Interpersonal Trust Development in GenAI-augmented Organisations

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Abstract: Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is being increasingly adopted across organisations, where its integration into work has been shown to significantly enhance efficiency and productivity. However, GenAI's use introduces greater uncertainty about the reliability and quality of work. This uncertainty, combined with potential changes in social interaction as an outcome of GenAI use, may directly impact interpersonal relationships, especially trust, among employees. Yet, remarkably few studies explore GenAI's impact on interpersonal relationships within organisations. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the impact of GenAI on interpersonal trust in organisations that have integrated GenAI to assist in the conduct of work, referred to here as GenAI-augmented organisations. In this study, we apply the organisational trust model, defining trust as the willingness to be vulnerable in response to perceived trustworthiness based on evaluated ability (skills and competencies), integrity (adherence to shared values and norms) and benevolence (concern for others). We explore how this response evolves in the context of GenAI use. We conducted nine qualitative semi-structured interviews in April-May 2025 with managers from knowledge-intensive, GenAI-augmented organisations. Our findings suggest that in GenAI-augmented organisations, managers tend to place greater trust in employees demonstrating ability requiring higher cognitive effort, such as critical GenAI use, asking questions, understanding, and explaining GenAI outputs. Integrity, described through the manner of GenAI use, particularly by demonstrating responsibility, maintaining transparency, providing evidence, and aligning with organisational policies, is also critical for developing interpersonal trust. Moreover, uncritical GenAI use that may burden others with more work can lead to a reduction in trust. In response to uncertainty, managers often increase supervision; however, this is not necessarily a sign of distrust but a strategy to manage uncertainty. To our knowledge, our study is one of few qualitative studies exploring GenAI use in organisations. It provides a novel perspective that connects GenAI and interpersonal relationships. The findings have implications for management practices, organisational culture, and aligning GenAI to enhance trust and collaboration within organisations.

Keywords: Trust, Generative AI, Workplace environment

1. Introduction

The rapid adoption of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is transforming the nature of work in organisations that have integrated GenAI to support employees in conducting their work. In this study, we refer to these as GenAI-augmented organisations. Despite these changes, interpersonal relationships among employees remain central to work (cf. Bankins et al, 2024). Trust, which emerges through social interaction, is recognised as one of the most important interpersonal relationships for organisational performance (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman 1995). Recent research found that GenAI may foster conditions that promote social interaction (Marimon, Mas-Machuca & Akhmedova 2024) but may also lead to a decline in it (Retkowsky, Hafermalz & Huysman 2024) and erode interpersonal trust (Pavleska 2025; Schilke & Reimann 2025). Therefore, it is increasingly important to understand how GenAI influences interpersonal trust within organizations, leading to the research question: *How does the use of GenAI affect the development of interpersonal trust between managers and their team members within GenAI-augmented organizations*?

GenAI refers to a subset of artificial intelligence systems that autonomously produce content, such as text and images, in response to prompts (cf. Retkowsky, Hafermalz & Huysman 2024). GenAI-augmented organizations commonly apply it to support decision-making, automate routine tasks, enhance communication, and deliver performance-related feedback (Bankins et al, 2024). Our study seeks to explore how managers in these organisations develop interpersonal trust in their team members. To address this, we draw from the organisational trust model that defines interpersonal trust in organisations as the willingness to be vulnerable to another's actions, based on perceptions of their ability, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman 1995). As GenAI alters the nature of work (Bankins et al, 2024), it may influence how these dimensions are enacted and perceived.

2. Literature Review

Prior research suggests that evaluation of trustworthiness is a necessary antecedent to trust. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) propose a trust model in which trustworthiness is evaluated along three dimensions:

ability (skills and competencies), integrity (adherence to shared values and norms), and benevolence (concern for others). This model is widely applied in exploring interpersonal trust in contemporary organisational settings (e.g., Bentzen 2023). Notably, context influences how trustworthiness is evaluated and perceived (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman 1995). Blomqvist and Ståhle (2000) extend this model by distinguishing between interpersonal trust (trust among individuals) and organisational trust (trust in systems, structures, and norms) and by emphasising that trustworthiness is evaluated iteratively through observed competence, goodwill, and behaviour. Their work highlights the important role of competence, defined as professional skills, expertise, and judgment, as a necessary condition for trust development. In relationships between managers and employees, perceptions of competence, benevolence, and integrity are central to the evaluation of trustworthiness (Bentzen 2023). When trustors perceive trustworthiness as low and are unwilling to take risks, different forms of supervision are often used as substitutes for trust (cf. Mayer, Davis & Schoorman 1995). However, recent research suggests that meaningful supervision may enhance rather than reduce trust (cf. Bentzen 2023).

