competence.

Taken together, these mechanisms indicate that digitalization primarily strengthens trust by improving information quality, predictability, and coordination, thereby reducing uncertainty in intra- and inter-organizational relationships.

5.1.2 Trust-eroding mechanisms

Although only a small number of studies explicitly code digitalization as trust-eroding ($n = 4$), several additional mixed and contingent cases also point to potential trust-reducing mechanisms. While less frequently reported, these mechanisms are conceptually significant and highlight potential risks associated with digital transformation.

The most prominent mechanism is surveillance perception and loss of autonomy. Digital monitoring systems can be perceived as instruments of control rather than coordination, leading to reduced discretion and increased feelings of being monitored. This perception can negatively affect trust, particularly when actors feel constrained in their decision-making.

Second, reduced relational interaction contributes to the erosion of affective trust. As digital systems replace or reduce face-to-face communication, opportunities for relationship-building diminish, weakening emotional bonds between organizational actors.

Third, power asymmetry amplification occurs when digital tools centralize control at headquarters, reinforcing hierarchical dominance and limiting subsidiary autonomy. This imbalance can lead to perceptions of unfairness or dependency, thereby undermining trust.

Fourth, algorithmic opacity reduces trust when decision-making processes become difficult to interpret. Black-box systems can create uncertainty about how outcomes are generated, leading to skepticism and reduced confidence in the system and its operators.

Finally, punitive use of data can actively damage trust. When digital information is used primarily for monitoring, evaluation, or blame, it can foster a climate of fear rather than cooperation.

Overall, these mechanisms suggest that digitalization may erode trust when it is associated with control, reduced autonomy, and weakened interpersonal relationships.

5.1.3 Dual and contingent effects of digitalization

A key finding of the review is that digitalization often produces dual and context-dependent effects on trust. In several studies ($n = 9$), digital technologies are associated with both trust-enhancing and trust-eroding mechanisms at the same time. For example, the same system may increase transparency and coordination while also creating perceptions of surveillance or reduced autonomy. Similarly, standardization may improve predictability, but it may also limit flexibility and local discretion.

In addition, a substantial number of studies ($n = 59$) indicate that the effect of digitalization on trust is contingent rather than direct or uniform. This means that similar technologies can lead to different trust outcomes depending on how they are implemented, interpreted, and used by organizational actors. The studies contributing to each category are listed in Appendix III.

These findings suggest that digitalization should not be understood as either trust-building or trust-damaging in itself. Rather, its effect depends on the balance between enabling mechanisms, such as transparency, shared data, and process reliability, and constraining mechanisms, such as surveillance, opacity, and power asymmetry. The following sections build on this insight by examining how these mechanisms affect different dimensions of trust and under what conditions they become more or less dominant.

5.2 Differential Effects of Digitalization on Trust Dimensions

Building on the identified mechanisms in Section 5.1, this section examines how digitalization affects different types of trust. Specifically, it distinguishes between cognitive, affective, and institutional trust and analyzes how each dimension responds to digitalization.

5.2.1 Cognitive trust

Cognitive trust is the most extensively represented dimension in the sample ($n = 89$) and shows a predominantly positive relationship with digitalization. The studies contributing to each category are listed in Appendix III.

Across the reviewed studies, cognitive trust is primarily associated with trust building, with only limited instances of trust erosion or violation. This indicates that digital technologies tend to strengthen trust based on competence, reliability, and predictability.

At the same time, the majority of cases are coded as contingent, suggesting that the positive effects of digitalization are not automatic but depend on contextual and implementation factors.

The mechanisms identified in Section 5.1 explain this pattern. Digitalization enhances cognitive trust by increasing transparency, standardizing processes, and enabling shared access to data, thereby reducing uncertainty and enabling more informed decision-making. These features make partner behavior more predictable and verifiable.

However, the presence of contingent and mixed cases indicates that these benefits can be offset by opposing mechanisms, such as algorithmic opacity or perceived surveillance, which may undermine trust even in otherwise well-structured systems.

Overall, cognitive trust appears to be the dimension most consistently supported by digitalization, although its positive effects remain conditional rather than universal.

5.2.2 Affective trust

Affective trust is less frequently addressed in the literature ($n = 6$) and shows a more fragile, contingent relationship with digitalization.

Most cases involve trust building, but nearly all are coded as contingent, with one case showing a clearly positive effect. This suggests that while digitalization can support affective trust under certain conditions, its impact is highly dependent on the relational context.

The mechanisms identified earlier provide a clear explanation. Digitalization often reduces face-to-face interaction and informal communication, which are critical for developing emotional bonds and interpersonal closeness. As a result, affective trust may weaken even as cognitive trust strengthens.

At the same time, affective trust can still emerge or be maintained when digital tools are used to support collaboration, communication, and mutual understanding.

Overall, affective trust appears to be the most vulnerable dimension in digital contexts, as it relies on relational dynamics that are difficult to replicate in digital systems.

5.2.3 Institutional trust

Institutional trust ($n = 32$) shows a generally positive but strongly contingent relationship with digitalization.

The majority of cases involve trust building, suggesting that digitalization can enhance confidence in organizational systems, rules, and governance structures. However, similar to cognitive trust, most cases are coded as contingent, highlighting the importance of how digital systems are designed and implemented.

Digitalization supports institutional trust by establishing transparent procedures, standardized processes, and clear rules, which increase perceptions of fairness and reliability. In this sense, trust shifts from individuals to systems.

However, institutional trust may be undermined when digital systems are perceived as opaque, overly controlling, or misaligned with local contexts. In particular, algorithmic decision-making and centralized control can reduce perceptions of legitimacy and fairness.

Thus, institutional trust is strengthened when digital systems are perceived as fair and transparent, but weakened when they are associated with control and a lack of accountability.

5.2.4 Mixed or unclear trust effects

A small subset of studies ($n = 5$) reports mixed or unclear trust effects, where trust is generally described as building, but the mechanisms remain ambiguous or not fully specified.

Most of these cases are coded as contingent, with one study indicating a direct positive effect of digitalization. While limited in number, these findings suggest that some studies do not clearly differentiate among trust dimensions or fully unpack the underlying mechanisms.

These cases further support the broader observation that the relationship between digitalization and trust is often complex and context-dependent, and not always explicitly theorized in the literature.

5.2.5 Comparative synthesis across trust dimensions

A comparison of the three trust dimensions reveals clear differences in how digitalization influences trust.

First, digitalization most consistently supports cognitive trust, as mechanisms such as transparency, standardization, and shared data directly enhance predictability and reliability. However, this effect remains conditional on appropriate system implementation.

Second, affective trust appears to be the most vulnerable dimension. While digitalization can support trust under certain conditions, its effects are predominantly contingent and often associated with reduced interpersonal interaction, making affective trust sensitive to relational dynamics.

Third, institutional trust occupies an intermediate position. Digitalization tends to strengthen trust in systems and governance structures, particularly through increased transparency and procedural fairness. At the same time, this effect depends on perceptions of legitimacy and contextual alignment.

Taken together, these findings suggest that digitalization shifts the basis of trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships. Trust becomes less rooted in interpersonal relationships and more grounded in data, systems, and formal structures.

However, this shift introduces a tension: while digitalization strengthens cognitive and institutional trust, it may simultaneously weaken affective trust, thereby altering the overall composition of trust within organizational networks.

5.3 Contingencies of the Digitalization–Trust Relationship

The analysis of contingent cases reveals that the relationship between digitalization and trust is not determined by single contextual variables, but by the interplay of competing mechanisms. While Section 5.1 identified the mechanisms through which digitalization influences trust, this section examines the conditions under which these mechanisms lead to trust-enhancing or trust-reducing outcomes.

5.3.1 Absence of simple contextual determinants

The analysis does not reveal clear linear relationships between contextual variables - such as governance mode, industry, or type of digitalization - and trust outcomes.

Across the contingent cases, similar configurations of governance structures (e.g., relational governance, hybrid governance, or formal control) and similar digital technologies (e.g., data integration systems, collaboration platforms, or enterprise systems) are associated with both trust-enhancing and trust-reducing effects.

