

Trust, Distrust and Control Interplay in Interorganizational Relations

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to provide a systematic literature review of research on the interplay between trust, distrust and control in interorganizational relations. The authors aim at diagnosing the current state of research along with gaps in the literature and then outlining opportunities for further research. The paper fulfills the aims by exploring the literature in four fields: (1) the understanding of trust, distrust and control, (2) interplay between trust and control, (3) relation between control and distrust and (4) relation between trust, distrust and control.

Design/methodology/approach: The systematic literature review was conducted following the framework in Kraus et al. (2020). The sample consisted of 78 publications which were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Findings: Our systematic literature review revealed the prevalence of debate on trust, with distrust being marginalized. Five research gaps emerged from the analysis. As for the relation between two constructs, the trust–control debate is on top, trust–distrust takes the second position, with distrust–control as a marginal research area.

Originality/value: The paper is a comprehensive review of the body of literature integrating three constructs: trust, distrust and control, along with new research directions.

Keywords: trust, control, distrust, interorganizational relations, systematic literature review.

JEL: M10

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Zaufanie, nieufność i kontrola w relacjach międzyorganizacyjnych

Streszczenie

Cel: celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie systematycznego przeglądu literatury dotyczącej badań nad wzajemnym oddziaływaniem zaufania, nieufności i kontroli w relacjach międzyorganizacyjnych. Autorzy dążą do zdiagnozowania obecnego stanu badań wraz z lukami w literaturze, a następnie nakreślenia możliwości dalszych badań. Artykuł spełnia te cele, badając literaturę w czterech obszarach: (1) rozumienia zaufania, nieufności i kontroli; (2) wzajemnego oddziaływania zaufania i kontroli; (3) związku między kontrolą a nieufnością oraz (4) związku między zaufaniem, nieufnością i kontrolą.

Metodologia: systematyczny przegląd literatury został przeprowadzony zgodnie z ramami przedstawionymi przez S. Krausa, M. Breiera i S. Dasi-Rodríguez (2020). Próba składała się z 78 publikacji, które zostały przeanalizowane zarówno ilościowo, jak i jakościowo.

Wyniki: przeprowadzony systematyczny przegląd literatury ujawnił przewagę debaty skoncentrowanej wokół tematu zaufania, przy czym można zauważyć, że nieufność jest marginalizowana. Jeśli porównamy relacje między dwoma konstruktami, to debata zaufanie–kontrola jest na czołowym miejscu, zaufanie–nieufność zajmuje drugą pozycję, natomiast zaufanie–nieufność zajmuje trzecią pozycję, natomiast nieufność–kontrola jest marginalnym obszarem badawczym. Z analizy wytoniło się pięć luk badawczych.

Oryginalność/wartość: artykuł stanowi kompleksowy przegląd literatury integrującej trzy konstrukty: zaufanie, nieufność i kontrolę, wraz z nowymi kierunkami badań.

Słowa kluczowe: zaufanie, kontrola, nieufność, relacje międzyorganizacyjne, systematyczny przegląd literatury.

1. Introduction

A large body of research shows that trust and control are important factors for interorganizational relationships (IORs). For many decades control was treated as a governance mechanism, and trust has emerged as the central mechanism for the coordination of IORs (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007). It is as such crucial to embrace both control and trust in interorganizational relationships (Cao & Lumineau, 2015; Long & Sitkin, 2018; Long & Weibel, 2018; Vlaar, Van den Bosch & Volberda, 2007) as they facilitate cooperation (Cao & Lumineau, 2015).

Trust and control have been studied in IORs from various perspectives stressing the complexity and significance of the trust-control nexus (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007). However, the literature calls for more theoretical frameworks addressing the trust and control relationship (Long & Sitkin, 2006). Despite a vast amount of research in the past two decades, there is no consensus on the type of relation between trust and control (substitute vs complementary). The question of whether any optimal combination of trust and control may serve as a prerequisite for cooperation (Long & Sitkin, 2018; Möllering & Sydow, 2019) also remains subject to discussion.

One should also not neglect the role of distrust in organizations, as an equally important governance mechanism (Six & Latusek, 2023). Both trust and distrust “contribute to establishing and maintaining relations: trust

through heightening the belief in positive intentions of the other party, and distrust through undertaking rational measures to secure transactions” (Lewicka & Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2022). Vlaar et al. (2007) indicate that trust and distrust impact on formal coordination and control, inter-organizational performance, and managers’ perceptions attributed to their partners’ behavior.

However, the relationship between trust, distrust and control in interorganizational relations still remains unclear (Connelly, Miller & Devers, 2012). Exploring the issue, we discovered that no systematic review has yet been conducted on it. Such a review would enable integrating the existing body of research from different disciplines and creating a knowledge base on which future research can be grounded (Tranfield, Denyer & Smart, 2003). Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to systematically review the current literature on the relationship of trust, distrust and control in IORs. To meet the goal, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How do trust, distrust and control interplay on an interorganizational level?

RQ2: What research gaps exist in the literature on trust, distrust and control on an interorganizational level that future studies can address?

In our opinion, understanding the mechanisms of interplay between trust, distrust and control is crucial for business areas, such as: strategic management (particularly internationalization strategies), business development and R&D innovation – as strategic alliances are often created in the areas. Strategic alliances require cooperation, but other aspects come into play, for instance the power relations between parties that impact the quality of an alliance. Business alliances leading to innovations or product development rely strictly on knowledge, it requires protection along with good relations, therefore cooperation arrangements become commonplace (Raza-Ullah & Kostis, 2020).

The paper has been structured as follows: Section 2 describes the scope of the review, Section 3 presents methods for the literature review, whereas the quantitative and qualitative results are included in Section 4, Section 5 presents a discussion, future avenues for research and some limitations of the paper.

