

Knowledge Co-creation and Self-organization Improvement by Knowledge Sharing in Communities of Interest

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Abstract: Digital technologies, the social media landscape, and communities of interest play a crucial role in our society, suggesting an improvement in self-organization. Based on social interaction, international scientific studies have examined knowledge sharing across various fields. They have considered things like the factors influencing the willingness to share knowledge among members of a virtual community (Castaneda and Cuellar, 2020), and the role of trust in promoting knowledge sharing (Cien et al., 2005). Studies show that women generally use online resources to discuss health issues in online communities (Zaslow, 2012), though the phenomenon of motherhood—particularly how mothers acquire knowledge—needs to be studied in more detail. This continuation of research into knowledge co-creation and knowledge sharing in communities of interest, extends previous research by observing one hybrid community of mothers for seven years. Knowledge sharing in communities of interest involves building a sensitive environment while fostering trust from a self-esteem and self-organization development perspective. The knowledge co-creation in this study, presents knowledge-sharing practices across different communities of motherhood and examines changes in collaboration over time. In this era of artificial intelligence, there are transformative trends in mental health toward treating people as friends and therapists rather than as individuals, including chatbot-based therapy and emotional health apps (Olawade et al., 2024). A mixed-method triangulation study was conducted via an online semi-structured questionnaire distributed using Lithuanian Facebook groups for mothers of children born in 2011 and 2009; a comparison was conducted with the previous case study of mothers with children born in 2017. The qualitative methodology was intentionally selected to elicit individual member reflections on knowledge sharing within communities of interest and to fill the scientific gap left by research studies on knowledge co-creation, self-confidence and self-organization improvement in hybrid communities of interest in Lithuania.

Keywords: Knowledge co-creation and sharing, Communities of interest, Case of motherhood, Self-organization

1. Introduction

Knowledge co-creation and knowledge sharing in communities of interest are shaped by a mapping of constructs operating at individual, relational, community, and organizational levels. Trust is the most consistently identified facilitator. Integrity-based trust, emerges as the strongest predictor of knowledge-sharing behaviour in communities of interest and is key to openness. Being self-organized and finding joy and meaning in life are also key to openness. Knowledge sharing in an open community is valuable for a secure environment, whereas knowledge hiding is rare. In the era of digitalization, various virtual communities have emerged, and members pay close attention to knowledge-creation, processing, and sharing practices.

Exploring further research on knowledge co-creation and sharing in communities of interest, it is important to emphasize the importance of action for robust knowledge sharing and co-creation in hybrid communities, and that AI cannot fully automate decision-making in various life situations. If we remain isolated, we may develop even more mental health issues, so the best way to avoid them and improve our quality of life is to join communities of interest. Social capital — particularly social interaction ties and identification — strongly influences both knowledge-sharing intentions and knowledge quality (Yoon and Wang, 2011). Awareness of information use and knowledge sharing directly facilitates the co-creation of new knowledge and the ability to make suitable decisions both personally and professionally. The collaborative process involves activities such as joint problem-solving, building on others' ideas, synthesizing diverse knowledge, and co-creating and sharing knowledge, resulting in shared psychological benefits. These include, enhanced self-efficacy and well-being, as well as social benefits through reciprocal relationships and network expansion. This study's scientific research is continuous, focuses on knowledge management processes, and emphasizes a systematic approach across communities of interest and their activities.

The aim of the research was to compare the factors that contribute to knowledge co-creation and sharing, and to indicate better self-organization within communities of interest. *The task of the research* was to analyse the theoretical framework of the social cognitive theory and other theories adapted to knowledge co-creation and sharing, to analyse the knowledge co-creation process while the knowledge is shared in communities of interest, to examine the self-organization concept according to knowledge sharing, and according to previous outcomes, to compare the case studies of communities of interest of mothers in a virtual environment. The research questions (RQs) were as follows: RQ1: What factors drive knowledge co-creation, sharing, and self-organization

in case studies of communities of interest among mothers in a virtual environment? RQ2: What are the values of knowledge co-creation in communities of interest? How do they affect self-organization improvement?

The research method included an analysis of scientific literature and a comparison of three case studies from the communities of interest among mothers, conducted using a qualitative survey. The qualitative methodology was intentionally selected to elicit personal reflections on knowledge sharing and co-creation in communities of interest.