Research has shown that technologies can significantly shape how trust is developed (Lumineau, Schilke & Wang 2023). Communication tools like email, messaging, and video conferencing have been shown to enhance social interaction, thereby supporting trust (Lumineau, Schilke & Wang 2023). Unlike these earlier technologies, GenAI is not a communication tool (cf. Retkowsky, Hafermalz & Huysman 2024). Instead, by generating content in the background as the basis for social interaction, it alters the conditions under which such interaction takes place (cf. Retkowsky, Hafermalz & Huysman 2024). GenAI use can enhance employees' access to and processing of information and reduce misunderstandings. It also supports collaboration, creativity, and knowledge sharing by retrieving and synthesising large volumes of data, improving written consistency, and serving as a learning tool (Florea & Croitoru 2025; e.g., Yeon, Lee & Park 2024). However, by performing work tasks more independently and reducing employee interdependence, GenAI use may reduce interpersonal interaction, and may contribute to individualisation and isolation (Retkowsky, Hafermalz & Huysman 2024). GenAI use may also reinforce inequality and insecurity, as high performers are often better positioned to use GenAI for high-quality output, thus extending their abilities (Humlum & Vestergaard 2025). All this can constrain social interaction.

GenAI outputs raise reliability and data quality concerns (cf. Bankins et al, 2024). Therefore, critical GenAI use, such as verifying outputs rather than blindly accepting them, is central to mitigating the risks of overreliance on GenAI (Marimon, Mas-Machuca & Akhmedova 2024). Moreover, research shows that GenAI use may unintentionally negatively affect evaluations of trustworthiness and trust development (Pavleska 2025; Schilke & Reimann 2025), a phenomenon referred to as the "AI Penalization Effect" (Kim et al, 2025, p. 6).

Although research increasingly explores the use of and trust in GenAI (cf. Bankins et al, 2024), less is known about how GenAI, operating in the background and embedded in employees' work, may influence interpersonal trust, especially between managers and team members.

3. Method

We conducted a qualitative study to explore how GenAI use impacts the development of interpersonal trust in GenAI-augmented organisations. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to capture participants' experiences. To answer our research question, we recruited nine managers working in GenAI-augmented organisations in Norway, Denmark, Germany, the UK, and the USA. We focused on managers because they are uniquely positioned to evaluate the trustworthiness of employees within organisations. Therefore, this provides important insights into the nature of interpersonal trust in GenAI-augmented organisations.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling via a LinkedIn announcement targeting managers in GenAI-augmented organisations. This approach ensured a relatively homogeneous group with relevant GenAI experience, enabling rich insights into its impact on interpersonal trust. The nine recruited managers (M1–M9) described themselves as experienced GenAI users. Three participants worked in consulting, four in software research, and two in IT services; seven had direct reports, while two did not. One was a C-level executive in a large international consulting firm; the others were middle managers. Their responsibilities typically included planning, task assignment, team communication, and performance reviews. The sample size of nine was considered sufficient for a qualitative interview study, allowing for in-depth exploration of diverse perspectives while achieving thematic saturation (cf. Saunders & Townsend 2016).

The data collection, conducted in April-May 2025, adhered to the dedicated data management plan and followed the principles of responsible research conduct. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and

was conducted digitally via Microsoft Teams. The interview guide included questions grouped into five sections: (1) participant background (e.g., job role, responsibilities), (2) use of GenAI (e.g., work tasks, integration into workflow), (3) organisational context (e.g., organisational policies), (4) impact on work and trust (e.g., transparency, performance evaluation), and (5) interpersonal relationships and communication (e.g., changes in collaboration, communication patterns). Interviews were audio-recorded using Microsoft Teams recording function with participants' consent and transcribed both automatically and manually verbatim to ensure accuracy.

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). NVivo 15.0 was used for thematic analysis alongside exploring code relationships. Transcripts were read multiple times to gain familiarity, and initial codes were generated inductively to capture recurring patterns related to GenAI and trust. The final themes reflect how trust is developed in GenAI-augmented organisations, focusing on employees conducting their work using GenAI, managers evaluating trustworthiness and developing trust, and GenAI usage, boundaries, and effects.