2. Scope and Boundary of the Review

2.1. Trust

The concept of trust has been discussed and shown from different perspectives – many publications refer to the definition by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) that emphasizes a willingness towards vulnerability by one party towards another (Fryxell, Dooley & Vryza, 2002; Vlaar et al.,

2007). Factors influencing trust creation identified so far include: level of uncertainty (Adobor, 2006), familiarity and past experience (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007); shared values, communication and opportunism (Goo, 2009); successful fulfillment of repeated exchanges (Connelly et al., 2012); relational behaviors (Schoenherr, Narayanan & Narasimhan, 2015), as well as information sharing (Shin, Yoo & Kwon, 2020). Even though trust as a term invokes positive connotations, scholars point out that excessive trust may result in detrimental effects (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007; Gallivan & Depledge, 2003; Gundlach & Cannon, 2009) or introduce *rigidities* that require moderation (Thorgren & Wincent, 2011).

Scholars emphasize the aspects of the definition that refer to belief, subjective expectations or attitude (Das & Teng, 1998; Das & Teng, 2001; Kostis & Näsholm, 2020; Lui & Ngo, 2004; Nooteboom, 1996; Tomkins, 2001). However, the aspects are more related to the individual level of interaction. At the organizational level, the aspect of management is emphasized, i.e., trust as an organizing principle (Kostis, Bengtsson & Näsholm, 2021) that is connected with organizational structure and social interactions in an organization (Reed, 2001). The enabling role of trust is related to: (1) greater confidence (Das & Teng, 1998; Das & Teng, 2001) though also to a negative side of being overconfident (Kostis & Näsholm, 2020), as well as (2) open communication and negotiation outcomes (Vlaar et al., 2007). Interorganizational trust is a phenomenon hard to observe and measure (Mellewigt, Madhok & Weibel, 2007) and it “(...) is linked to the predictability of a partner firm’s behavior toward a vulnerable focal firm” (Gulati & Nickerson, 2008, p. 3).

In the general academic debate, trust as an incremental component of any IOR (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007; Kostis & Näsholm, 2020; Vlaar et al., 2007) is linked with an exchange between organizations and plays a significant role in risk reduction, as it relates to the reduction of subjective risk perception (Das & Teng, 1998; Das & Teng, 2001).¹ Other areas where trust acts as a reductor are: complexity or uncertainty (Das & Teng, 1998; Tomkins, 2001), the probability of opportunistic behavior (Das & Teng, 2001; Kostis & Näsholm, 2020) or the effects of potential tensions in IORs (Kostis & Näsholm, 2020). Some scholars indicate the role of trust as a safeguard in situation of insufficient contractual governance and as a means of relational governance (Dekker, 2004; Inkpen & Curall, 2004; Nooteboom, 1996; Poppo & Zenger, 2002) or “(...) non-market form of exchange governance between firms” (Alvarez, Barney & Bosse, 2003, p. 393).

Das and Teng (1998) differentiated between trust and confidence in interorganizational cooperation. Even though trust contributes to confidence, it is linked with expectations, whereas confidence is a perception of certainty in the partnership relation. The definition of trust elaborated by Tomkins (2001) is based on the belief of one party in the activities of another party without suspicion and in circumstances of a possible lack of information.

Conceptualizing trust in joint ventures as a decision to rely on another party taking into account certain amount of risk makes trust more universal and enables analysing at different levels: individual, group or organization (Inkpen & Curall, 2004) while being observable as behaviors (Kramer, 1999). Table 1 summarizes criteria that constitute the conceptualization of trust.

Table 1
Criteria and Meaning Contributing to the Conceptualization of Trust

Criterion	Meaning
Role	<p>A factor considered in the design of control systems (Langfield-Smith & Smith, 2003)</p> <p>Enhancing the probability of desired behavior (Das & Teng, 1998) or reduction of probability of opportunistic behavior (Das & Teng, 2001)</p> <p>Reduction of: risk, complexity, uncertainty (Das & Teng, 1998; 2001), loss (Inkpen & Curall, 2004)</p> <p>Managing the area of intangible human resources in IORs (Bijlsma-Frankema & Costa, 2005)</p> <p>Enabling interorganizational cooperation (Vlaar et al., 2007); enhancing cooperation (Fryxell et al., 2002); enabling coordination (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007)</p> <p>Enabling formation of alliances in early phase and moderation in the implementation stage (Kostis & Näsholm, 2020)</p>
Nature	<p>Fragile (Kramer, 1999; Yang et al., 2011)</p> <p>Requires resources over time (Das & Teng, 1998), initial cost is high (Lui & Ngo, 2004)</p> <p>Is a state of mind rather than action (Das & Teng, 2001) and is subjective (Nooteboom, 1996)</p> <p>Reciprocal (Das & Teng, 2001)</p> <p>Derives from experiences (Tomkins, 2001)</p> <p>Can exist without calculation (Tomkins, 2001)</p> <p>Multilevel phenomenon (Das & Teng, 2001)</p> <p>Develops incrementally (Inkpen & Curall, 2004)</p> <p>Based on “new similarities” (incl. formal and informal, codified or non-codified rules) (Bijlsma-Frankema & Costa, 2005)</p> <p>Has tangible and intangible components (Koch & Koch, 2018)</p> <p>Future oriented – predicting future performance (Koch & Koch, 2018)</p> <p>Different intensities (Kostis, 2020)</p>
Types	<p>Category-based, role-based and rule-based (Kramer, 1999)</p> <p>Goodwill trust, competence trust (Das & Teng, 2001)</p> <p>Swift trust (Tomkins, 2001; Schiffing et al., 2020)</p> <p>Cognitive-based or affect-based (Das & Teng, 2001; Fryxell et al., 2002)</p> <p>Contractual trust (Langfield-Smith & Smith, 2003)</p> <p>Calculus-based, relational and institution-based (Dekker, 2004)</p> <p>Character-based, process-based, institution-based (Bijlsma-Frankema & Costa, 2005; Pavlou, 2002)</p> <p>Calculative and non-calculative (incl. i.e. intuition) (Lumineau, 2014)</p> <p>Intangible and tangible trust (Koch & Koch, 2018)</p> <p>Partnership trust: agreement-driven, knowledge-driven, “swim or sink together” (Shin et al., 2020)</p>