The research might provide a link for further exploration into the power of the relevant communities in personal knowledge-creation behaviour and collective knowledge co-creation and sharing.

2. Literature Review

The notion of knowledge is usually described as the data, information, knowledge, wisdom or competencies pyramid with a construction along the axes — first, understanding from exploration to reflection, second, the context from collecting the details to integrating the picture, and third, the time between the past and the future; although the interpretation of the same data varies significantly based on an individual (Taparauskienė and Jokūbauskienė, 2025).

At the individual level, intrinsic motivational factors such as knowledge, self-efficacy, and the enjoyment of helping others are more influential than extrinsic rewards (Jeon, Kim and Koh, 2011), as well as community support, active leadership, and clear alignment of community objectives with individual goals are key to enabling the conditions for knowledge co-creation and knowledge sharing processes (Zboralski, 2009). Since it is understood that online platforms, particularly academic ones, foster collaborative knowledge creation through textual cues reflecting emotional expressiveness and politeness (Wu, Lee, and Goh, 2025), the convergence of knowledge and significant learning gains have been demonstrated in educational communities' performance (Draper, 2013).

Psychological ownership of knowledge is instrumental in increasing knowledge-exchange intentions in open-innovation communities and is associated with personal outcome expectations, organizational innovativeness, and affective community commitment (Pirkkalainen *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, creative identity, creative self-efficacy, and domain-relevant knowledge serve as determinants for novel idea generation in open innovation communities (Laud, Conduit, and Karpen, 2023). With loneliness as a phenomenon and the increasing role of a companion or a friend, the rapid growth of digital technologies (Ramaul *et al.*, 2026), and artificial intelligence online platforms appear to be the main ones meeting knowledge co-creation goals, completely mediated by the effect of communities on knowledge-sharing intention (Matsuo and Aihara, 2021).

2.1 Review of Theories

The theoretical background and contextual considerations of knowledge co-creation and knowledge sharing suggest that a unified theory of knowledge sharing may be challenging to develop, and research shows that perspectives vary, are dynamic, and are context-dependent.

Social Capital Theory has emerged as one of the most cross-disciplinary and frequently discussed constructs in scientific literature. For Coleman, social capital is productive, i.e., it enables actors to achieve ends that would otherwise be impossible; otherwise, it may be understood as a shared process (Tzanakis, 2013). Bourdieu identified different forms of capital (economic, cultural, and social), as key elements and focused on two parts: the network of social ties to which a person has access and the resources that flow through those ties (Wetterberg, 2004). Li *et al.* (2015) documented exponential growth in publications on social capital across sociology, political science, education, economics, epidemiology, and other fields. Social capital depends on the size of social networks as well as the amount and quality of resources (prestige, power, and wealth) contained in the networks, the resources that are directly usable in the short or long run (Li, 2015).

Social Capital Theory suggests that social capital, the network of relationships possessed by an individual or a social network, and the set of resources embedded within it, strongly influence the extent to which interpersonal knowledge sharing occurs (Chiu, Hsu, and Wang, 2006), which strongly affects the personal motivation and the intention to share, gain new knowledge, and co-create the existing one. Coleman's description of community-generated trust enjoys strong empirical support (Tzanakis, 2013). In this field of research, this theory emerged as one of the most cross-disciplinary and frequently discussed constructs. Structuration Theory, originally developed by Giddens, has been widely adapted. Network theories (weak ties, structural holes, network closure) are examined and represent another major cluster of fundamentals. The contemporary

perspectives and Castells' idea of a network should be understood in the context of his epochal grand narrative built to provide a framework to interpret the logic and societal tensions of a technologically mediated, globalized world, as well as his institutional network analysis that may help to outline contextual aspects of relationally constructed "society" in social theoretical discourse (Anttiroiko, 2019).

Literature increasingly advocates multi-theory approaches rather than focusing on a single theory. Osch et al. found that socio-psychological theories dominated, with cooperation theory and network theory being the most prominent (Van Osch and Coursaris, 2015). Due to the influence of postmodernism, theories around social change have been abandoned, and theorists have focused on a specific point of reference — power, structuration, network, etc. (Jokūbauskienė, 2013). According to M. Castells, modern societies are formed around the bipolar opposition of "Network" and "Self". This opposition becomes the premise of the main changes during this information age. "Network" is a new organizational structure that uses networked communication media; the "network model" is characteristic of advanced economic sectors, strong corporations, communities, and social movements; "Self" is the activities through which people try to re-establish their identity in an unstable, changing environment (Gudauskaitė, 2008). Social theories are not static; they evolve through elaboration, integration, and refinement. The ubiquitous logic of networking has spread exponentially amid the simultaneous, disruptive effects of enhanced connectivity (Castells, 2023). These theories provide a foundation for understanding the interactions explored in this research.