In particular, relational governance - often assumed to support trust - appears in cases where digitalization both increases and decreases trust. This suggests that governance mode alone is insufficient to explain trust outcomes in digital contexts.

Similarly, no consistent pattern emerges across industries or sectors, which appear highly heterogeneous. These findings indicate that trust outcomes cannot be explained by single contextual variables in isolation.

5.3.2 Co-existence of trust-enhancing and trust-reducing mechanisms

Instead of distinct contextual drivers, the contingent cases are characterized by the co-existence of opposing mechanism bundles within the same setting.

On the one hand, digitalization consistently introduces mechanisms that enhance trust, including:

- increased transparency,
- process reliability and standardization,
- and shared data enabling joint sensemaking.

These mechanisms reduce uncertainty and increase predictability, thereby supporting cognitive and institutional trust.

On the other hand, the same digital environments simultaneously give rise to trust-reducing mechanisms, including:

- perceptions of surveillance and loss of autonomy,
- reduced relational interaction,
- algorithmic opacity,
- and power asymmetry.

These mechanisms undermine affective trust and can also weaken perceptions of fairness and legitimacy.

Importantly, these opposing mechanisms frequently co-occur within the same empirical cases, indicating that digitalization does not produce unidirectional effects but rather introduces structural tensions within trust relationships.

5.3.3 Mechanism-based contingencies

Given the absence of clear contextual determinants, the findings suggest that the effects of digitalization on trust are contingent on the relative dominance and interaction of competing mechanisms, rather than on structural characteristics alone.

Trust-enhancing outcomes are more likely when mechanisms such as transparency, standardization, and shared data are experienced as enabling coordination, clarity, and mutual understanding.

In contrast, trust-reducing outcomes emerge when digitalization is associated with mechanisms such as surveillance, opacity, reduced interpersonal interaction, or reinforced power asymmetries.

Thus, the key condition is not the presence of specific technologies or governance structures per se, but how digital mechanisms are enacted and experienced within a given context.

5.3.4 Implications for understanding digitalization and trust

These findings suggest that digitalization shifts the determinants of trust from stable, context-driven factors to more dynamic, mechanism-based contingencies.

Rather than producing predictable outcomes, digital technologies simultaneously enable and constrain trust, depending on how their features are interpreted and integrated into organizational relationships.

This implies that trust in digital intra- and inter-organizational settings is inherently ambivalent and tension-driven, as trust-enhancing and trust-reducing mechanisms coexist and interact.

Overall, the analysis indicates that digitalization does not determine trust outcomes through fixed contextual conditions, but through the configuration and balance of competing mechanisms within the same environment.

5.4 Summary of Key Patterns

The findings of this study reveal several consistent patterns in how digitalization influences trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships.

First, digitalization introduces mechanisms that simultaneously enhance and undermine trust. On the one hand, mechanisms such as transparency, process standardization, and shared data reduce

uncertainty and increase predictability, thereby supporting trust formation. On the other hand, digitalization also gives rise to mechanisms such as surveillance, reduced relational interaction, algorithmic opacity, and power asymmetry, which can weaken trust.

Second, the effects of digitalization differ across trust dimensions. Cognitive trust is most consistently strengthened as digital systems enhance reliability and information availability. Institutional trust is also generally supported, although its effects remain conditional on perceptions of fairness and legitimacy. In contrast, affective trust appears more vulnerable, as digitalization often reduces interpersonal interaction and relational closeness.

Third, the relationship between digitalization and trust is characterized by contingency and tension rather than linear effects. The analysis does not reveal clear deterministic relationships between contextual variables and trust outcomes. Instead, trust outcomes depend on the interplay between trust-enhancing and trust-reducing mechanisms, which frequently co-exist within the same context.

Taken together, these findings suggest that digitalization does not simply increase or decrease trust but reshapes its underlying structure. Trust increasingly relies on systems, data, and formal processes, while relational and interpersonal dimensions may weaken.

6. Discussion

6.1 Interpretation of Key Findings

The findings of this study show that digitalization does not have a simple or uniform effect on trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships. Instead, it changes how trust is built and maintained. Digital technologies introduce mechanisms that can both strengthen and weaken trust simultaneously, leading to mixed, sometimes contradictory outcomes.

A key pattern is that trust increasingly rests on systems, data, and processes. Mechanisms such as transparency, process standardization, and shared data reduce uncertainty and make behavior more predictable. This supports cognitive and institutional forms of trust, as actors can rely more on clear information and consistent procedures. In this sense, trust becomes less dependent on personal relationships and more grounded in how well systems function.

At the same time, this shift has important side effects. Digitalization often reduces direct interaction between people, as communication and coordination increasingly take place through digital systems. However, interpersonal relationships are an important basis for affective trust, which rests on emotional bonds, care and concern between actors (McAllister, 1995). When these interactions become less frequent, opportunities to build personal relationships, informal understanding, and emotional connection may also decrease. As a result, while cognitive trust tends to increase, affective trust may weaken or become more fragile.

In addition, digital technologies can change how control is experienced. Tools that are designed to improve transparency and coordination can also be perceived as forms of monitoring or surveillance. This may lead to feelings of reduced autonomy and increased pressure. This finding is consistent with prior research showing that trust and control are closely related and often develop together (Inkpen and Currall, 2004). In digital environments, this relationship becomes more complex, as monitoring can be more continuous and less visible. Research on algorithmic management also shows that digital systems can be experienced both as helpful and as restrictive, depending on how they are used and perceived (Kellogg, Valentine and Christin, 2020).

An important insight from the findings is that these positive and negative effects often occur simultaneously within the same context. The same digital system can increase transparency and

coordination while also reducing autonomy or personal interaction. This helps explain why similar technologies and organizational settings lead to different trust outcomes across cases. It is therefore not digitalization itself that determines the outcome, but how its effects are experienced by the actors involved.

Overall, the findings suggest that digitalization shifts trust away from personal relationships and toward systems and formal processes. However, this does not mean that relational trust disappears. Instead, both forms of trust continue to exist and interact, sometimes reinforcing each other and sometimes creating tension. Understanding trust in the digital era, therefore, requires recognizing this balance between system-based and relational elements.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on trust and digitalization in three main ways.

First, they suggest that digitalization does not simply increase or decrease trust, but reconfigures its foundations. While traditional research often emphasizes trust as a relational phenomenon built through repeated interaction, familiarity, and social exchange (McAllister, 1995; Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998), the findings indicate that digitalization shifts trust more strongly toward systems, data, and formalized processes. In digitally mediated intra- and inter-organizational settings, trust is increasingly grounded in transparency, predictability, standardization, and the perceived reliability of digital infrastructures. This extends existing trust theory by showing that digitalization strengthens the role of system-based trust alongside relational forms of trust.

Second, the study highlights the dual character of digitalization in relation to trust. Digital technologies introduce mechanisms that can simultaneously enable and constrain trust. For example, transparency may reduce uncertainty and support confidence, while also being experienced as surveillance. Standardization may enhance reliability and coordination while, at the same time, limiting autonomy and flexibility. These findings support prior research on the interplay between trust and control (Inkpen and Currall, 2004), but also show that this relationship becomes more tension-filled in digital contexts. Rather than producing linear effects, digitalization reshapes trust through competing mechanisms that may operate simultaneously.

Third, the findings suggest that trust outcomes are better explained through mechanisms than through broad contextual categories alone. The review indicates that neither governance structure, industry, nor technology type is sufficient on its own to explain whether digitalization strengthens or weakens trust. Instead, outcomes depend on how specific digital mechanisms are designed, implemented, and experienced in practice. This points to the value of a mechanism-based perspective, which helps explain why similar technologies may produce different trust outcomes across seemingly comparable settings.

Taken together, these findings suggest that digitalization transforms trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships by making it more strongly embedded in systems and formal structures, while leaving relational forms of trust more vulnerable to erosion. Theoretically, this implies that trust in digital environments should be understood not as a stable relational state, but as a dynamic outcome shaped by the interaction of enabling and constraining mechanisms.

6.3 Conceptual Framework of Trust in the Digital Era

Based on the findings of this review, this study proposes a conceptual framework that explains how digitalization influences trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships. The framework combines three central elements: the digital mechanisms introduced by technology, the different dimensions of trust, and the balance between trust-enhancing and trust-reducing effects.