2.2. Distrust

Contrary to trust, distrust has been not researched to such an extent (Six & Latusek, 2023). Scholars (Kostis & Näsholm, 2020; Vlaar et al., 2007), refer to the definition by Lewicki et al. (1998) stating that distrust is “confident negative expectations regarding another’s conduct”. Conceptual relations between trust and distrust remain an open question both in interpersonal relations (Mayer & Mussweiler 2011) as well as in interorganizational relations (Bijlsma-Frankema, Sitkin & Weibel, 2015; Gustafsson et al., 2021) and interorganizational settings (Guo, Lumineau & Lewicki, 2017). In the trust literature, three different perspectives on how trust and distrust relate to each other can be found: (1) trust and distrust as two ends of the same conceptual continuum, (2) trust and distrust as opposites but with neutral ground in between, and (3) trust and distrust as related yet distinct concepts. Even though traditionally distrust was conceptualized as the opposite of trust, recent studies posit that despite their naturally polarized definitions, they are in fact separable and distinct (Dimoka, 2010; Komiak & Benbasat, 2008; Moody et al., 2014; Mthombeni & Chizema, 2022; Oomsels, 2019; Saunders, Dietz & Thornhill, 2014). They can also co-exist within the very same relationships having high or low intensity simultaneously (Sitkin & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2018). Distrust has been defined as a “lack of confidence in the other, a concern that the other may act so as to harm one, that he does not care about one’s welfare or intends to act harmfully, or is hostile” (Grovier, 1994, p. 240).

As indicated by Lewicka and Zakrzewska-Bielawska (2022) the majority of studies on distrust show that it has mostly negative connotations. It may manifest in poor information and knowledge exchange between partners (Vlaar et al., 2007) and withholding (Kostis et al., 2021). Scholars elaborate on the negative effects of distrust, with it manifested in imposing additional protection (Tomkins, 2001); safeguarding, bypassing and development of alternative strategies (Kostis et al., 2021). Despite its restrictive nature (Vlaar et al., 2007), distrust as an organizing principle may have its “bright side” (Kostis, 2020), fostering a necessary dose of suspicion and alertness in relationships (Kostis & Näsholm, 2020) or making parties’ responsibilities transparent “on paper” and limiting any “gray zones” (Kostis et al., 2021). Distrust may act as a kind of remedy for “rose colored glasses” – a symbol of excessive optimism and too much trust put in the relationship. Table 2 summarizes the dimensions that constitute the conceptualization of distrust.

Table 2
Criteria and Meaning Contributing to the Conceptualization of Distrust

Criterion	Meaning
Role	“Enables healthy suspicion” (Lumineau, 2014), Facilitation of uncertainty management through alternatives (Kostis & Näsholm, 2020), Reduction of negative consequences of trust (Kostis et al., 2021)
Nature	State of suspicion is an incremental part (Kramer, 1999), Restricting nature (Vlaar et al., 2007), Stemming from incongruent values (Kostis & Näsholm, 2020)
Types	Category-based distrust – social categorization of individuals (Kramer, 1999); Interpersonal and institutional distrust – each divided into: ability-based distrust, integrity-based distrust, benevolence-based distrust (Bachman & Hanappi-Egger, 2012), Calculative and non-calculative (including intuition) (Lumineau, 2014), swift distrust (Schiffeling et al., 2020),

2.3. Control

While trust has been identified as a key resource in successful alliances, recent research indicates that it can lead to improved effectiveness only if coupled with effective control processes (Möllering, 2001, 2005; Long, 2010). The relationship between trust and control is characterized by tensions and contradictions. In particular, the literature identifies a lack of knowledge regarding how managers effectively balance their control and trust-building activities in practice (Long & Weibel, 2018); and – given the co-existence of trust and distrust – how trust or distrust between partners influences their control decisions and practices (Gulati & Nickerson, 2008). Recent studies also show that trust can be not only an asset, but also a liability in IORs which may create lock-in (Möllering & Sydow, 2019; Swärd, 2016). Control and institutionalized distrust have also been identified as mechanisms that may help avoid lock-in and maintain trust at an appropriate level (Möllering & Sydow, 2019)

Overall, control plays a significant role in IORs mainly by reducing risks, but also by impacting different aspects of IORs: confidence (Das & Teng, 1998), coordination (Das & Teng, 2001; Dekker, 2004; Reed, 2001), especially via formalization (Vlaar et al., 2007), as well as the achievement of strategies and goals (Inkpen & Curall, 2004). As an organization needs to specify goals, goal setting is treated as a social control mechanism, as it involves actors in interactions therefore enabling them to better understand each other in the process (Das & Teng, 1998). With reference to goals, control is not only a “checklist”, but may serve as a motivational factor, accompanied by incentives (Dekker, 2004). In their research on CEO-board of directors relations with reference to strategic alliance formation, Gulati

and Westphal (1999, p. 476) note “(...) the board is viewed as an efficient control device that can help align management decision making with shareholders’ interests”.

Control may also function in organizations as a routinization mechanism for certain fields or activities, such as learning (Das & Teng, 1998). In their research on IORs between small and large companies, Vélez, Sánchez and Álvarez-Dardet (2008) identified three main types of control: (1) actions, (2) results, (3) personnel-cultural control along with specific control mechanisms, i.e. control scorecards, feedback control, evaluation system, norms and procedures limiting actions. Table 3 summarizes the criteria and meanings contributing to the conceptualization of control.

Table 3
Criteria and Meanings Contributing to the Conceptualization of Control

Criterion	Meaning
Role	<p>“Building confidence in partner cooperation through enhancing predictability of goals” (Das & Teng, 1998)</p> <p>Reduction of risk (Das & Teng, 2001)</p> <p>Facilitation of coordination (Das & Teng, 2001; Dekker, 2004; Reed, 2001); co-ordination (Reed, 2001)</p> <p>Countermeasures towards a partner’s powerful market position (Handfield & Bechtel, 2002)</p> <p>Helps better interpretation of a partner’s behavior (Vlaar et al., 2007)</p> <p>Enables knowledge sharing and interaction in offshoring projects (Karlsen et al., 2021)</p>
Nature	<p>May require high expenses (Das & Teng, 1998)</p> <p>“More proactive and interventionist” (Das & Teng, 2001, p. 254)</p> <p>Formal control can be cybernetic, while social – not pre-specified in terms of output or behavior (Fryxell et al., 2002)</p> <p>Depends on codified shared rules and expectations (Bijlsma-Frankema & Costa, 2005)</p> <p>Can change during time, depending on the gap between expected and actual performance (Karlsen et al., 2021)</p>
Types	<p>Formal – behavior, output, Informal – social/clan, External measure-based and internal value-based (Das & Teng, 2001)</p> <p><i>Controlling the partner and the alliance per se</i> (Das & Teng, 2001)</p>