2.2 Knowledge Co-creation

Knowledge co-creation is defined in the literature as a shared, interactive process of generating and sharing knowledge using academic Q&A platforms (Wu, Lee and Goh, 2025). The key constructs driving knowledge co-creation and sharing in communities of interest are trust, social capital, intrinsic motivation (especially knowledge of self-efficacy), organizational support, and community leadership, which produce measurable outcomes including increased individual skills and productivity, operational efficiency gains, time savings in information work, knowledge convergence and learning improvements, innovation through novel knowledge recombination, and strengthened collaborative networks — though participation is consistently skewed toward a small active core and most evidence pertains to knowledge sharing rather than co-creation.

Discussing the knowledge-creation process, Nonaka's commonly used SECI model has been argued to encompass the core knowledge-creation process, including the understanding of Ba/Space (Hislop, 2013). Community leadership plays a significant role. An active community leader who motivates members and organizes activities was found to positively influence both interaction frequency and quality (Zboralski, 2009). Leadership and management are essential to sustain participation and achieve community-of-interest objectives (Tremblay, 2018). The oscillation between guided modes (enabling leadership and adaptive tension), and self-directed modes (enhanced cooperation and boundary spanning), produced a continuous cycle of knowledge creation within a community of interest (Borzillo and Kaminska-Labbe, 2011). Knowledge is acquired through experience, and the highest level of the hierarchy is wisdom, which is created by building contributions to new ideas and reflecting a knowledge-based ecosystem (Burns, 2025). Knowledge co-creation fosters participatory learning and development, which differs from passive knowledge sharing (Utter *et al.*, 2021) and encourages a participatory culture in a supportive environment. According to research on co-creation in learning environments (Omland *et al.*, 2025), a conceptual systematic view, with four concepts focusing on dialogue, positioning, voice, and agency allow for conceptualizing co-creation within a sociocultural paradigm, helping to explore social interactions.

2.3 Personal Self-organization Improvement and Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing sustains self-organization by enhancing team performance, coordination quality, and decision-making effectiveness — measured through outcomes such as knowledge exchange frequency, network structural properties, psychological need satisfaction, and organizational performance indicators — but only when it emerges through trusted, informal relationships supported (not supplanted) by formal structures, as formalization or trust deficits can paradoxically undermine the adaptive capacity that self-organization requires.

Networks that exhibit higher clustering, modularity, and local focal points are interpreted as evidence of effective self-organizing processes (Sher and Rafaeli, 2024). The literature illustrates a positive relationship between knowledge sharing and self-organization health, with quantitative evidence showing substantial effect sizes: knowledge sharing correlated with decision-making effectiveness (Abdi, Kiarie and Gichohi, 2025), organizational enablers such as trust and leadership correlated with knowledge sharing (Cormican *et al.*, 2021) and collaborative climate increases in knowledge-searching frequency (Schoch *et al.*, 2011).

In the literature, community commitment showed the strongest positive impact on knowledge-sharing behaviour in coworking spaces (Rese, Kopplin, and Nielebock, 2020), although perceptions of reciprocity and justice also shaped knowledge-sharing continuance. Distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice affected trust, which in turn influenced organizational citizenship behaviours (altruism and conscientiousness) and ultimately knowledge-sharing continuance intentions in virtual communities (Fang and Chiu, 2010).

In the context of virtual community rewards, intrinsic motivations, including enjoyment and self-efficacy, mediated the relationship between rewards and tacit knowledge sharing, and virtual rewards showed an inverse U-shaped relationship with tacit knowledge sharing, indicating that excessive rewards can undermine it (Wang *et al.*, 2021).

3. Methodology

The aim of this study is to analyse and compare the factors that encourage knowledge co-creation, sharing, and self-organization improvement among mothers in a hybrid environment.