4. Findings

The analysis revealed a strong relationship between how work is conducted and how trust is developed in GenAI-augmented organisations. Findings reveal that participants' trust in team members was shaped by the critical use of GenAI, the ability to ask questions, understand, and explain GenAI outputs, and behaviours such as demonstrating responsibility, maintaining transparency, providing evidence, adhering to policies, and avoiding overburdening others as a result of GenAI use.

4.1 GenAI use and Increased Uncertainty

Participants described extensive use of GenAI when conducting their work. Employees use GenAI for tasks such as meeting transcription, summarisation, and drafting emails and reports. It also supports performance reviews, document translation, and synthesising internal documentation across languages and regions. In their organisations, GenAI is used for both routine administrative tasks and more complex work, such as stakeholder communication and business architecture planning. In consulting, GenAI processes large volumes of meeting data to produce workshop content, reports, and specifications. In software development research, it supports data collection and analysis. In some of these organisations, GenAI is also applied to support dyslexic employees and non-native English speakers. In several domains, such as consulting and software development, internal GenAI platforms have been developed and tailored to organisational needs.

All participants observed that GenAI use was a source of increased uncertainty regarding work reliability and quality. They explained that while GenAI produces impressive outputs, verifying them is challenging. As a result, employees often struggle to determine whether these outputs are reliable. As one participant elaborated: "We often get very, I shall not say, cool things, very good things out, but we are not sure if they are real things, if they are really good and it is very difficult to verify" (M3).

Although all organisations in this study had implemented company-wide policies for GenAI use, participants noted that these did not help mitigate uncertainty. Several participants explained that the policies focused on legal compliance and information security, resulting in vague guidance that failed to address practical uncertainties. As one participant explained: "We have standard guidelines mostly around legality... but it's not giving you guidelines on what can go wrong" (M7). Another participant echoed: "They might say, use it where you think it makes sense..." (M1). This further contributed to uncertainty resulting from GenAI use. Still, most participants observed that the majority of their team members adhered to these policies, which contributed to their trust in them.

4.2 Ability and Integrity: Critical GenAI use and Trust

All participants expressed trust in team members who used GenAI in ways that added value to their work. As participants noted, GenAI outputs were considered "really smart logical output" (M1) when it made "sense in the wider context" (M1).

This trust was particularly evident when their team members demonstrated critical GenAI use, especially by taking responsibility and actively verifying GenAI outputs. As one participant noted: "It [critical use] certainly affects trust' (M1). Another participant trusted her team members when they acted as an "interrogator" (M2), ensuring that the insights generated were real and "not AI's hallucinations" (M2). This emphasis on verification stemmed from participants' concerns about personal responsibility in GenAI use. As participants put it: "You have to stand by what you produce" (M3) and "The responsibility for the deliverable lies with the person

producing it" (M4). Reinforcing this, one participant in a consulting company noted: "You can't write something without understanding it. You can't write something without having control over your sources" (M4). Another participant echoed this, urging: "Please review it before sending it out, verify and double-check that it's correct... if you generate information and plan to send it to others, read it over, verify it!" (M6).

All participants noted that being "critical thinkers" when using GenAI required even greater cognitive effort from employees. As one participant told, "It actually requires more ability or a greater capacity for critical thinking than ever before. Precisely because we can't necessarily be 100% certain that what's being suggested is the only correct answer" (M8). Another participant explained that she trusted her team members when they demonstrated planning, synthesised information, and formulated complex instructions to achieve meaningful results with GenAI, while also verifying its outputs. She elaborated: "[They] had a strategy in their head. They had—for their tasks—they need to combine multiple types of data and information and documents. And they have to write very specific prompts to get—like, usually—an instruction this long, sometimes even a couple of pages long, to spit this output that they have" (M7).

Moreover, several participants emphasised the importance of team members asking questions for critical GenAI use. As one participant elaborated, asking questions reflects intentionality and planning: "Another important thing is that they ask questions, because that's one of the indicators for me that they have a plan in their head—they know what they're doing" (M2).

Most participants trusted their team members when they demonstrated an understanding of their work processes and context, as GenAI outputs were seen to lack contextual depth and could reduce reliability and quality if used without such understanding. Participants exemplified this concern. One stated: "In my head, I'm screaming like you're not allowed to use AI, you need to figure out the design process first, you need to be able to navigate it up and down" (M2). Another participant elaborated: "It [GenAI] only has text, and it needs to extrapolate context from text. Like, the transcription doesn't tell you what's the problem, who's the user, why we're talking to them, and what we're trying to extract from the situation. It just gives me a lot of text that it's going to summarise in a bunch of bullet points that don't address my assumptions or initial hypothesis that I came in with" (M7). A third participant echoed this concern, highlighting the importance of "understanding the content and the consequences of something that is more advanced than what you normally work with" (M3).