3. Review Method

Kraus, Breier and Dasí-Rodríguez (2020) highlighted the issue of quality in systematic literature reviews, as it affects the editorial process. Addressing the call for more rigorous systematic literature reviews, we followed the framework proposed by Kraus et al. (2020). To identify relevant publications, we relied on the Scopus database which has been indicated as one of the possible valuable sources for literature reviews (Kraus et al., 2020). We decided to rely on the Scopus database for two reasons: (1) its quality and

(2) its advanced search functions. Its wide range of functions enables better content extraction by narrowing the search by diversified criteria (i.e., type of paper, search field, subject area, etc.).

A review protocol (Table 4) was created to track the steps taken within review process. The research process started in March 2022 and ended on the 30th of June 2022.

Table 4

Review Protocol for the First Course of Systematic Literature Review – Scopus Search

Subject area:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business, management and accounting (all subfields) • decision sciences (all subfields) • economics, econometrics and finance (all subfields) • social sciences (all subfields) 	
Search in: article title, abstract, keywords	
Document type: article, conference paper and book chapter	
Source title: journal, conference proceeding, book chapter	
Language: English	
Keywords	
Trust	AND control (with variations: audit, auditing, monitoring, governance, supervision)
Distrust	AND control (with variations: audit, auditing, monitoring, governance, supervision)
Search within results function in Scopus:	Interorganizational cooperation alliance(s), strategic alliance(s), interorganiz(s)ational collaboration, interfirm cooperation, interfirm collaboration, interorganizational governance, interorganizational relations interorganizational collaboration

In the first step, we proceeded with search strings with the keywords “trust or distrust*” and “control*” – the latter with synonyms: “audit*”, “monitoring*”, “governance*”, “supervision*” in the titles, abstracts, or keywords of publications (Cao & Lumineau, 2015). We narrowed the subject area to four fields: 1) “business, management and accounting”, 2) “social sciences”, 3) “decision sciences” and 4) “economic, econometrics and finance”, as our research field concerns the areas. Our experience shows that relying only on the “social sciences” dimension could narrow the literature review results; on the other hand, not excluding any subject areas could produce a huge amount of irrelevant literature. In the scope of document types, we included: “article”, “conference paper” and “book chapter”, as the component of peer-reviews adds to search quality.

Further, we decided to extract the essential publications using the Scopus function “search in the results”. Additional search was conducted in two fields: 1) interorganizational cooperation–alliance(s), strategic alliance(s), interorganizational collaboration, interfirm cooperation, interfirm collaboration, interorganizational governance, interorganizational relations and 2) collaboration. We focused on English-language peer-reviewed academic publications. At the end of the Scopus search procedure 196 papers emerged.

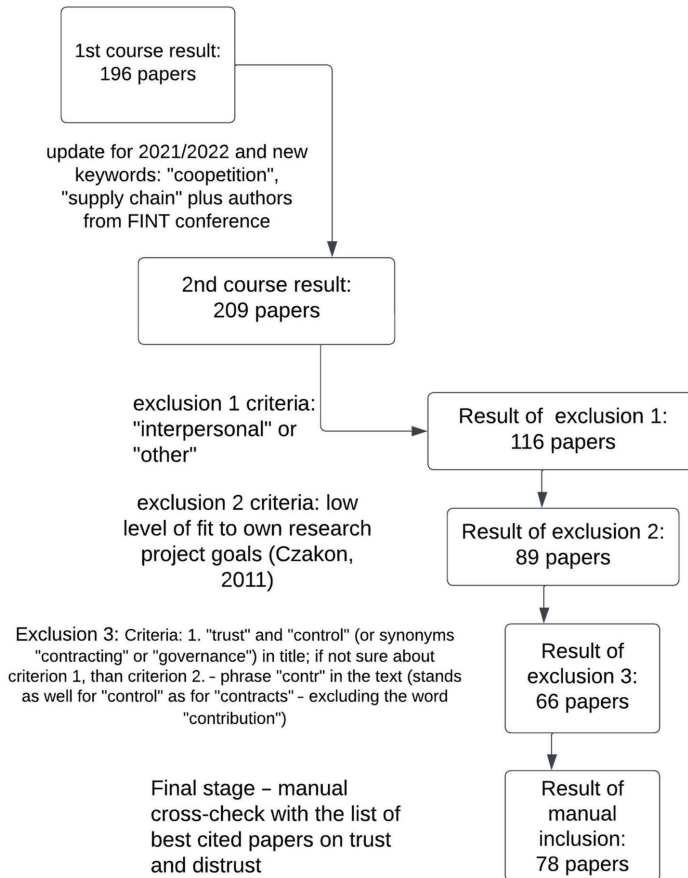
In the second step, we examined the abstracts of the remaining articles to determine the level of relationships they referred to. We defined two levels of relationships: interorganizational and interpersonal; papers impossible to match were tagged as “others”. Even though in the first step we included “interorganizational” as a keyword, some publications were strongly focused on the individual level of analysis (i.e., relations between managers responsible for a given area in the organization). As our scope of interest is at the interorganizational level, all papers tagged as “interpersonal” and “others” were excluded, which resulted in 116 papers remaining.

In the third step, we proceeded with literature extraction. This step ensures the quality of the literature review (Kraus et al., 2020) due to vast number of publications on trust/distrust in interorganizational relations. In this process, two rounds of exclusion were conducted. Firstly, we defined exclusion criteria following Czakon (2011, p. 58) who divided text stratification into three levels: “1) referring directly to the researched phenomena, 2) referring partly to the researched phenomena or 3) referring loosely to the researched phenomena”. We complied the articles into an Excel file, on the basis of the description of a few dimensions: (1) general research purpose, (2) terms used in relation to main constructs (trust, distrust, control), (3) key research areas (i.e., business, public sector), in terms of our own research goals. Respectively, we excluded publications with a low fit level to our research purpose. In the final exclusion we searched for the co-existence of keywords “trust/distrust” and “control” in the title (along with synonyms of “contracting” or “governance”). In case of uncertainty, we decided upon additional criterion – the phrase “contr*” – which could stand either for “control” or “contracts”. We were checking publication content in terms of the presence (using the word count tool) of the phrase, excluding the word “contribution” (which is not our scope of interest). As a result, 66 papers were left.