The methodology used in the research was three case studies, with qualitative surveys and qualitative content analysis, comparison, and observational participation. The survey reached 26 informants, and, according to the qualitative survey sample requirements, the gathered information began to be repeated. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, and the main reason for participating in the survey was to belong to a closed hybrid group of mothers with kids in 2009, 2011, or in previous research in 2017. The survey was conducted using Microsoft Forms, part of Microsoft 365, and, in accordance with ethical principles, answers were recorded anonymously. The data was transferred to Microsoft Excel for a panoramic data monitoring of the analysis. The primary survey was conducted in June of 2024, and the final two case studies were explored in March of 2026. According to Social Behaviour Theory, the survey questions were divided into three dimensional factors: environmental, individual, and behaviour (also referred to as an activity). The primary questions were slightly adapted in the 2026 research, with a focus on knowledge co-creation. The communities were selected according to the characteristics of the specified criteria involved: 1. Community unites mothers of Lithuania, 2. Community has been operating for more than 7 years, 3. Community meets hybrid participation form — virtual collaboration and real events. Communities were coded C1, C2, and C3. The communities consist of 33 to 49 members.

According to social behaviour and social capital theories, co-creation in a learning environment was considered within the theories providing social interactions that are presented in Figure 1, which focus on categories: dialogue, positioning, voice, and agency (Omland *et al.*, 2025). The survey questions were divided into three dimensions: environmental factors, individual factors, and behaviour. The study's findings were organized into categories and subcategories based on a qualitative content analysis, using the theories of social behaviour discussed earlier. Social Cognitive theory was used for categorization, and, according to the knowledge co-creation dimensions, to focused on social interactions, organizing answers into blocks and questions in dimensions. The limitations of the study consist of 1) the number of case studies in the research (3), 2) the country's conditions (Lithuania), and 3) the methods selected methods.

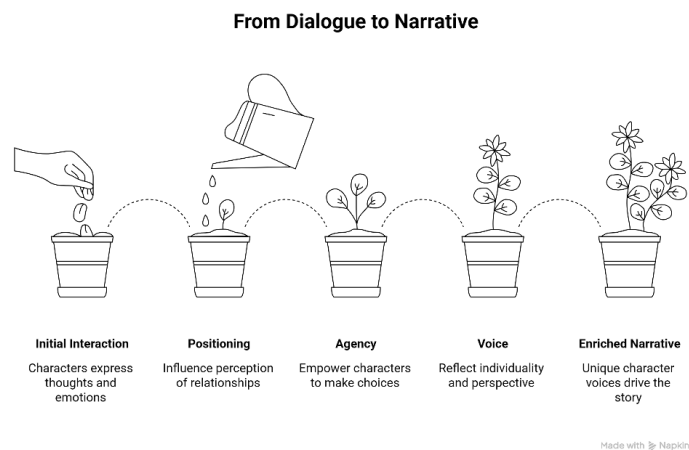


Figure 1: Social interactions: dialogue, positioning, agency, voice

4. Results

As described in the methodology, Social Cognitive Theory was used for categorization and, according to the knowledge co-creation dimensions, focused on social interactions, organizing answers into blocks and questions in the dimensions.

Q1 How did you experience the need to search for people with the same interests in community networks and social networks?

Table 1: Individual: dialogue and positioning and Environmental: agency

Category	Subcategory	Affirmative statement
Individual: dialogue and positioning	Like-minded	"First child, new experiences, wanted to <i>gain more knowledge</i> ." (C1, C2, C3); "When I started to <i>lack like-minded people in my circle</i> ." (C1); "Due to the <i>lack of communication on current topics</i> " (C1); "common topics" (C3).
Environmental: agency	Experience	"We shared our troubles. <...It has grown into our permanent community, now that the children are 7 years old (C1); "willingness to share" (C3); "new experience" (C2).

The answers reveal individual motivations for social interaction, dialogue, and positioning, while seeking belonging and communication, finding like-minded people raising kids of the same age, and continuing to share knowledge for 8 to 17 years. Knowledge sharing and knowledge co-creation foster a community culture and enable that community to build together, as shown in Figure 2, which presents new experiences and self-organized improvements in communication.