At the center of the framework is the assumption that digitalization affects trust indirectly through specific mechanisms rather than directly as a uniform force. On the one hand, digitalization can generate trust-enhancing mechanisms such as transparency, standardization, and shared access to information. These mechanisms reduce uncertainty, increase predictability, and support coordination between organizational actors. As a result, they tend to strengthen cognitive and institutional trust, which rely more strongly on competence, reliability, consistency, and formal structures.

On the other hand, digitalization can also produce trust-reducing mechanisms, including perceived surveillance, reduced interpersonal interaction, algorithmic opacity, and increased asymmetries of power and control. These mechanisms may reduce autonomy, weaken relational closeness, and

limit understanding of how decisions are made. In particular, they make affective trust more vulnerable, while also undermining broader trust perceptions when digital systems are experienced as unfair, intrusive, or overly controlling.

A central feature of the framework is that these mechanisms can coexist within the same digital environment. Digital systems, therefore, do not generate purely positive or purely negative trust effects. Instead, they create a tension in which trust is shaped by the interaction of enabling and constraining forces. This helps explain why the same technology may strengthen trust in one setting while weakening it in another.

The framework further suggests that the three dimensions of trust are not affected equally. Cognitive trust is more likely to benefit from greater information availability and process reliability. Institutional trust is strengthened when digital structures are perceived as consistent, legitimate, and fair. Affective trust, by contrast, is more vulnerable in digital settings because it depends more heavily on interpersonal contact and relational closeness.

Overall, the framework views digitalization as a process that restructures trust rather than simply increasing or decreasing it. Trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships becomes more deeply embedded in systems, data, and formalized processes, while relational elements remain important but are more prone to erosion. The final trust outcome depends on how digital mechanisms are designed, implemented, and perceived in practice.

6.4 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for managers involved in the design and implementation of digital systems in intra- and inter-organizational relationships, particularly in headquarters–subsidiary contexts.

First, digitalization should be treated as a governance issue rather than as a purely technical or efficiency-driven project. Systems such as ERP platforms, data-sharing tools, and monitoring technologies not only improve coordination and process reliability; they also shape how trust is

built, maintained, or weakened within and between organizations. Managers should therefore recognize that decisions about digital system design also influence relational dynamics.

Second, organizations need to balance transparency with perceived autonomy. Shared data, monitoring tools, and real-time visibility can reduce uncertainty and improve coordination, but they may also be perceived as surveillance if implemented without sufficient sensitivity. Managers should therefore pay attention not only to what information is collected and shared, but also to how these practices are communicated and justified. In practice, this means explaining the purpose of monitoring, limiting unnecessary data collection, and ensuring that transparency is not experienced as excessive oversight.

Third, organizations should actively preserve opportunities for interpersonal interaction. Because digitalization can reduce the need for direct communication, affective trust may weaken over time as relationships become increasingly mediated by systems and data. Managers should therefore create opportunities for informal exchange, relationship-building, and personal contact, especially in international and headquarters–subsidiary relationships, where geographical and cultural distance already make trust-building more difficult.

Fourth, attention should be paid to the transparency and intelligibility of digital systems themselves. Systems perceived as opaque or difficult to understand may undermine trust, even when they function efficiently from a technical perspective. Providing clear explanations of how systems operate, how decisions are made, and how data is used can reduce uncertainty and increase acceptance. In this sense, explainability is not only a technological issue, but also a trust-related one.

Fifth, managers should remain aware of the power implications of digitalization. Centralized systems and standardized digital processes can shift control toward headquarters or central units, which may be perceived by subsidiaries or partners as dominance rather than coordination. To reduce these risks, organizations should involve relevant actors in the design and implementation of digital systems and allow an appropriate degree of local flexibility where possible.

Overall, the findings suggest that successful digitalization requires more than technical implementation. It requires the deliberate management of the relationship between efficiency,

control, and trust. Organizations that combine strong system-based coordination with attention to relational dynamics are more likely to achieve positive trust outcomes in digital environments.

6.5 Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the study is based on a systematic literature review, meaning the findings rely on existing research rather than primary empirical data. While this approach provides a broad, structured overview of the field, it also depends on how trust and digitalization are conceptualized and measured across the selected studies. Differences in definitions, research designs, and contexts across the literature may influence the observed patterns.

Second, although the study was initially designed to focus on HQ–subsidiary relationships, the review revealed that relatively few studies directly address this specific context. As a result, the analysis includes a broader range of and inter-organizational settings, such as alliances, platforms, and other forms of collaboration. While these contexts share relevant characteristics, they are not fully equivalent. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as transferable only indirectly, rather than as strictly specific to HQ–subsidiary relationships. At the same time, this limitation also highlights a gap in the existing literature.

Third, the analysis is based on qualitative coding and interpretation of the literature, which involves a degree of subjectivity. Although a structured coding framework was applied, the identification and grouping of mechanisms depend on the researcher’s interpretation. Future studies could complement this approach with multiple coders or quantitative methods to increase robustness.

Fourth, the study covers a broad range of digital technologies and applications, from enterprise systems to algorithmic management tools. While this enables a comprehensive perspective, it limits the ability to draw precise conclusions about the effects of specific technologies.

6.6 Future Research

The limitations of this study point to several directions for future research.

First, there is a clear need for more empirical research focusing specifically on HQ–subsidiary relationships. Given the limited number of studies identified in this context, future work could examine how digitalization affects trust within multinational corporations more directly and test the patterns identified in this study.

Second, future research could explore the micro-level processes of trust formation in digital environments. While this study identifies key mechanisms, further insights are needed into how individuals and teams perceive and respond to digital systems in their daily work.

Third, further research is needed to better understand how organizations can manage the balance between trust-enhancing and trust-reducing mechanisms. This includes examining how system design, communication practices, and governance structures shape the experience of digitalization.

Finally, future studies could investigate the effects of specific types of digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence or platform-based systems, to better understand whether different technologies create different trust dynamics.

7. Conclusion

This thesis examined how digitalization influences trust in intra- and inter-organizational relationships, with particular attention to implications for headquarters-subsidary relationships in multinational enterprises. The study was motivated by the growing importance of digital technologies in organizational coordination and governance, as well as by the central role of trust in enabling cooperation, knowledge sharing, and effective inter-organizational relationships. While both trust and digitalization have been widely studied, their intersection remains fragmented, especially in relation to multinational headquarters-subsidary settings.

To address this gap, the thesis conducted a systematic literature review of research on digitalization and trust in intra- and inter-organizational contexts. The aim was not only to summarize existing findings, but also to identify the mechanisms through which digitalization strengthens, weakens, or reshapes trust. The review focused on three main questions: how digitalization influences trust, how these effects differ across cognitive, affective, and institutional trust, and under what conditions digitalization is more likely to strengthen or undermine trust.

The findings show that digitalization does not have a uniform effect on trust. Instead, it produces dual and sometimes contradictory mechanisms. On the one hand, digital technologies can strengthen trust by increasing transparency, improving information availability, standardizing processes, enabling shared data access, and supporting more efficient coordination. These mechanisms reduce uncertainty and make behavior more predictable, thereby supporting cognitive and institutional forms of trust.

On the other hand, digitalization can also undermine trust. Digital systems may be experienced as tools of surveillance, excessive control, or centralization. They may reduce local autonomy, weaken interpersonal interaction, and create uncertainty when algorithmic or data-driven processes are opaque. These mechanisms are especially relevant for affective trust, which depends more strongly on direct interaction, relational closeness, and informal exchange.

A central finding of the thesis is therefore that digitalization reshapes the basis of trust. Trust becomes increasingly grounded in systems, data, formal procedures, and technological infrastructures. This strengthens system-based, cognitive, and institutional forms of trust, but may

simultaneously make relational and affective trust more fragile. Digitalization does not remove the need for trust; rather, it changes what trust is based on and how it is maintained.

The review also shows that the effects of digitalization are highly contingent. Similar technologies can produce different trust outcomes depending on how they are designed, implemented, communicated, and experienced by organizational actors. Transparency may be perceived as helpful clarity or as intrusive surveillance. Standardization may create reliability or reduce autonomy. Shared data may support joint sensemaking or become a tool for control and blame. Thus, the impact of digitalization depends less on the technology itself and more on the balance between enabling and constraining mechanisms.