At the final stage, publications were also identified through reference checking (Booth et al., 2012) and by contacting experts working in the trust field (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008). Contacts with experts took place in March 2022 by project team members during an academic conference on trust studies. The selected experts were scholars who possess in-depth knowledge and experience in trust research. The papers that were found at the stage, were reviewed by full text analysis. In this way, another twelve

articles were added to the sample, resulting in a final total of 78 papers. The 12 included papers referred to, for instance, supply chain, R&D alliance, competition. As they had not been found in the earlier Scopus search, they enriched the final body of literature reviewed. The time scope of reviewed articles dates from 1996 until 2022.

Figure 1
Literature Review Process



4. Findings

4.1. Bibliometric Analysis

The bibliometric analysis focused on aspects that might be useful to researchers willing to further explore the field of interplay between trust, distrust and control.

We might state that interest in the topic of relations between trust, distrust and control has been rather stable, resulting in single or a few publications appearing in any given year (see Figure 2). During the period, only 3 book chapters were published on the studied issue. One may notice a peak in the number of items published in 2021. This might be a weak signal of growing interest on the issue, especially when we consider the pandemic period of 2020–2021 that raised questions on the overall level of trust.

Figure 2
Distribution of Publications in 1996–2022

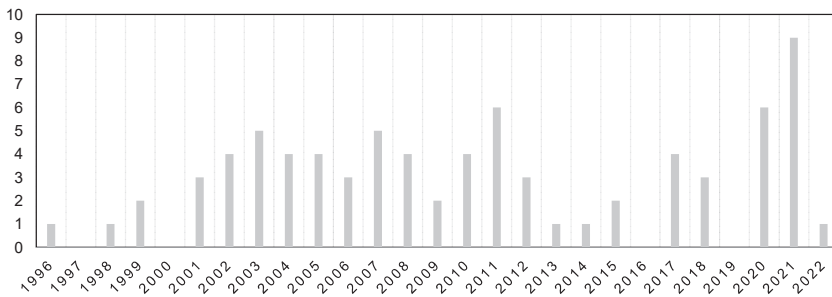


Figure 3 and 4 present types of analyzed papers. Most of them are empirical ones (67%) with a focus on the qualitative approach to research.

Figure 3
Breakdown by Paper Type of All Analyzed Publications

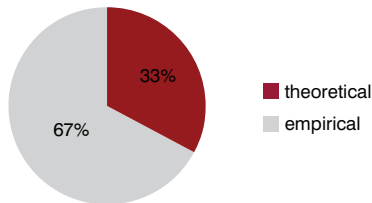


Figure 4
Breakdown by Research Type of All Analyzed Publications

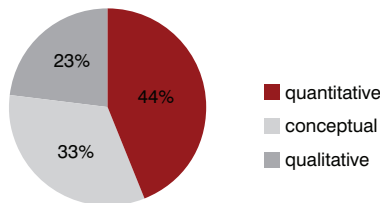


Table 5 shows the most frequently cited papers. Most of the publications are conceptual papers (60%). The most often cited article (3043 times) is theoretical one published in 2001 by Das and Teng, followed by Poppo and Zenger (2002) and once again Das and Teng (1998), with 2130 and 1918 citations, respectively. We can also see that most of the most cited documents concern trust and control (one theme) and trust and contracts (second theme). There is only one article that refers to distrust, however it is the fourth most cited paper which confirms a growing interest in the concept.

Table 5
Top 10 Cited Papers

Authors	Title	Year	Type of paper	Type of research	Citations (Scopus)
Das, T.K. and Teng, B.-S.	Trust, control, and risk in strategic alliances: An integrated framework	2001	Theoretical	Conceptual	3043
Poppo, L., and Zenger, T.	Do formal contracts and relational governance function as substitutes or complements?	2002	Empirical	Quantitative	2130
Das, T.K. and Teng, B.-S.	Between trust and control: Developing confidence in partner cooperation in alliances	1998	Theoretical	Conceptual	1918
Kramer, R.M.	Trust and distrust in organizations: Emerging perspectives, enduring questions	1999	Theoretical	Conceptual	1822
Dekker, H.C.	Control in inter-organizational relationships: Evidence on appropriate concerns and coordination requirements	2004	Empirical	Mixed-method	1430
Nooteboom, B.	Trust, opportunism and governance: A process and control model	1996	Theoretical	Conceptual	1080
Tomkins, C.	Interdependencies, trust and information in relationships, alliances and networks	2001	Theoretical	Conceptual	1044

Table 5 – continued

Authors	Title	Year	Type of paper	Type of research	Citations (Scopus)
Inkpe, A.C. and Currall, S.C.	The coevolution of trust, control and learning in joint ventures	2004	Theoretical	Conceptual	986
Handfield, R.B., and Bechtel, C	The role of trust and relationship structure in improving supply chain responsiveness	2002	Empirical	Quantitative	588
Lui, S.S. and Ngo, H.	The role of trust and contractual safeguards on cooperation in non-equity alliances	2004	Empirical	Quantitative	582

The overview of academic journals included in our sample shows a prevalence of business and management journals. On the basis of Figure 5, the 12 most relevant journals represent only 40% of the total number of articles, which confirms the spread of publications among many outlets.

Figure 5

Overview of Journals that Included at Least Two Papers from the Sample



4.2. Content Analysis

Content analysis was conducted by coding papers using the MAXQDA software. Codes were related to research questions and the main purpose of the paper. Figure 6 presents the code tree with its main codes, they include the aggregated number of coded paragraphs.