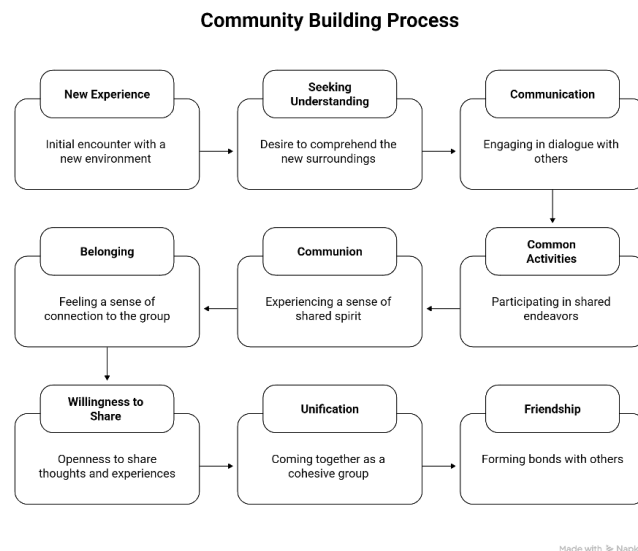


Figure 2: The community building process

The next question illustrates the importance of the ability to share experiences and of a suitable community climate for all its members.

Q2 What do you think you can bring to the community members, and what can you get from sharing knowledge and asking questions? What unites the members of the community?

Table 2: Individuals: Dialogue and positioning

Category	Subcategory	Affirmative statement
Individuals: dialogue and positioning	Discussions, sharing	"<...> Women from various fields, with different views and experiences, have gathered here, and this provides a wider spectrum of knowledge <...> This community is united by the desire to share our knowledge."; (C1); "The courage to share knowledge"; "advice, openness, goodwill, distance" (C2)
	Support	"Changes, Q&A, listening, respect, positivity, support<...>" (C3). "Support, emotions, empathy. <...>"; "<...>. Most of the time, it's verified and honest."; "We share understanding, no judgment <...> in all situations" (C1)

From individuals forming a dialogue and positioning the following question leads to agency and voice under the environmental category:

Q3 What do you think has led to the fact that the community of interests you belong to has existed for more than eight to seventeen years?

Table 3: Environment: agency

Category	Subcategory	Affirmative statement
Environment: agency	<i>Experience</i>	"An active core of the group has formed not only online conversations, but also <i>live meetings, only active members in the group</i> " (C1); "Openness, respect for each other.; "Good sense of humour. Sincerity of members" (C1); "Observation, common community goal" (C2). <...> "Sincerity and common interests."; "Community, friendliness, empathy"; "<...> friendship, advice and support in any situation" (C1); "active participation; feeling of own people, even sharing secrets" (C2); "Sincere people" (C3).
	<i>Characteristics</i>	

Social exchange ensures that the main objectives of knowledge co-creation and sharing in communities of interest are: to foster trust and reciprocity among members; to enable the conversion and integration of tacit and explicit knowledge through interactive, iterative processes; to empower stakeholders across private, public, and nonprofit sectors for co-developed innovation, learning, and societal impact; and to bridge knowledge gaps by creating safe, inclusive spaces for dialogue and collaboration, and the next question discusses the importance of feedback and interpersonal trust.

Q4 How important is feedback and knowledge sharing in the community? What tools facilitate knowledge sharing?

Table 4: Behaviour: voice

Category	Subcategory	Affirmative statement
Behaviour: voice	Belonging	"Having a support team is very important, <i>not feeling alone</i> , <...> when you get a response" (C1); "Common space, support, belonging to a group, being seen" (C2). "Accessibility makes it easier-you get answers at any time." "Feedback is important because you are heard, understood, and believed." (C1); "Community, experience, security" (C3). "Topics, discussions, Q&A, comments, calls, meetings, live communication" (C3).
	Learning	
	Tools	

Q5 What characteristics contribute to the development of interpersonal trust in a community?

Q6 In what situations do you share knowledge? In what situations do you seek the community's knowledge?

Table 5: Behaviour: Voice, Environment: agency and Self-organization: voice

Category	Subcategory	Affirmative statement
Behaviour: Voice	Characteristics	"Respect, openness and sincerity, feeling safe", <...> "ethical communication, self-criticism, empathy, friendliness, openness, support and advice, certainty" (C1). "Respect, listening, confidence, trust, tolerance of criticism with arguments, polite communication, warm relationship, goodwill to share, sense of humour" (C2). "Naturalness, friendly atmosphere, sensitive experience, private community, peace, empathy, listening, willingness to create long-lasting friendships" (C3).
Environment: agency	Willingness	<...> "I always hope that the community will share their insights. <...>where I am confident in my knowledge" (C1). "Willingness to hear other thoughts" (C2) "When I have difficult, unsolvable questions <...> discovering something new. <...> you trust them" (C1). "Raising the question, having problems" (C2). "A place for searching for support, I know that I know" (C3). "Does not cross the border into personal space" (C2). "Real life situations, sharing knowledge and experience" (C3).
	Co-creation	
	Self-organization and care	

Q7 What value do you get from belonging to the community? What do you think the community's longevity chances are, and what factors could determine this?