These findings are particularly relevant for headquarters-subsidary relationships. Although direct research on digitalization and trust in this specific context remains limited, the broader inter-organizational literature provides important insights. In multinational enterprises, digital systems can help headquarters and subsidiaries coordinate across distance, reduce information asymmetry, and align processes. At the same time, they can also intensify power asymmetries, increase perceptions of headquarters control, and weaken subsidiary autonomy. This makes the HQ-subsidary context an important area for future research.

The main contribution of this thesis is the development of a mechanism-based understanding of trust in the digital era. Rather than asking whether digitalization increases or decreases trust, the thesis shows that digitalization reconfigures trust through competing mechanisms. In doing so, the findings contribute to the literature on organizational trust by demonstrating that digitalization influences trust indirectly through mechanisms such as transparency, standardization, shared data, and surveillance, thereby providing additional insights into the integrative model of organizational trust proposed by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995). Furthermore, the findings support the view that trust and control should be understood as complementary rather than opposing governance mechanisms (Das and Teng, 1998), as digital technologies can simultaneously enhance coordination while creating perceptions of control. Finally, by showing that digitalization primarily strengthens cognitive and institutional trust while affective trust remains comparatively vulnerable, the study complements McAllister's (1995) distinction between cognition-based and affect-based trust. This mechanism-based perspective helps explain why existing findings are

fragmented and why digitalization can produce both positive and negative trust outcomes simultaneously.

For theory, the thesis contributes by integrating research on trust, digitalization, and intra- and inter-organizational governance into a mechanism-based explanation of how digitalization reshapes trust. It highlights the importance of distinguishing between different dimensions of trust and demonstrates that digitalization should be understood as a governance phenomenon rather than merely as a technological development. For practice, the findings suggest that managers should not treat digital systems solely as tools for efficiency and control. Instead, they should consider how such systems influence perceptions of fairness, autonomy, transparency, and relational interaction.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates that trust remains essential in digitalized intra- and inter-organizational relationships, but its foundations are changing. Digitalization can support trust when it provides clarity, reliability, and shared understanding. However, it can undermine trust when it is experienced as surveillance, opacity, or centralized control. Understanding trust in the digital era therefore requires moving beyond linear assumptions and recognizing the competing mechanisms embedded in digital governance structures. The challenge for organizations is not simply to digitalize, but to digitalize in ways that preserve trust while improving coordination.

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Appendices

Appendix I - Search strings

Scopus

```
(
  TITLE-ABS-KEY
  (
    trust OR "interorganizational trust" OR "relational trust"
    OR "cognitive trust" OR "affective trust" OR "institutional trust"
    OR confidence
  )
  AND
  TITLE-ABS-KEY
  (
    digitalization OR digitization OR "digital transformation"
    OR "digital technolog*" OR "digital monitoring" OR "digital visibility"
    OR dashboard* OR "enterprise system*" OR ERP OR "information system*"
    OR ICT OR "information technology" OR "algorithmic control"
    OR "data sharing" OR "platform ecosystem*" OR "digital platform*"
    OR "IT governance"
  )
  AND
  TITLE-ABS-KEY
  (
    "interorganizational" OR "inter-organizational"
    OR (headquarters AND subsidiar*) OR (HQ AND subsidiar*)
    OR alliance* OR "strategic alliance"
    OR "joint venture" OR "joint venture*"
    OR franchis* OR "franchise network"
    OR "inter-firm network" OR interfirm OR "business network"
    OR "network governance"
    OR "multinational enterprise" OR MNE
  )
)
AND (PUBYEAR > 1999 AND PUBYEAR < 2026)
AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"))
AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar"))
```

