When Does Trust in Coworkers Matter? Exploring the Role of Perceived Task Interdependence

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Organizations often promote trust in coworkers to enhance employee effectiveness, but such efforts are not always successful. Drawing on social exchange theory, we propose that perceived task interdependence moderates the relationship between trust in coworkers and positive individual outcomes. Specifically, trust in coworkers has a stronger positive effect on task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and job satisfaction when perceived task interdependence is high. Using data from 297 employees and their supervisors, our findings support this hypothesis. These results underscore the significance of contextual factors, such as task interdependence, in maximizing the positive impact of trust in coworkers within organizations.

Keywords: trust in coworkers, perceived task interdependence, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Trust is defined as a psychological state that comprises a willingness to accept vulnerability based on a positive expectation of the trustee (Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). It plays a crucial role in the workplace, functioning as both a lubricant for organizational operations and a form of social capital that enhances individual effectiveness (Ferris et al., 2009; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Korsgaard et al., 2008). Grounded in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that individuals tend to reciprocate favorable treatment, prior research consistently shows that trust leads to more favorable job attitudes and encourages productive behaviors, such as higher job satisfaction, improved task performance, and increased organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Legood et al., 2021).

Although valuable insights have been gained regarding the benefits of trust, several questions remain underexplored and require further investigation. Previous studies have shown that employees distinguish between various exchange partners in the workplace, including top management, immediate supervisors, and their colleagues (e.g., Aryee et al., 2002; Lavelle et al., 2007; Mach et al., 2010). Whitener (1998) similarly noted that employees can develop trust in at least two different referents: specific individuals, such as supervisors and coworkers, and the organization as a whole. In addition, Costigan and colleagues (1998) proposed that trust is a complex concept comprising both vertical (i.e., trust in top management and

supervisors) and horizontal (i.e., trust in coworkers) dimensions. In the workplace, employees may develop varying levels of trust in each of these referents based on their interactions and expectations (Lavelle et al., 2007). However, previous research has predominantly focused on trust in leadership (i.e., trust in upper-level leaders or direct supervisor, e.g., Burke et al., 2007; Yang & Mossholder, 2010), leaving the impact of trust in coworkers relatively understudied in the trust literature (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Lau & Liden, 2008; Parker et al., 2006). Yet, examining trust in coworkers is increasingly relevant, especially as many organizations adopt flatter structures with fewer managerial layers (Dirks & Skarlicki, 2009). In team-oriented environments characterized by cooperative tasks, employees must trust, collaborate with, and coordinate effectively with one another to perform their work successfully (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2006; Lau & Liden, 2008). Additionally, coworkers often serve as the most important informal network within organizations (Tan & Lim, 2009). Employees tend to share work-related ideas and problems with coworkers they trust, rather than supervisors, subordinates, or family members (Stevenson & Gilly, 1991). Moreover, the shift from well-defined individual tasks to more complex, ambiguous, and collaborative work has further heightened the importance of interpersonal relationships among coworkers (Kilduff & Brass, 2010).

While researchers have increasingly acknowledged the importance of trust in coworkers (e.g., Dirks & de Jong, 2022; Ferres et al., 2004), it remains unclear which contextual factors influence how trust in coworkers functions, especially considering that trust does not exist in a vacuum (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2011; Misztal, 2011; Ozer et al., 2014). In this study, we propose that perceived task interdependence—the degree to which people must closely interact with coworkers to complete their own task—serves as a key contextual contingency that shapes the effectiveness of trust in coworkers. When task interdependence is high, employees often rely heavily on their coworkers for information, resources, or assistance with task completion (Ozer et al., 2014). In such contexts, trust in coworkers plays a vital role in facilitating open communication, promoting cooperation, and reducing conflict. Employees who trust each other are more likely to seek and offer help, share feedback, and work collaboratively, which can enhance individual positive attitudes and promote productive behaviors. In contrast, when perceived task interdependence is low, the workplace context doesn't demand much coworker interaction (Lin 2007; Yu & Takahashi, 2021). In such contexts, fewer situations demand cooperation, information sharing, or joint problem-solving. Thus, relationships with coworkers may be peripheral, which reduces the importance of trust as a driver of individual attitudes and behavior.