The agency category of the environmental dimension includes subcategories of active participation and common interests, which lead to considering why members of the community of interest share and co-create their knowledge, it is found that core values, such as active participation, friendship, trust, support, accessibility, new knowledge creation, common themes, belonging, positiveness, respect, experience, safety, communication, advice, sharing and creating, honesty and joy are very important for motivation, ensuring active participation, and meeting communities members expectations. Friendship, trust, positivity, communication, and honesty are the main findings that help to create a suitable community environment. According to social exchange theory, it can be concluded that individual members derive value from knowledge, co-creation, and trust in better self-organization, as well as from the need to share experiences using principles of dialogue, positioning, agency, and voice.

Table 6: Values

	Values:	C1	C2	C3
Dialogue	<i>Active participation</i>	✓	✓	○
	<i>Friendship</i>	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Trust</i>	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Support</i>	✓	✓	○
Positioning	<i>Accessibility</i>	✓	○	○
	<i>New knowledge & common themes</i>	✓	✓	○
	<i>Belonging</i>	✓	✓	○
Agency	<i>Positiveness</i>	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Respect</i>	○	✓	✓
	<i>Experience</i>	✓	○	✓
	<i>Safety</i>	○	✓	✓
Voice	<i>Communication</i>	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Advice</i>	✓	✓	○
	<i>Sharing & Creating</i>	✓	✓	○
	<i>Honesty & joy</i>	✓	✓	✓

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Members of the communities of interest share common goals and interests, which allow them to become part of the community. As stated in the results analysis, the members should have relevant education, a worldview, interests, and a willingness to share and co-create knowledge within the group. Based on the theoretical frameworks of social cognitive theory and other theories of knowledge co-creation and sharing (e.g., the SECI model of knowledge creation), the environment, personal factors, and behaviour were identified as dimensions in the empirical research. The concept confirms the research design framework and includes real-time findings for today's digitalization and artificial intelligence environment. The study confirmed the necessity for genuine, responsive, sincere human interaction in everyday life. It is worth noting, that AI was not an objective of the study, but it may yield valuable insights into human interactions, including the perspective of AI as a talking friend. Broadening the topic may serve as a continuation of longitudinal research or as guidelines for future research, including other countries.

According to the knowledge co-creation process, while the knowledge is shared in communities of interest, Social Capital Theory suggests that social capital, the network of relationships possessed by an individual or a social network, strongly influences the knowledge ecosystem (Chiu, Hsu, and Wang, 2006). Focusing on *dialogue*, *positioning*, *voice*, and *agency* allows for the concept of co-creation within a sociocultural paradigm (Omland et al., 2025). Theoretical frameworks define self-organization in terms of knowledge sharing, enhanced team or community performance, improved coordination quality, and more effective decision-making. The study explored existing factors described in Table 6 that contribute to knowledge co-creation and sharing processes in communities of interest, drawing on prior outcomes such as, Active participation, Trust, Sharing and Creating, and others. The environmental, personal, and behavioural dimensions ensure that core

values in daily life are aligned with friendship, trust, positivity, communication, and honesty. The chance of hybrid meetings, presumably, creates stronger interpersonal connections, fosters trust, influences friendship, generates insights, provides support, shares and co-creates knowledge, remains respectful, and creates a secure environment in a network. The concept of activity theory in the primary study of the research is also open to discussion and can serve as a basis for further research.

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Ethics Declaration: The survey collects anonymous confirmation of participation from communities. The link to the surveys in MS Forms (1) <https://forms.office.com/e/jsSp9jeXaF> (2) <https://forms.office.com/e/zSRMbSczGJ> (3) <https://forms.office.com/e/Qfk2QAeQxV>

AI Declaration: The Elicit and Scopus AI tools were used as the primary research resources for information gathering and systematization, Napkin AI to illustrate text and data, and Grammarly for proofreading.

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