Web of Science

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TS=(
  trust OR "interorganizational trust" OR "relational trust"
  OR "cognitive trust" OR "affective trust" OR "institutional trust"
  OR confidence
)
```

AND

TS=(

digitalization OR digitization OR "digital transformation"
OR "digital technolog*" OR "digital monitoring" OR "digital visibility"
OR dashboard* OR "enterprise system*" OR ERP OR "information system*" OR ICT OR "information technology" OR "algorithmic control"
OR "data sharing" OR "platform ecosystem*" OR "digital platform*" OR "IT governance"

)

AND

TS=(

"interorganizational" OR "inter-organizational"
OR (headquarters AND subsidiar*) OR (HQ AND subsidiar*)
OR alliance* OR "strategic alliance"
OR "joint venture" OR "joint venture*" OR franchis* OR "franchise network"
OR interfirm OR "inter-firm" OR "inter-firm network"
OR "business network" OR "network governance"
OR "multinational enterprise" OR MNE

)

AND LANGUAGE: (English)

AND DOCUMENT TYPES: (Article)

Appendix II - Included Studies

PAPER ID	AUTHORS	TITLE	YEAR	SOURCE TITLE	DOI
S001	Abd-Elghany, M.M.	Advanced Technologies and International Business: A Comprehensive Review of Digital Transformation in Global Operations	2025	Journal of Logistics, Informatics and Service Science	10.33168/JLISS.2025.0113
S003	Adomako, S; Nguyen, NP	Digitalization, inter-organizational collaboration, and technology transfer	2024	JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER	10.1007/s10961-023-10031-z
S004	Agahari, W.; Ofe, H.; Reuver, M.	It is not (only) about privacy: How multi-party computation redefines control, trust, and risk in data sharing	2022	Electronic Markets	10.1007/s12525-022-00572-w
S005	Agyekumhene, C.; de Vries, J.R.; van Paassen, A.; Macnaghten, P.; Schut, M.; Bregt, A.	Digital platforms for smallholder credit access: The mediation of trust for cooperation in maize value chain financing	2018	NJAS - Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences	10.1016/j.njas.2018.06.001
S006	Aktepe,Ç; Dedeoglu, AÖ	Collaborative Supply Chain Management in the Sharing Economy: An Empirical Research	2024	EGE ACADEMIC REVIEW	10.21121/eab.20240414
S008	Alazab, M.; Alhyari, S.; Awajan, A.; Abdallah, A.B.	Blockchain technology in supply chain management: an empirical study of the factors affecting user adoption/acceptance	2021	Cluster Computing	10.1007/s10586-020-03200-4
S009	Ali, M; Kurnia, S; Johnston, RB	Investigating IOS Adoption Maturity Using a Dyadic Approach	2009	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF E-COLLABORATION	10.4018/jec.2009040103
S010	Alkhudary, R.	Is blockchain truly improving supply chain information quality? A positivist case study research	2025	International Journal of Logistics Management	10.1108/IJLM-12-2023-0551

S011	Allen, D.K.; Colligan, D.; Finnie, A.; Kern, T.	Trust, power and interorganizational information systems: The case of the electronic trading community TransLease	2000	Information Systems Journal	10.1046/j.1365-2575.2000.00078.x
S015	Aoyama, Y.; Ratick, S.J.	Trust, transactions, and information technologies in the U.S. logistics industry	2007	Economic Geography	10.1111/j.1944-8287.2007.tb00341.x
S016	Asare, AK; Brashear-Alejandro, TG; Kang, J	B2B technology adoption in customer driven supply chains	2016	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & INDUSTRIAL MARKETING	10.1108/JBIM-02-2015-0022
S022	Ballatore, M; Gerrits, L; Kromes, R; Arena, L; Verdier, F	Toward the Conception of a Multichain to Meet Users' Future Needs: A Design Science Research Approach to Digital Servitization in the Automotive Industry	2024	IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT	10.1109/TEM.2023.3317208
S023	Baraldi, E.; Nadin, G.	The challenges in digitalising business relationships. The construction of an IT infrastructure for a textile-related business network	2006	Technovation	10.1016/j.technovation.2005.09.016
S025	Barnes, J; Liao, Y	The effect of individual, network, and collaborative competencies on the supply chain management system	2012	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PRODUCTION ECONOMICS	10.1016/j.ijpe.2012.07.010
S027	Beck, R; Marschollek, O; Gregory, RW	Establishing Preconditions for Spanning the Boundaries in Public Private IT Megaprojects	2010	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROJECT MANAGEMENT	10.4018/jitpm.2010100102
S031	Berenguer-Contrí, G.; Gil-Saura, I.; Gil, R.; Vallejo-Auñón, L.; Javier Juma-Michilena, I.	ICT and value co-creation in B2B: the new way of loyalty in service; TIC y cocreación de valor en B2B: la nueva	2024	Cuadernos de Gestion	10.5295/cdg.221879gb

		forma de fidelización en el servicio			
S036	Bodendorf, F.; Bayr, C.	Shaping Platform Governance Principles to Manage Interorganizational Data Exchange	2025	Information Systems Journal	10.1111/isj.12592
S041	Bossler, LF; Buchwald, A; Spohrer, K	And No One Gets the Short End of the Stick: A Blockchain-Based Approach to Solving the Two-Sided Opportunism Problem in Interorganizational Information Sharing	2025	INFORMATION SYSTEMS RESEARCH	10.1287/isre.2022.0065
S042	Bouncken, R; Barwinski, R	Shared digital identity and rich knowledge ties in global 3D printing-A drizzle in the clouds?	2021	GLOBAL STRATEGY JOURNAL	10.1002/gsj.1370
S045	Bremang, A.; Lyons, A.C.; Michaelides, Z.	An information system's architecture to support responsive supply chains	2006	International Journal of Agile Systems and Management	10.1504/IJASM.2006.011630
S046	Brenk, S.; Burmeister, C.; Diener, K.; Lüttgens, D.	Boon or bane of open value creation: The impact of business model design and relational trust on competitive advantage	2025	Long Range Planning	10.1016/j.lrp.2025.102507
S048	Bunduchi, R	Trust, power and transaction costs in B2B exchanges - A socio-economic approach	2008	INDUSTRIAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT	10.1016/j.indmarman.2007.05.003
S049	Cabrilo, S; Dahms, S; Mutuc, EB; Marlin, J	The role of IT practices in facilitating relational and trust capital for superior innovation performance: the case of Taiwanese companies	2020	JOURNAL OF INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL	10.1108/JIC-07-2019-0182
S050	Çaldağ, M.T.; Gökalp, E.	Understanding barriers affecting the adoption and usage of open access data in the context of organizations	2025	Data and Information Management	10.1016/j.dim.2023.100049

S055	Chae, B.; Yen, H.R.; Sheu, C.	Information technology and supply chain collaboration: Moderating effects of existing relationships between partners	2005	IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management	10.1109/TEM.2005.856570
S060	Charki, M.H.; Josserand, E.	Online reverse auctions and the dynamics of trust	2008	Journal of Management Information Systems	10.2753/MIS0742-1222240407
S061	Chatfield, AT; Yetton, P	Strategic payoff from EDI as a function of EDI embeddedness	2000	JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS	10.1080/07421222.2000.11518271
S062	Chelariu, C; Osmonbekov, T	Communication technology in international business-to-business relationships	2014	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & INDUSTRIAL MARKETING	10.1108/JBIM-09-2012-0162
S063	Chen, JT; Cai, WY; Luo, JM; Mao, HY	How does digital trust boost open innovation? Evidence from a mixed approach	2025	TECHNOLOGICAL FORECASTING AND SOCIAL CHANGE	10.1016/j.techfore.2024.123953
S064	Chen, Y.; Jian, P.; Zhang, Y.; Li, J.; Wu, Z.; Liu, Z.	A systematic solution of distributed and trusted chain-network integration	2024	Journal of Industrial Information Integration	10.1016/j.jii.2024.100664
S068	Cho, B; Ryoo, SY; Kim, KK	Interorganizational dependence, information transparency in interorganizational information systems, and supply chain performance	2017	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS	10.1057/s41303-017-0038-1
S069	Chou, A.	The role of knowledge sharing and trust in new product development outsourcing	2008	International Journal of Information Systems and Change Management	10.1504/IJISCM.2008.026707
S075	Çolak, H; Kagnicioglu, CH	Predicting the Blockchain Technology Acceptance in Supply Chains with Inter-Firm Perspective: An Integrated DEMATEL and PLS-SEM Approach	2023	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING	10.1080/1051712X.2023.2214543

S076	Crossman, A; Lee-Kelley, L	Trust, commitment and team working: the paradox of virtual organizations	2004	GLOBAL NETWORKS-A JOURNAL OF TRANSNATIONAL AFFAIRS	10.1111/j.1471-0374.2004.00099.x
S083	Dedrick, J; Kraemer, KL	The impacts of IT on firm and industry structure: The personal computer industry	2005	CALIFORNIA MANAGEMENT REVIEW	10.2307/41166309