Accordingly, we believe that this study contributes to the growing body of trust research by examining the effects of trust in coworkers on important individual outcomes and by identifying perceived task interdependence as a critical boundary condition. In doing so, it responds to calls for research that investigates the contextual factors shaping the impact of trust in coworkers (Dirks & de Jong, 2022) and helps explain previously mixed findings on the relationship between trust in coworkers and individual effectiveness. By incorporating perceived task interdependence, this study offers greater explanatory power for understanding the influence of trust in coworkers on individual attitudes and behaviors. These findings can help organizations develop more targeted and actionable insights. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships examined in this study.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Trust in Coworkers and Individual Effectiveness

According to Blau (1964), social exchange "refers to voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others" (p. 91). Social exchange theory was developed to explain social relationships as processes of reciprocal exchanges between individuals. Its central mechanism suggests that all social relationships are formed and sustained through a subjective evaluation of costs and benefits. For example, when individuals perceive that the costs of a relationship are greater than its benefits, they are likely to discontinue the relationship. Conversely, relationships in which perceived costs and benefits are balanced are considered equitable and are more likely to be maintained. Thus, a fundamental principle of social exchange theory is the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), which suggests that social interactions are inherently reciprocal. When this norm is

violated, such as when one party consistently fails to reciprocate, the relationship is likely to extinguish over time (Anderson & Williams, 1996; Gouldner, 1960; Masterson et al., 2000).

In organizational contexts, employees often approach social exchange relationships with a long-term perspective, expecting that reciprocity will unfold over time (Rousseau, 1989). Trust plays a critical role in facilitating these exchanges, as it reduces uncertainty about a partner's intentions and strengthens the perceived obligation to reciprocate (Colquitt et al., 2012). Therefore, social exchange theory offers a theoretical basis for understanding the role of trust in workplace relationships (Stinglhamber et al., 2006; Whitener et al., 1998).

Employees who perceive a high level of trust in their coworkers are more likely to experience positive emotions and a heightened sense of obligation to reciprocate by engaging in helping and supportive behaviors—commonly referred to as organizational citizenship behavior directed toward individuals (OCB-I). These positive emotions can also extend beyond interpersonal relationships. Specifically, trust in coworkers can foster positive feelings toward the organization that provides them with work environments with trustworthy employees or with a work climate where mutual trust can thrive (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). When many employees consistently exhibit such trust-based behaviors over time, the resulting positive affect and prosocial behavior may further spill over, strengthening organizational citizenship behavior directed toward the organization (OCB-O), such as working to improve its operation or demonstrating loyalty to it (Lee & Alle, 2002).

Beyond influencing OCB, trust in coworkers may also enhance task performance. Dirks (1999) argued that high-trust teams foster a sense of psychological safety, as employees are less concerned about being exploited by others and can therefore focus more fully on their work. Furthermore, because trust is inherently reciprocal, employees who trust their coworkers are more likely to receive both instrumental and emotional support, such as guidance, encouragement, and assistance with task-related challenges (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Dirks & Skarlicki, 2009; Liden et al., 2000). In contrast, when employees are unable to trust their coworkers, they experience higher levels of stress and strain (Spector & Jex, 1998), and their performance is hindered because they must allocate cognitive resources to monitoring and self-protective behaviors (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Empirical research supports the positive impact of trust in coworkers on both OCB and task performance. For instance, Colquitt et al.'s (2007) meta-analysis found moderate corrected correlations between trust in coworkers and both OCB ($r = .27$) and task performance ($r = .39$).

Affective theory of social exchange (Lawler, 2001) complements social exchange theory by explicitly incorporating emotion as part of the social exchange process. According to this theory, individuals who perceive favorable treatment are likely to experience positive emotions such as appreciation, happiness, and joy. They then seek to identify the source of these emotions to continue experiencing them. These positive emotions are attributed to the party responsible for them, which in turn strengthens feelings of solidarity toward that party. When employees trust their coworkers, they experience positive emotions not only toward their coworkers but also, over time, toward their jobs, which provide such pleasant relational work environments (Colquitt et al., 2007). Through this attribution process, trust in coworkers can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction (e.g. Lehmann-Willenbrock & Kauffeld, 2010; Redman et al., 2012). In a similar vein, Chiaburu and Harrison (2008) argued and found that employees are more likely to be satisfied with their job and less likely to leave their organization when a congenial social environment is created by their coworkers.