4.3 Ability, Integrity, and Benevolence: "It Only Decreases Trust if you Blindly Follow it"

While participants generally stated that their trust remained unchanged following GenAI adoption in their organisations, many acknowledged that uncritical GenAI use by team members could reduce it. All participants have experienced situations of uncritical GenAI use by their team members. One participant described this uncritical GenAI use as a very linear process: work goes into Copilot and comes out without any verification (M1). Similarly, another participant elaborated: "AI tells them something and they're like, OK, well, I guess that looks legit to me" (M2), while another remarked: 'It only decreases trust if you blindly follow it' (M7).

Moreover, uncritical use of GenAI affected how participants assigned work tasks. One participant explained that, after a team member delivered low-quality work, he became reluctant to assign tasks requiring autonomy: "For him, certainly, you know, I really have to be careful about what I assigned him… So, certainly it does affect the work that I can assign to him" (M1).

Uncritical GenAI use also led to a burdening with more work, signalling the lack of consideration for others in their team. One participant shared how this uncritical GenAI use required him and other team members to: "step in by discarding everything that had been created and rewriting it all from scratch ourselves" (M6). Another participant described a situation where a team member used GenAI to quickly produce a first draft and then passed it to others for revision. This left the participant with more work: "Then we find that it's myself or the other person in the team that are the ones doing all of the critical thinking, and the manual work to improve something that he had only just sort of put through ChatGPT or Copilot. So, it is certainly between team members, it is, and between team, it is affecting people when it's not being used correctly, absolutely" (M1).

However, participants noted that uncritical GenAI use is often associated with team members who are generally low performers. One participant emphasised that a decline in trust stems from a broader pattern of low performance, with GenAI use being just one example (M1). Another participant explained that low performers' general tendency to avoid asking questions was reflected in their uncritical GenAI use: "My lower performers—you know, as a manager, you always encourage your people to ask questions—but they don't.

They can't. And if they don't have questions for me, they won't have questions for AI either" (M2). Notably, some participants observed that GenAI use actively worsened the quality of certain team members' work, making their low performance more visible (M2).

4.4 Integrity: Transparency and Evidence

Participants were not concerned about the disclosure of GenAI use but emphasised that their trust was affected when GenAI use was not disclosed in the cases of low-quality work: "He didn't tell me that it was with AI, but I saw it and the quality was really bad, and I could tell he hadn't read through it, and that did make me lose trust in the work" (M1). Participants also noted that disclosure was often left to team members, making it harder to evaluate how GenAI was applied. As one participant explained, at present, "it's up to an individual to say when they use it and when they don't" (M1). Another added: "I see the traces, but it's hard for me to see it systematically and comprehensively" (M4).

In contrast, participants trusted team members who used GenAI transparently and supported their outputs with evidence: "She's using it a lot, she's also pretty careful in kind of like structuring it... showing her work, like showing evidence... even if you know AI did something that still she has the evidence that is supporting it" (M2). These team members were seen as trustworthy, as one participant explained: "She will always put a caveat or a little asterisk saying, you know, like, I created this synthesis using AI. So, she does full disclosure" (M9).

4.5 Increased Managerial Supervision

All participants noted that the increased uncertainty around work reliability and quality, rooted in uncritical GenAI use, required increased supervision. Moreover, the complexity of verifying GenAI outputs significantly increased the need for quality assurance. Participants emphasised that supervision was important for ensuring quality. As one participant elaborated: "Previously, it was difficult to formulate something if you didn't understand it. But now, you can formulate something without understanding it, and that creates new demands for both control and follow-up" (M4). He further stressed that: "[GenAI use] mean we have to be more vigilant, of course, in terms of quality assurance and the responsibility placed on each employee and each leader" (M4). Another participant echoed this concern, stating: "Our trust issue is more about quality assurance and the methods the tools use" (M3).

Moreover, most participants experienced situations in which uncritical GenAI use resulted in serious negative consequences. These incidents led to tighter supervision of certain team members. For example, one participant experienced how one of his team members sent a GenAI-produced report directly to top management without verifying it (M1). This participant elaborated regarding such negative experience: "From then on, I was always checking the work that he was doing..." (M1). He concluded that until his team members demonstrate critical GenAI use: "Maybe it does require more managerial oversight until people are more comfortable with it and know how to use it appropriately" (M1).