S096	Ekman, P	The enterprise system revisited: how well does it capture the company's business network?	2015	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & INDUSTRIAL MARKETING	10.1108/JBIM-11-2012-0163
S098	Ekman, P; Thilenius, P; Windahl, T	Extending the ERP system: considering the business relationship portfolio	2014	BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	10.1108/BPMJ-08-2012-0085
S101	Eurich, M; Oertel, N; Boutellier, R	The impact of perceived privacy risks on organizations' willingness to share item-level event data across the supply chain	2010	ELECTRONIC COMMERCE RESEARCH	10.1007/s10660-010-9062-0
S103	Falcone, EC; Steelman, ZR; Aloysius, JA	Understanding Managers' Reactions to Blockchain Technologies in the Supply Chain: The Reliable and Unbiased Software Agent	2021	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS LOGISTICS	10.1111/jbl.12263
S109	Fernandez, AS; Chiambaretto, P	Managing tensions related to information in coopetition	2016	INDUSTRIAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT	10.1016/j.indmarman.2015.11.010
S117	Gal, U; Jensen, TB; Lyytinen, K	Identity Orientation, Social Exchange, and Information Technology Use in Interorganizational Collaborations	2014	ORGANIZATION SCIENCE	10.1287/orsc.2014.0924
S119	Gebauer, J.; Buxmann, P.	Assessing the value of interorganizational systems to support business transactions	2000	International Journal of Electronic Commerce	10.1080/10864415.2000.11518379
S121	Gelhaar, J; Jussen- Lengersdorf, I;	To share or not to share - exploring the willingness of	2025	JOURNAL OF DECISION SYSTEMS	10.1080/12460125.2025.2583303

	Möller, F; Otto, B	industrial data providers to share data			
S126	Golonka, M.	Interfirm cooperation strategy of hyper-growth and stable-growth ICT firms in Sweden	2016	Journal of Management and Business Administration. Central Europe	10.7206/jmba.ce.2450-7814.183
S127	Golonka, M.	Proactive cooperation with strangers: Enhancing complexity of the ICT firms' alliance portfolio and their innovativeness	2015	European Management Journal	10.1016/j.emj.2014.10.004
S129	Goo, J.; Kishore, R.; Rao, H.R.; Nam, K.	The role of service level agreements in relational management of information technology outsourcing: An empirical study	2009	MIS Quarterly: Management Information Systems	10.2307/20650281
S138	Guo, X.; Reimers, K.; Xie, B.; Li, M.	Network relations and boundary spanning: Understanding the evolution of e-ordering in the Chinese drug distribution industry	2014	Journal of Information Technology	10.1057/jit.2013.27
S141	Hacker, J; Miscione, G; Felder, T; Schwabe, G	Commit or Not? How Blockchain Consortia form and Develop	2023	CALIFORNIA MANAGEMENT REVIEW	10.1177/00081256231175530
S142	Hadaya, P; Cassivi, L	Joint collaborative planning as a governance mechanism to strengthen the chain of IT value co-creation	2012	JOURNAL OF STRATEGIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS	10.1016/j.jsis.2012.03.001
S143	Halder, A	Fostering Citizenship Behavior Among Megaproject Stakeholders Through Cross Functional Integration	2025	IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT	10.1109/TEM.2025.3575817
S144	Halonen, R.	Removing obstacles when implementing	2011	International Journal of Information	10.1504/IJITM.2011.042587

		inter-organisational information systems		Technology and Management	
S151	Hanisch, M.; Goldsby, C.; Fortin, M.; Rogerson, M.	Governing Within Semirigid Limits: Navigating the Centralization–Decentralization Paradox in Blockchain-Based Platforms	2025	Journal of Operations Management	10.1002/joom.70001
S154	He, M.; Wang, T.; Xia, H.; Dai, J.	Empirical research on how social capital influence inter-organizational information systems value co-creation in China	2022	Asia Pacific Business Review	10.1080/13602381.2021.1889124
S156	Hoefnagel, E.; de Vos, B.; Buisman, E.	Marine informational governance, a conceptual framework	2013	Marine Policy	10.1016/j.marpol.2013.02.006
S158	Holm, K.; Goduscheit, R.C.	Exploring the opportunities of blockchain-enabled coopetition: learnings from the wind turbine industry	2023	International Journal of Technology Management	10.1504/IJTM.2023.133927
S160	Huang, Z.; Janz, B.D.; Frolick, M.N.	A comprehensive examination of Internet-EDI adoption	2008	Information Systems Management	10.1080/10580530802151228
S161	Hung, S.-Y.; Chang, S.-I.; Yen, D.C.; Kang, T.-C.; Kuo, C.-P.	Successful implementation of collaborative product commerce: An organizational fit perspective	2011	Decision Support Systems	10.1016/j.dss.2010.11.007
S165	Ibbott, CJ; O'Keefe, RM	Trust, planning and benefits in a global interorganizational system	2004	INFORMATION SYSTEMS JOURNAL	10.1111/j.1365-2575.2004.00167.x
S166	Ibrahim, M; Ribbers, PM	The impacts of competence-trust and openness-trust on interorganizational systems	2009	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS	10.1057/ejis.2009.17
S169	Ioannou, I.	RELATIONAL TRADE NETWORKS	2023	Cambridge Law Journal	10.1017/S0008197323000430
S171	Isaja, M.; Nguyen, P.;	A blockchain-based framework for	2023	Computers in Industry	10.1016/j.compind.2023.103853

	Goknil, A.; Sen, S.; Husom, E.J.; Tverdal, S.; Anand, A.; Jiang, Y.; Pedersen, K.J.; Myrseth, P.; Stang, J.; Niavis, H.; Pfeifhofer, S.; Lamplmair, P.	trusted quality data sharing towards zero- defect manufacturing			
S173	Järveläinen, J.	Information security and business continuity management in interorganizational IT relationships	2012	Information Management and Computer Security	10.1108/09685221211286511
S174	Jarvenpaa, SL; Majchrzak, A	Knowledge collaboration among professionals protecting national security: Role of transactive memories in ego-centered knowledge networks	2008	ORGANIZATION SCIENCE	10.1287/orsc.1070.0315
S175	Järvinen, M.	Trust-building in a coopetitive multi- supplier network	2019	Journal of Public Procurement	10.1108/JOPP-02-2018-0003
S190	Kasper- Fuehrer, E.C.; Ashkanasy, N.M.	Communicating trustworthiness and building trust in interorganizational virtual organizations	2001	Journal of Management	10.1016/S0149-2063(01)00090-3
S196	Khandelwal, V.K.; Gottschalk, P.	Information technology support for interorganizational knowledge transfer: An empirical study of law firms in Norway and Australia	2003	Information Resources Management Journal	10.4018/irmj.2003010102
S204	Klincewicz, K.	Establishing and managing an innovation network: The case of NTT DoCoMo	2009	International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management	10.1504/ijeim.2009.023847
S208	Kostelić, K.; Turk, M.	Modeling interactions in a dynamic heuristic business network	2024	Applied Network Science	10.1007/s41109-024-00660-0

S210	Krathu, W.; Pichler, C.; Xiao, G.; Werthner, H.; Neidhardt, J.; Zapletal, M.; Huemer, C.	Inter-organizational success factors: a cause and effect model	2015	Information Systems and e-Business Management	10.1007/s10257-014-0258-z
S213	Kumar Agrawal, T.K.; Angelis, J.; Khilji, W.A.; Kalaiarasan, R.; Wiktorsson, M.	Demonstration of a blockchain-based framework using smart contracts for supply chain collaboration	2023	International Journal of Production Research	10.1080/00207543.2022.2039413
S222	Lavie, D.; Haunschild, P.R.; Khanna, P.	Organizational differences, relational mechanisms, and alliance performance	2012	Strategic Management Journal	10.1002/smj.1987
S232	Li, M.	IT-Enabled Interactions and Interfirm Trust: The Moderating Role of Relationship Duration	2023	Journal of Advanced Computational Intelligence and Intelligent Informatics	10.20965/jaciii.2023.p0522
S235	Li, Y.; Huang, X.; Zhang, K.	Effects of interfirm IT capability and interfirm trust on omnichannel integration: the mediating role of interfirm integration	2023	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	10.1108/JBIM-05-2022-0194
S239	Lindhagen, S.; Modigh, A.; Winblad, U.	The impact of Covid-19 on inter-organizational coordination in Swedish eldercare: a mixed methods study	2025	BMC Health Services Research	10.1186/s12913-025-12576-1
S242	Liu, ML; Hull, CE; Hung, YTC	Starting open source collaborative innovation: the antecedents of network formation in community source	2017	INFORMATION SYSTEMS JOURNAL	10.1111/isj.12113
S243	Liu, Y.; Esangbedo, M.O.; Bai, S.	Adaptability of inter-organizational information systems based on organizational identity: Some factors of partnership for the goals	2019	Sustainability (Switzerland)	10.3390/su11051436

S244	Lobo, C.A.; Marinho, A.; Santos Pereira, C.; Azevedo, M.; Moreira, F.	The Role of Leadership and Strategic Alliances in Innovation and Digital Transformation for Sustainable Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Existing Literature	2025	Sustainability (Switzerland)	10.3390/su17136182