Figure 6
Content of code tree – main codes

Code	Number of coded segments
Control	375
Distrust	76
Distrust-control relation	13
Governance	82
IOR	84
Lack of trust	18
Mistrust	11
Performance	31
Risk	51
Trust	543
Trust-control relations debate	491
Trust-control-innovation	14
Trust-distrust relation	107
Trust-distrust-control relation	25
TOTAL	1921

As trust, distrust and control are complex constructs, those codes were divided into subcodes. Subcodes were related to issues such as: definition, mechanisms, effects, nature, types, role. Relations between trust, distrust and control constructs were treated as stand-alone codes. A quick glance at the general code tree leads us to the following conclusions:

- High visibility of trust in academic debate, control in second place and distrust being marginalized,
- As for relations including two constructs, there is prevalence of the trust-control debate, with trust-distrust taking the second position, trust-distrust taking the third position, with distrust-control marginalized,
- Marginal debate that includes the three concepts together.

The prevalence of trust and control are visible in different dimensions in the graphic form of a word cloud extracted from MAXQDA. Figure 7 depicts keywords on the basis of their frequency in all codes and subcodes, where the size of each word in the cloud is related to a higher frequency of mentions.

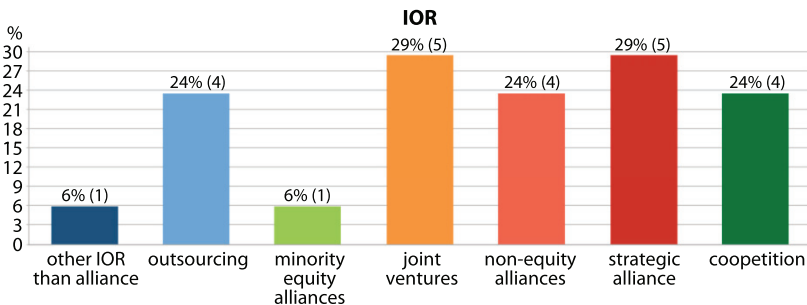
Figure 7
Word Cloud of Main Codes and Their Subcodes



Source: own analysis in MAXQDA.

In the general content analysis, our scope of interest also included IOR types as research areas. Our analysis of documents with subcodes related to a main IOR code showed that 29% of documents (where subcodes appeared) belonged to strategic alliance and joint ventures; non-equity alliances, competitions and outsourcing being ranked the second position. Minority equity alliance and other forms than alliance could benefit from more research.

Figure 8
Types of IOR in Trust, Distrust and Control Research



4.2.1. Different Understandings of Trust and Control

The majority of scholars' efforts have been devoted to research on trust and control relations. Trust and control have been subjects of debate in the IORs research field, as they are "(...) the two contributory factors of confidence in partner cooperation" (Das & Teng, 1998, p. 494).

Firstly, there is ambiguity around the meanings of trust and control, as has been noted by Gallivan and Depledge (2003). Different meanings of trust result from varied theoretical approaches. Tomkins (2001) linked his view with the agency theory; whereas Lui and Ngo (2004) drew it from transaction cost theory. Faems et al. (2008) indicated a relational perspective stemming from social exchange theory. Puranam and Vanneste (2009) referred to the *sociological tradition* in research. Schepker et al. (2014, p. 215) positioned trust in the *capabilities and relational contracts* theoretical field. Susarla, Holzhaecker and Krishnan (2020) indicated that theoretical lenses impact research on trust: economic lenses focus on calculative trust and future output, whereas social lenses expose a relational side with vulnerability and past issues. Furthermore, trust as *relational governance* has been operationalized with features such as: trustworthiness, fairness, keeping promises or good reputation (Cao & Lumineau, 2015, p. 24).

Secondly, what makes the debate on the trust-control relation more complicated, is the conceptualization of trust as a means of control. Gundlach and Cannon (2009), Wang, Yeung and Zhang (2011) as well as Yang, Zhou and Jiang (2011) have referred to trust directly as a mechanism of control, whereas Pavlou (2002) used the term *control trust* (meaning the one based on institutionalized procedures, for instance: monitoring, accreditation or legal bonds). Vélez et al. (2008) clearly state that trust should not be viewed as means of control, as it is based on belief and a positive approach to partners and its primary role is not to influence a person's behavior.

Thirdly, vast amount of research on trust-control relations has been devoted to formal contracts. This might be an effect of previous research on "formal control as a mechanism of governing organizational relations" (Bijlsma-Frankema & Costa, 2005, p. 263). In the study of supply chain responsiveness, Handfield and Bechtel (2002) did not support the hypothesis stating that detailed contracts would contribute to a buyer's greater trust perception of a supplier. Mellewigt et al. (2007) noted that formal contracts – defined as legal commitments – have been regarded mainly as a means of control, therefore neglecting their second role of coordination. The authors contributed to the debate on formal contracts and trust by shedding light on the duality of functions that have the same goal, namely the predictability of behavior.

4.2.2. Interplay Between Trust and Control in Interorganizational Relations

Research concepts in the field of trust and control in IORs have included the impact of the interplay on: benefits to exchange (Puranam & Vanneste, 2009), confidence in partner cooperation (Das & Teng, 1998), coordination (Dekker, 2004), long-term orientation (Yang et al., 2011), opportunism (Yang et al., 2011; Cao & Lumineau, 2015), performance of international joint ventures (Fryxell et al., 2002), positive expectations (Bijlsma-Frankema & Costa, 2005), relationship performance (Cao & Lumineau, 2015; Gulati & Nickerson, 2008; Vlaar et al., 2007), responsiveness of supply chain (Handfield & Bechtel, 2002), risk perception (Das & Teng, 2001; Pavlou, 2002), repairing relationship after a conflict situation (Malhotra & Lumineau, 2011), satisfaction (Cao & Lumineau, 2015; Lui & Ngo, 2004; Pavlou, 2002).

Relations between trust and control do not fit a universal frame. Intuitively, one might think of the two concepts as opposites, but the issue is complex. Firstly, different types of trust and control can be considered as part of the debate on their relation. Secondly, *trust* is also referred to as relational governance. One must be mindful of the nuances while exploring the field. For instance, Langfield-Smith and Smith (2003) bring us to the point where the role of trust is to provide control in a relationship. Similarly, Puranam and Vanneste (2009) explored the relation between *trust* and *governance mechanisms* — the latter defined as formal governance, like contracts or ownership. Thirdly, the borders between trust and control may not be as sharp as one would think. Bijlsma-Frankema and Costa (2005), differentiating between formal and social control, indicated similarities between trust and control (alignment of mutual expectations and interaction) along with their dissimilarities (enforcement of agreement). Puranam and Vanneste (2009) stated that both trust and formal governance create the foundations for exchange in relationships and enable coordination and mitigation of conflicts stemming from unexpected changes. In her longitudinal study on client-contractor relationships, Badenfelt (2010) noted some implicit control mechanisms that may be treated as tools of power over partners to maintain a desired level of trust.