4.6 Summary

In GenAI-augmented organisations, GenAI use together with vague organisational policies introduces greater uncertainty regarding work reliability and quality. Therefore, managers' trust in their team members is shaped not only by how critically GenAI is used but also by team members' ability to ask questions, understand, and explain GenAI outputs. According to participants, this requires a higher level of cognitive effort than before. Moreover, demonstrating responsibility and transparency in GenAI use, providing evidence, and alignment with organisational policies are also important to managers for developing trust. In contrast, uncritical use of GenAI can burden others with more work and reduce trust. When uncertainty is high and/or evaluated trustworthiness is low, managers tend to increase supervision. Thus, in GenAI-augmented organisations, trust is developed and reinforced when employees are perceived as trustworthy based on behaviours such as demonstrating the results of cognitive effort, which reflects their ability, and the manner in which work including GenAI use is conducted, which reflects their integrity; and using GenAI in ways that do not burden others, which reflects their benevolence (see Figure 1).

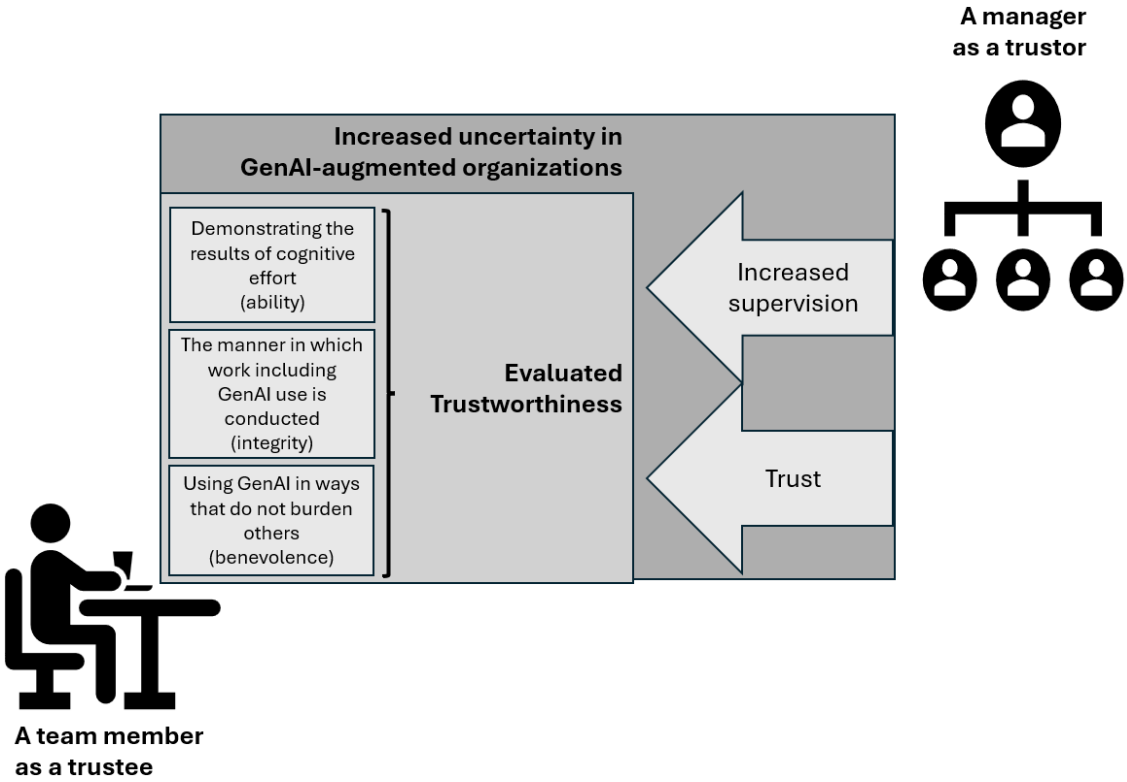

Figure 1: Managers' trust development in GenAI-augmented organisations

5. Discussion

Drawing from the trust model proposed by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995), this study advances the understanding of how GenAI use affects the development of interpersonal trust between managers and their team members within GenAI-augmented organisations. It appears that ability and integrity are particularly important in evaluating trustworthiness for developing trust in these organisations, compared with the central role of all three dimensions in relationships between managers and employees in non-GenAI-augmented organisations (cf. Bentzen 2023). The emphasis on cognitive effort, reflected in ability, aligns with the view that competence is a necessary condition for trust development (cf. Blomqvist & Ståhle 2000). Moreover, employees who take responsibility, through critical GenAI use, particularly by verifying GenAI outputs, demonstrate ability and, through this, integrity. These intertwined dimensions shape how managers evaluate trustworthiness and develop trust, thereby specifying Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) model by showing how responsibility and cognitive effort, when intertwined through GenAI use, amplify their influence. Notably, our findings reveal that uncritical use of GenAI, especially when it creates more work for others, may be perceived as a lack of consideration, which negatively impacting evaluations of benevolence. In such cases, benevolence is evaluated based on the consequences of GenAI use rather than the employee intent. However, its influence on trust development appears less prominent than that of ability and integrity. This may be explained by the context in which trust is evaluated (cf. Mayer, Davis & Schoorman 1995), as GenAI-augmented organisations are described by uncertainty and/or reduced social interaction and employee interdependence (cf. Retkowsky, Hafermalz & Huysman 2024). These conditions may make benevolence, such as empathy or helpfulness, less observable and therefore less influential.

Our findings align with prior research emphasising the increased uncertainty, reliability concerns, and risk of overreliance on GenAI, which in turn necessitate greater cognitive effort to verify GenAI outputs (Marimon, Mas-Machuca & Akhmedova 2024; Retkowsky, Hafermalz & Huysman 2024). This also helps explain why the manner in which work is conducted, especially the demonstration of responsibility and the provision of evidence, influences trust development. Moreover, the increased uncertainty necessitates increased supervision. This increase in supervision does not necessarily indicate a decline in trust; rather, it is a strategy to manage uncertainty. This aligns with research suggesting that supervision, when perceived as meaningful, does not erode trust (cf. Bentzen 2023). However, our findings differ from those of Schilke and Reimann (2025) and Pavleska (2025), possibly due to our participants' emphasisis on responsibility, evidence and verification.