S248	Lumineau, F; Wang, WQ; Schilke, O	Blockchain Governance-A New Way of Organizing Collaborations?	2021	ORGANIZATION SCIENCE	10.1287/orsc.2020.1379
S249	Luna-Reyes, LF; Derrick, DC; Langhals, B; Nunamaker, JF	Collaborative Cross- Border Security Infrastructure and Systems: Identifying Policy, Managerial and Technological Challenges	2013	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF E- POLITICS	10.4018/jep.2013040102
S250	Luostarinen, K.; Naumenko, A.; Pulkkinen, M.	Identity and access management for remote maintenance services in business networks	2006	IFIP International Federation for Information Processing	10.1007/978-0-387-39229-5_1
S253	Magas, M.; Kiritsis, D.	Industry Commons: an ecosystem approach to horizontal enablers for sustainable cross- domain industrial innovation (a positioning paper)	2022	International Journal of Production Research	10.1080/00207543.2021.1989514
S254	Mao, JY; Lee, JN; Deng, CP	Vendors' perspectives on trust and control in offshore information systems outsourcing	2008	INFORMATION & MANAGEMENT	10.1016/j.im.2008.07.003
S255	Markus, ML; Bui, Q	Going Concerns: The Governance of Interorganizational Coordination Hubs	2012	JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS	10.2753/MIS0742-1222280407
S267	Montazemi, A.R.; Pittaway, J.J.; Qahri- Saremi, H.; Wei, Y.	Factors of stickiness in transfers of know- how between MNC units	2012	Journal of Strategic Information Systems	10.1016/j.jsis.2012.01.001

S270	Msanjila, S.S.; Afsarmanesh, H.	On development of TrustMan system assisting configuration of temporary consortiums	2009	International Journal of Production Research	10.1080/00207540902847330
S272	Mulligan, C.; Godsiff, P.; Brunelle, A.	Boundary Spanning in a Digital World: The Case of Blockchain	2020	Frontiers in Blockchain	10.3389/fbloc.2020.00037
S275	Nakpodia, F.; Ashiru, F.; Adegbite, E.; Koporcic, N.	Insidious institutional challenges of mature MNE subsidiaries operating in weak institutional markets: Corporate governance to the rescue	2025	Journal of International Management	10.1016/j.intman.2025.101258
S278	Nawinna, D.; Venable, J.R.	Effects of ICT-enabled social capital on inter-organizational relationships and performance: empirical evidence from an emerging economy	2019	Information Technology for Development	10.1080/02681102.2018.1451979
S280	Nezami, MR; de Bruijne, MLC; Hertogh, MJCM; Bakker, HLM	Collaboration and Data Sharing in Inter-Organizational Infrastructure Construction Projects	2022	SUSTAINABILITY	10.3390/su142416835
S282	Nicolaou, A.I.; Ibrahim, M.; Van Heck, E.	Information quality, trust, and risk perceptions in electronic data exchanges	2013	Decision Support Systems	10.1016/j.dss.2012.10.024
S284	Nicolaou, AI	Integrated information systems and transparency in business reporting	2010	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF DISCLOSURE AND GOVERNANCE	10.1057/jdg.2009.27
S292	Oláh, J.; Hidayat, Y.A.; Dacko-Pikiewicz, Z.; Hasan, M.M.; Popp, J.	Inter-organizational trust on financial performance: proposing innovation as a mediating variable to sustain in a disruptive era	2021	Sustainability (Switzerland)	10.3390/su13179947
S294	Oláh, J.; Hidayat, Y.A.;	Integrative trust and innovation on	2021	Economics and Sociology	10.14254/2071-789X.2021/14-2/6

	Popp, J.; Lakner, Z.; Kovács, S.	financial performance in disruptive era			
S299	Otte-Trojel, T; Rundall, TG; de Bont, A; van de Klundert, J	Can relational coordination help inter-organizational networks overcome challenges to coordination in patient portals?	2017	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HEALTHCARE MANAGEMENT	10.1080/20479700.2015.1101911
S301	Panteli, N.; Sockalingam, S.	Trust and conflict within virtual inter- organizational alliances: A framework for facilitating knowledge sharing	2005	Decision Support Systems	10.1016/j.dss.2004.03.003
S305	Paterson, I.; Maguire, H.; Al-Hakim, L.	Analysing trust as a means of improving the effectiveness of the virtual supply chain	2008	International Journal of Networking and Virtual Organisations	10.1504/IJNVO.2008.018826
S306	Pathak, B.; Ashok, M.; Tan, Y.L.	Value co-destruction: Exploring the role of actors' opportunism in the B2B context	2020	International Journal of Information Management	10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102093
S307	Perry, C.; Cavaye, A.; Coote, L.	Technical and social bonds within business-to-business relationships	2002	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	10.1108/08858620210415217
S309	Piña-Stranger, A.; Varas, G.; Mobuchon, G.	Managing Inter- University Digital Collaboration from a Bottom-Up Approach: Lessons from Organizational, Pedagogical, and Technological Dimensions	2023	Sustainability (Switzerland)	10.3390/su151813470
S313	Pulkkinen, M.; Naumenko, A.; Luostarinen, K.	Managing information security in a business network of machinery maintenance services business - Enterprise architecture as a coordination tool	2007	Journal of Systems and Software	10.1016/j.jss.2007.01.044
S315	Qian, X.; Papadonikolaki, E.	Shifting trust in construction supply chains through	2021	Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management	10.1108/ECAM-12-2019-0676

		blockchain technology			
S316	Qin, C.; Fan, B.	Factors that influence information sharing, collaboration, and coordination across administrative agencies at a Chinese university	2016	Information Systems and e-Business Management	10.1007/s10257-015-0298-z
S317	Qu, WG; Yang, ZY	The effect of uncertainty avoidance and social trust on supply chain collaboration	2015	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH	10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.09.017
S321	Rampersad, G; Troshani, I; Plewa, C	IOS adoption in innovation networks: a case study	2012	INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT & DATA SYSTEMS	10.1108/02635571211278974
S322	Randolph, RV; Hu, HF; Silvernail, KD	Better the devil you know: Inter-organizational information technology and network social capital in coopetition networks	2020	INFORMATION & MANAGEMENT	10.1016/j.im.2020.103344
S323	Ratnasingam, P	Trust in inter-organizational exchanges: a case study in business to business electronic commerce	2005	DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEMS	10.1016/j.dss.2003.12.005
S324	Ratten, V.	An empirical examination of alliances in the Australian technology industry	2009	International Journal of Business and Globalisation	10.1504/IJBG.2009.023501
S326	Redondo, E; Daniel, E; Ward, J	Combining the rational and relational perspectives of electronic trading	2009	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS	10.1057/ejis.2008.61
S328	Reuver, M.	Governance of mobile service innovation after the walled gardens	2011	Info	10.1108/14636691111101874
S337	Saab, D.J.; Tapia, A.; Maitland, C.; Maldonado, E.; Ngamassi, L.-M.N.	Inter-organizational Coordination in the Wild: Trust Building and Collaboration Among Field-Level ICT Workers in	2013	Voluntas	10.1007/s11266-012-9285-x

		Humanitarian Relief Organizations			
S344	Schwabe, G	The role of public agencies in blockchain consortia: Learning from the Cardossier	2019	INFORMATION POLITY	10.3233/IP-190147
S346	Scott, J.E.	Facilitating interorganizational learning with information technology	2000	Journal of Management Information Systems	10.1080/07421222.2000.11045648
S347	Scott, J.E.; Kaindl, L.	Enhancing functionality in an enterprise software package	2000	Information and Management	10.1016/S0378-7206(99)00040-3
S355	Shen, L.; Su, C.; Zheng, X.; Zhuang, G.	Contract design capability as a trust enabler in the pre-formation phase of interfirm relationships	2019	Journal of Business Research	10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.10.007
S368	Spralls, S.A.; Hunt, S.D.; Wilcox, J.B.	Extranet Use and Building Relationship Capital in Interfirm Distribution Networks: The Role of Extranet Capability	2011	Journal of Retailing	10.1016/j.jretai.2010.09.001
S370	Steinhueser, M.; Richter, A.; Smolnik, S.	How to bridge the boundary? Determinants of inter-organizational social software usage	2015	Electronic Markets	10.1007/s12525-015-0192-z
S378	Susha, I.	Establishing and implementing data collaborations for public good: A critical factor analysis to scale up the practice	2020	Information Polity	10.3233/IP-180117
S382	Tanveer, U.; Ishaq, S.; Hoang, T.G.	Enhancing carbon trading mechanisms through innovative collaboration: Case studies from developing nations	2024	Journal of Cleaner Production	10.1016/j.jclepro.2024.144122
S388	Tong, PS; Umesh, UN;	Collaborative Relationships: The	2016	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATION	10.1142/S021987701640006X

	Johnson, J.L; Lee, R.P	Role of Information Technology		AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT	