Based on this systematic literature review, we have identified four types of relations between the two phenomena: where trust and control are substitutes, complements, simultaneous and where trust acts as a moderator/mediator. The general dispute has been focused on the following main question for many years: do trust and control substitute or complement each other? As Alvarez et al. (2004) explained, the substitution effect appears when two governance devices address the same need in a similar way and their joint interaction effect is negative, whereas complementary effects result in a joint positive outcome. Puranam and Vanneste (2009, p. 16) specified two effects crucial to the relation: (1) a direct crowding out effect

(reducing trust in the relationship because of complex formal governance) and (2) an indirect crowding out effect, when complex formal governance “(...) weakens the positive association between the ex-ante trust and trust in the relationship”. They differentiate them from the substitution relationship between trust and formal governance: “(...) trust lowers the marginal benefits of governance complexity, and vice versa” (Puranam & Vanneste, 2009, p. 23). Schepker et al. (2014, p. 218) conclude: “(...) our review indicates that there is more support for the complementarity of relational capabilities and contracts than there is for them being substitutes”, but they do refer to the general terms *control* and *trust*. Grafton and Mundy (2017) challenged the debate by addressing “the myth of trust” with their research outcomes. They showed that, in a cooperative alliance, companies may decide upon a lower level of formal contracts not because of any reliance on trust, but because of an alternative approach – relational contracts, which are substitutes for formal contracts. Globerman and Nielsen (2006) noticed the macro aspects of environment of international alliances, being public policies (i.e. concerning infrastructure), which could substitute for “private” trust among parties. Gulati and Nickerson (2008, p. 1) were among those who reframed the debate on the trust-control relation, stating “(...) the question is not whether trust is a substitute or complement to formal governance, but rather when and how it may serve as both simultaneously”. As Bijlsma-Frankema and Costa (2005, p. 263) pointed out, trust not only “lubricates relations between partners and organizational processes”, but similar benefits can be achieved with control mechanisms. Alvarez et al. (2004) hypothesized that trust may be crucial as a governance form for the company in its relationship with its first partner, but contracts may matter more in the case of their next partnership.

Mellewigt et al. (2007) took another perspective – instead of exploring a direct relationship between trust and control, they hypothesized about trust as a mediator: (1) between contractual complexity and control concerns and (2) between contractual complexity and coordination concerns. Contractual complexity was defined as the number of provisions used in contractual arrangements. Other researchers based their research models on specific types of trust or/and control. Fryxell et al. (2002) used affect-based trust as a moderating factor between social control and international joint venture performance, whereas in the same paper they treated cognitive-based trust as a control variable. Lui and Ngo (2004) explored the moderating effects of competence and goodwill trust on contractual safeguards and performance satisfaction. In Malhotra and Lumineau (2011), competence-based trust and goodwill trust were mediators between contract choices and relational outcomes.

4.2.3. Relations Between Control and Distrust

Relations between distrust and control in IORs have not been thoroughly explored, however there are few scholars who have touched upon the area (Connelly et al., 2012; Gulati & Westphal, 1999; Koolwijk, van Oel & Bel, 2021; Malhotra & Lumineau, 2011).

Work by Yang et al. (2011) on the trust-formal control relationship considered the social aspect of weak or strong relational ties between parties as a critical factor for determining the interpretation of formal control and its effects. According to the authors, there are two possibilities (Yang et al., 2011, p. 89):

- a) when a structural framework is needed, formal control and trust mutually promote each other, and their joint effects on the relationship are better than individual;
- b) when a structural framework has already been established, formal control indicates distrust, and its joint effects with trust have a worse impact than their individual effects.

Even though the aim in Yang et al. (2011) was to highlight different relations between trust and control, depending on the type of relationship, they also referred to distrust. Distrust appeared there as an effect or formal control in the case of strong relational ties, which does not happen in weak relational ties. Similarly to Yang et al. (2011), the discussion in Malhotra and Lumineau (2011) notes that even a suggestion of contracts may signal distrust in the other party and therefore undermine the process of trust building. Bachman and Hanappi-Egger (2012) found out that interpersonal trust and institutional distrust may coexist in a productive manner in the context of corporate governance between the supervisory and executive boards in German and Austrian companies. What is important, they referred to the co-existence of the two constructs. This is contrary to a simultaneous relation, which – as hypothesized – could be detrimental to the productivity of the organization. Schiffing, Hannibal, Fan and Tickle (2020) highlighted the simultaneous existence of swift trust and swift distrust in cooperation in humanitarian operations. “As with the simultaneous nature of cooperation, we find that swift trust and swift distrust may simultaneously facilitate cooperation and help with managing uncertainty in hastily formed networks of organizations” (Schiffing et al., 2020, p. 18).

4.2.4. Relations Between Trust, Distrust and Control

The three concepts: trust, distrust and control have been treated differently in terms of their place in the debate, with trust dominating over others. Some scholars (Connelly et al., 2012; Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007; Lumineau, 2011; Vlaar et al., 2007; Yang et al., 2011) made a step forward and escaped the main framework of trust-control relations by adding the component of distrust.

According to Vlaar et al. (2007), research on trust/distrust and control should be related to performance assessments. Trust/distrust and control should not be the final goal, instead their role in achieving a certain purpose should be discussed. Their research model of trust-distrust-formalization (including coordination and control) encompasses both performance and interpretation of other party's behaviors by managers. Vlaar et al. (2007, p. 417) concluded: "Relationships in which high levels of trust are accompanied by low levels of distrust and/or formal control entail higher performance risks than relationships in which high levels of trust are accompanied by higher levels of dis-trust and/or formal control".