This suggests that the relationship between disclosure of GenAI use and trust is complex and context-dependent.

Our findings indicate that uncritical GenAI use is often associated with employees already known as low performers. This uncritical use appears to amplify performance inequalities, consistent with Humlum and Vestergaard's (2025) findings. Moreover, reduced social interactions, which can constrain peer support and informal learning (cf. Retkowsky, Hafermalz & Huysman 2024), may further increase these performance inequalities by limiting opportunities for low performers to improve. This, especially alongside the emphasis on cognitive effort and reduced observability of benevolence in a GenAI context, may present a significant organisational challenge. If high performers are better equipped for critical GenAI use, managers may place greater trust in them over low performers. Thus, GenAI use may contribute to uneven distribution of trust, leading to a more polarised or inequitable workplace if not mitigated.

These findings can be integrated into practical recommendations for GenAI-augmented organisations. Managers may need to provide targeted training to support employees in critical GenAI use. Such training should be tailored to specific workflows, as generalised training is often of limited value. To prevent GenAI from reinforcing existing inequalities, organisations should ensure that all employees receive adequate support. Finally, trust development is an ongoing process, requiring regular managerial reflection.

This study has several limitations. First, the relatively small number of participants may affect the generalisability of the findings. Second, the study focused exclusively on managerial perspectives and did not capture the experiences of non-managerial employees. Third, by focusing on interpersonal trust between managers and their team members, the study does not explore how interpersonal trust may interact with organisational trust, such as trust in structures, processes, and policies in GenAI-augmented organisations. Fourth, the data was collected at a single point of time, providing a snapshot rather than longitudinal view. Finally, while interviews provided rich data, they are subject to self-reporting biases and may reflect socially desirable responses, particularly in discussions of trust.

6. Conclusion and Further Research

This study explored how interpersonal trust between managers and their team members develops in GenAI-augmented organisations. Our findings reveal a potential shift in how trust is developed in these organisations, driven by the intertwining of ability and integrity, and by the reduced observability of benevolence in contexts of increased uncertainty related to work reliability and quality. Our study further contributes to the literature as one of the few to qualitatively explore interpersonal trust in GenAI-augmented organisations, specifically by showing how GenAI use influences managers' evaluation of these dimensions and providing deeper insight into interpersonal trust development in these settings.

Future research should explore the risk of GenAI-driven workplace polarisation and the role of benevolence.

Expanding beyond managerial perspectives to include diverse roles and industries, alongside longitudinal studies, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how trust develops as GenAI becomes more embedded in work. Further research into the interplay between interpersonal and organisational trust would also enrich this understanding.

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