S389	Toofani, M.; Hassanzadeh, A.; Rajabzadeh Ghatari, A.R.	Conceptual model for measuring transparency of inter- organizational information systems in supply chain: Case study of cosmetic industry	2018	International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications	
S393	Vaccaro, A.; Parente, R.; Veloso, F.M.	Knowledge Management Tools, Inter-Organizational Relationships, Innovation and Firm Performance	2010	Technological Forecasting and Social Change	10.1016/j.techfore.2010.02.006
S404	Wang, E.T.G.; Chen, J.H.F.	The influence of governance equilibrium on ERP project success	2006	Decision Support Systems	10.1016/j.dss.2004.10.005
S408	Wang, ZW; Zhong, XL	Stimulative Coordination Models for Cooperative and Competitive Enterprise Alliances Based on Token Economy	2022	IEEE ACCESS	10.1109/ACCESS.2022.3169598
S414	Westergren, U.H.	Opening up innovation: The impact of contextual factors on the co- creation of IT- enabled value adding services within the manufacturing industry	2011	Information Systems and e-Business Management	10.1007/s10257-010-0144-2
S415	Westergren, UH; Holmström, J	Exploring preconditions for open innovation: Value networks in industrial firms	2012	INFORMATION AND ORGANIZATION	10.1016/j.infoandorg.2012.05.001
S416	Westergren, UH; Holmström, J; Mathiassen, L	Partnering to create IT-based value: A contextual ambidexterity approach	2019	INFORMATION AND ORGANIZATION	10.1016/j.infoandorg.2019.100273
S420	Woltjer, R.; Lindgren, I.; Smith, K.	A case study of information and communication technology in	2006	International Journal of Emergency Management	10.1504/IJEM.2006.011300

		emergency management training			
S425	Xiao, JH; Xie, K; Hu, Q	Inter-firm IT governance in power-imbalanced buyer-supplier dyads: exploring how it works and why it lasts	2013	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS	10.1057/ejis.2012.40
S431	Yang, M.-H.; Liao, C.-H.; Liu, S.-C.	Applying internet-based information systems to facilitate business alliance activities	2007	Industrial Management and Data Systems	10.1108/02635570710719098
S435	Young-Ybarra, C.E.; Turk, T.A.	The evolution of trust in information technology alliances	2009	Journal of High Technology Management Research	10.1016/j.hitech.2009.02.003
S439	Zhang, F; Zhu, L; Lyu, CC	Does geographic distance benefit or harm cooperative NPD creativity? A contingency model	2022	R & D MANAGEMENT	10.1111/radm.12529
S444	Zhang, XY	The impact of digital capabilities of construction enterprises on project performance: the mediating role of inter-organizational cooperative behavior	2025	JOURNAL OF ASIAN ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDING ENGINEERING	10.1080/13467581.2025.2560456

Appendix III - Mapping of Included Studies to Analytical Categories

This appendix identifies the studies contributing to each descriptive and thematic category presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Full bibliographic information for all included studies is provided in Appendix II.

Study Type

Study type	Paper IDs
Conceptual/theoretical	S009, S010, S016, S022, S036, S041, S064, S069, S119, S156, S169, S171, S190, S208, S213, S242, S248, S249, S253, S255, S270, S272, S284, S299, S301, S370, S388, S389, S408
Empirical–qualitative	S004, S005, S011, S015, S023, S027, S042, S045, S048, S055, S060, S061, S076, S083, S096, S098, S101, S109, S117, S121, S126, S138, S141, S144, S151, S158, S161, S165, S166, S173, S175, S204, S250, S275, S280, S305, S306, S309, S313, S315, S321, S322, S323, S326, S328, S337, S344, S346, S347, S378, S382, S414, S415, S416, S420, S425, S431
Empirical–quantitative	S003, S008, S025, S031, S046, S049, S062, S068, S075, S103, S127, S129, S142, S143, S154, S160, S174, S196, S222, S232, S235, S243, S254, S267, S278, S282, S292, S294, S307, S317, S324, S355, S368, S393, S404, S435, S439, S444
Mixed methods	S006, S063, S239, S316
Review	S001, S050, S210, S244

Research Method

Research method	Paper IDs
Archival	S001, S222, S244, S267
Case Study	S005, S011, S023, S036, S042, S045, S048, S055, S060, S061, S076, S083, S096, S098, S109, S117, S119, S138, S141, S144, S151, S158, S161, S165, S166, S169, S204, S213, S242, S250, S255, S299, S305, S306, S309, S313, S321, S322, S323, S326, S328, S337, S344, S347, S378, S382, S414, S415, S416, S420, S425, S431
Design Science	S041
Experiment	S103, S284
Interview	S004, S015, S022, S027, S101, S121, S126, S173, S175, S275, S280, S315, S346, S370
Not applicable	S009, S010, S016, S064, S156, S171, S190, S210, S248, S249, S253, S270, S272, S301, S388, S408
Not measured	S069

Simulation	S208
Survey	S003, S006, S008, S025, S031, S046, S049, S062, S063, S068, S075, S127, S129, S142, S143, S154, S160, S174, S196, S232, S235, S239, S243, S254, S278, S282, S292, S294, S307, S316, S317, S324, S355, S368, S389, S393, S404, S435, S439, S444
Systematic Literature Review	S050

Trust Type

Trust Type	Paper IDs
Affective trust	S055, S061, S208, S337, S416, S439
Cognitive trust	S003, S005, S006, S009, S010, S011, S015, S016, S023, S025, S027, S031, S042, S045, S046, S048, S049, S050, S060, S062, S068, S075, S083, S096, S098, S101, S103, S109, S117, S119, S121, S127, S129, S142, S143, S144, S154, S158, S160, S161, S165, S166, S173, S174, S175, S190, S196, S204, S210, S222, S235, S239, S242, S243, S244, S267, S270, S278, S280, S284, S292, S299, S301, S305, S306, S307, S309, S313, S316, S321, S324, S326, S328, S347, S368, S370, S378, S388, S393, S404, S415, S420, S444, S076, S254, S389, S414, S425, S435
Institutional trust	S001, S004, S008, S022, S036, S041, S063, S064, S126, S138, S141, S151, S156, S169, S171, S213, S248, S249, S250, S253, S255, S272, S275, S294, S315, S317, S322, S323, S344, S382, S408, S431
Mixed / unclear	S069, S232, S282, S346, S355

Digitalization Category

Digitalization Category	Paper IDs
Collaboration platforms	S003, S005, S006, S010, S016, S023, S025, S031, S042, S046, S048, S049, S063, S069, S076, S109, S117, S126, S127, S141, S142, S143, S158, S161, S169, S174, S175, S190, S196, S204, S208, S213, S222, S232, S239, S242, S244, S248, S249, S267, S270, S278, S280, S292, S301, S305, S309, S321, S322, S328, S337, S346, S368, S370, S382, S388, S393, S408, S416, S420, S431, S435, S439
Data integration / interoperability	S001, S004, S008, S009, S011, S022, S036, S041, S045, S050, S055, S061, S062, S064, S068, S075, S083, S103, S119, S121, S138, S144, S151, S154, S160, S165, S166, S171, S235, S243, S250, S253, S254, S255, S272, S282, S284, S294, S299, S306, S307, S315, S316, S317, S324, S326, S344, S378, S389, S444

Digital monitoring	S101, S275, S414, S415
Enterprise systems	S096, S098, S347, S404
Information Systems	S015, S156, S210
IT governance	S027, S129, S173, S313, S323, S355, S425
Other	S060

Relationship Context

Relationship Context	Paper IDs
Alliance / JV	S003, S022, S027, S041, S046, S063, S069, S076, S109, S126, S127, S141, S144, S154, S158, S161, S166, S175, S190, S196, S204, S210, S222, S232, S235, S242, S243, S244, S249, S250, S270, S272, S278, S280, S282, S284, S292, S299, S301, S306, S309, S313, S321, S322, S324, S337, S346, S347, S355, S368, S370, S378, S393, S404, S408, S414, S415, S416, S420, S431, S435, S439, S444
Buyer–supplier	S001, S006, S008, S009, S010, S015, S016, S023, S025, S031, S045, S048, S055, S060, S061, S062, S068, S075, S083, S096, S098, S101, S103, S119, S129, S138, S142, S160, S165, S171, S173, S213, S254, S305, S315, S317, S323, S326, S388, S389, S425
Franchising	S307
HQ–subsidiary	S275
MNE internal network	S267
Other inter-organizational	S049, S050, S117, S143, S156, S174, S239, S248, S294, S316
Platform ecosystem	S004, S005, S011, S036, S042, S064, S121, S151, S169, S208, S253, S255, S328, S344, S382

Digitalization Mechanism Direction

Digitalization Mechanism Direction	Paper ID
Contingent	S004, S010, S011, S016, S023, S027, S036, S046, S048, S055, S061, S068, S075, S083, S098, S117, S119, S126, S138, S144, S156, S158, S160, S169, S173, S174, S175, S196, S208, S222, S232, S235, S242, S248, S249, S250, S253, S255, S275, S282, S299, S301, S306, S309, S316, S317, S321, S324, S326, S346, S370, S378, S388, S393, S404, S408, S416, S420, S431, S076, S355, S414, S425, S435
Curvilinear / mixed	S006, S015, S096, S109, S127, S129, S151, S204, S439
Digitalization decreases trust	S050, S060, S101, S328
Digitalization increases trust	S001, S003, S005, S008, S009, S022, S025, S031, S041, S042, S045, S049, S062, S063, S064, S069, S103, S121, S141, S142, S143, S154, S161, S165,

S166, S171, S190, S210, S213, S239, S243, S244,
S254, S267, S270, S272, S278, S280, S284, S292,
S294, S305, S307, S313, S315, S322, S323, S337,
S344, S347, S368, S382, S389, S415, S444