Referring to the model by Vlaar et al. (2007), Karlsen, Solli-Sæther, Oorschot and Vaagaasar (2014, p. 55) commented: "In the presence of distrust, trust and control should be substitutes, whereas for decreasing levels of distrust, trust and control enable each other." Connelly et al. (2012) argued that scholars seeking an understanding of trust-based governance nature in IORs have to measure trust and distrust independently. They claimed that contract specificity significantly decreases only in the presence of trust and no distrust in context. Lumineau (2014) took a further step, building his conceptual proposals on trust, distrust and control. He made a vital contribution in the field in terms of his conceptual work, by exploring contractual control and coordination in relation to trust and distrust (calculative and non-calculative types) with their positive and negative aspects.² An important remark in this context was also the existence of "(...) potential asymmetries of trust and distrust between the partners, both in terms of quality – for example, calculative or non-calculative – and in terms of levels" (Lumineau, 2014, p. 1569). Lumineau (2014) proposed a matrix of directions of influence of contractual control and contractual coordination on trust and distrust, respectively, to their types. Even though his research is a vital input to the body of conceptual papers, it was also limited to a universal trust and control meaning, without the inclusion of contextual factors (such as societal values, national and organizational culture) and contractual governance. He called for empirical research including context factors and the role of information processing systems for building trust and distrust.

5. Discussion and Future Research

This study contributes to the research area on the interplay between trust, distrust and control in interorganizational relations. It synthesized relevant studies and developed a research protocol to organize the existing literature. The paper fulfills its aim by exploring the literature in four fields: (1) the understanding of trust, distrust and control, (2) the interplay between trust and control, (3) the relation between control and distrust, and (4) the relation between trust, distrust and control.

Our systematic literature review revealed five research gaps. The first two research gaps refer to the common area of trust, distrust and control. The next three research gaps exist in the relation between two constructs: (3) trust-distrust, (4) trust-control and (5) distrust-control.

The first research gap is based on the conclusion regarding the scarce number of publications (78) in the analyzed period of 26 years (1996–2022). The annual number of publications is rather stable, though we can observe both a peak in 2021 and also years without any publications. This poses a question about the future potential of investigations at the crossroad of three phenomena: trust, distrust and control. On the one hand, this potential may be significant, as a relatively low number of publications have appeared. On the other hand, the question is why the field has not been explored enough, taking into account the presence of trust in business environment narratives. This issue is worth exploring, as: “(...) distrust appears to be the default condition in IOR contracting because organizational decision makers are unable to determine *ex ante* whether or not their partner will act opportunistically” (Connelly et al., 2012, p. 9). As our bibliometric analysis reveals, the management discipline is the most popular field of study on trust, distrust and control, which may suggest that such research would contribute to management practices and be valuable to organizational process design practices. On the other hand, this issue moves from strict management and business into other areas, such as humanitarian aid (Schiffing et al., 2020), organization of events (Adongo, Kim & Elliot, 2019) as well as university-industry collaboration (Bstieler, Hemmert & Barczak, 2015). As we showed in our content analysis, other IOR forms (more than the most common strategic alliances or joint ventures) also deserve more research.

The second research gap refers to the most cited paper type, the conceptual. This may suggest a need for stronger theoretical foundation for this area. Future research could focus on conceptual models embracing the three phenomena: trust, distrust and control, because the majority of literature covers relations between trust and control/contracts. This leaves distrust abandoned as a concept and so opens future avenues of research into its relations with trust and control in interorganizational exchange. Proposing conceptual models linking the three components could give new impetus for research in, as compared to previous years.

The third research gap touches the issue of asymmetry between trust and distrust, as noted by Lumineau (2014). Our qualitative analysis of papers brought scarce evidence of distrust mechanisms and types, in comparison to trust.³

The fourth research gap has been identified in the trust and control nexus, as most studies focused on formal control (i.e., contracts). This is contrary to the conclusion that: “these are often incomplete and that other mechanisms are employed to manage inter-firm relations (...)” (Grafton & Mundy, 2017: 24). The formal type of control is most obvious and

common, therefore it would be more challenging for researchers to dig into informal control types. It would be interesting to inquire whether informal control could have more common points with trust or distrust. Another future avenue would be to refer to Grafton and Mundy (2017, p. 25) and urge that trust – as an analytical device in inter-firm relations – should be investigated through the lens of economics, rather than “the narrow management perspective traditionally adopted in the control literature”.

Additionally, our findings highlight the need for future research to gain more insights into relations between distrust and control in IORs, as only few studies have investigated this nexus. Distrust has recently surfaced as an autonomous research subject (Guo et. al., 2017; Nienaber, Woodcock & Liotopoulos, 2021), so our understanding of its interplay with control remains limited.

This review study has its limitations. Firstly, the systematic literature review is focused on interorganizational relations, excluding the literature on the interpersonal dimension of trust. Secondly, our systematic review was based only on the Scopus database. Expanding repositories could enlarge the body of publications to be analyzed. Therefore, future work could include another large database, for instance the Web of Science. This inclusion would be in line with the guidelines in Kraus (2020) on the use of two databases. Thirdly, only English language publications were subject to analysis. Adding publications in other languages (e.g., Polish) could result in more publications being brought into the analysis. This would address the call in Lumineau (2014) for research to include contextual factors, such as national culture, societal values, as well as historical circumstances (i.e., different experiences in Central Europe and West Europe in the years after the Second World War). Finally, the review has been carried out with considerable caution and according to a research protocol, even though we naturally cannot eliminate the possibility of overlooking single articles.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Speaking about the general debate it is worth mentioning Hagedoorn et al. (2008, p. 89) who found out that “(...) interorganizational trust does not have to develop in such a situation, where partners are substantially different in terms of size and where both groups of companies play such a different role in the innovation process”. Their research was conducted in a specific context of partnerships between small entrepreneurial biotechnology firms and big pharmaceutical companies.
- ² Distrust may also have positive effects, as it “Supports monitoring of vulnerabilities, Encourages constructive skepticism, enables healthy suspicion” (Lumineau, 2014, p. 6).
- ³ According to the own analysis in MAXQDA, only 28 fragments were coded as “distrust mechanisms”, while “trust mechanisms” were present in 75 paragraphs.

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