The Contextual Moderating Role of Perceived Task Interdependence

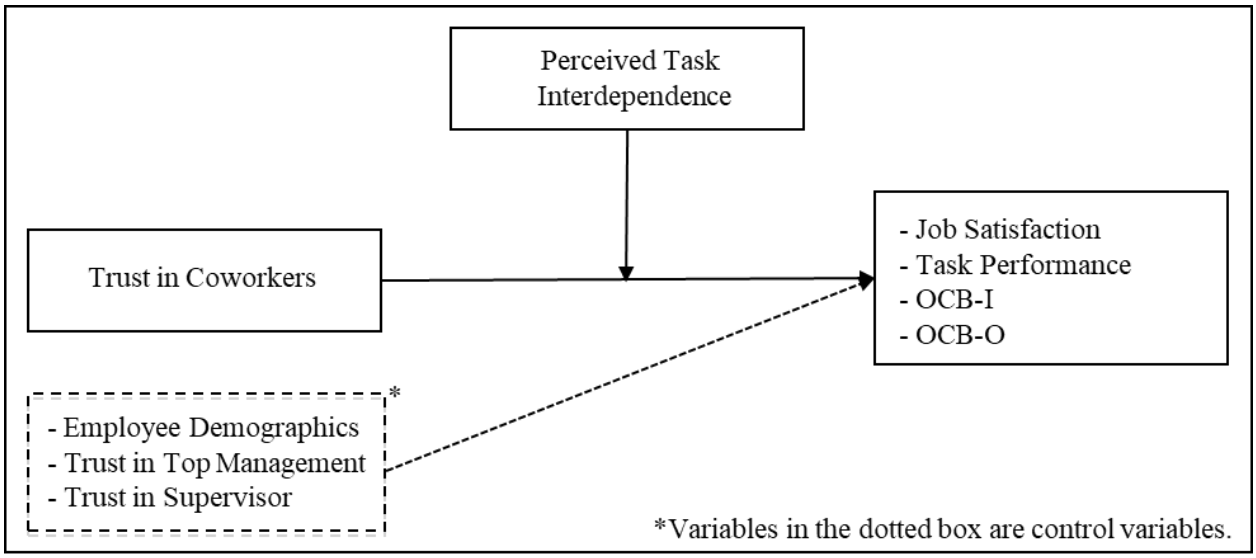
Perceived task interdependence refers to the degree to which employees rely on their coworkers for information, resources, or materials necessary to complete their own tasks (Van der Vegt et al., 2003), and can vary across individuals (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991; Van der Vegt et al., 2001). Prior studies have underscored the importance of perceived task interdependence, suggesting that highly interdependent tasks create more opportunities for interpersonal interaction and social exchange (e.g., Goo et al., 2022; Grant & Parker, 2009). Under conditions of high task interdependence, maintaining positive relationships with coworkers becomes particularly important (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

From a social exchange perspective, perceived task interdependence is likely to intensify the relationships of trust in coworkers with individual attitudes and behaviors. When tasks are highly interdependent, employees are more likely to expect support and coordination from their coworkers (Goo et al., 2022) and to develop confidence in their coworkers' reliability and willingness to reciprocate (Korsgaard et al., 2010). This dynamic fosters a norm of reciprocity, reinforcing the positive effects of trust in coworkers. Moreover, high interdependence introduces greater uncertainty and necessitates more coordination. Under such conditions, trust in coworkers reduces the need for constant monitoring, enhances psychological safety, and enables smoother collaboration.

Conversely, when perceived task interdependence is low, employees have less need to exchange information and resources with coworkers to accomplish their tasks (e.g., Campion et al., 1996). As a result, social interactions are reduced, and maintaining reciprocal relationships becomes less salient (Roberson, 2006). In such contexts, the influence of trust in coworkers is likely to be diminished. In fact, unsolicited help or resources from coworkers may be perceived as disruptive or unnecessary, rather than supportive, and thus may fail to enhance employees' positive attitudes and behavior (Yang & Chae, 2022). Therefore, it is expected that the positive effects of trust in coworkers on individual attitudes and behaviors will be stronger for those with higher levels of perceived task interdependence compared to those with lower levels. Building on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), we therefore propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1*: Perceived task interdependence moderates the positive effects of trust in coworkers on task performance (H1a), OCB-I (H1b), OCB-O (H1c), and job satisfaction (H1d), such that these positive effects become stronger as perceived task interdependence increases.*

FIGURE 1
MODEL OF HYPOTHESIZED RELATIONSHIPS



METHODS

Sample and Procedures

Data were collected from eight organizations in South Korea, representing various industries, including banking, civil services, hospitality and tourism, and manufacturing. One of the authors facilitated access to these organizations and, with the assistance of a designated contact person in each organization, distributed surveys to approximately 500 employees. A total of 297 completed surveys were returned. Supervisors of each work group were also asked to provide performance evaluations for the employees in their respective

group. All employee responses were successfully matched with their supervisors' performance ratings. Among the participating employees, 64% were male and 60% held a college degree or higher. Their average age was 37.91 years (standard deviation [*SD*] = 8.58).

Measures

This study employed a multi-source design in which two different sources reported on the study variables to reduce common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Specifically, employees reported their levels of trust in coworkers, perceived task interdependence, and job satisfaction, while their immediate supervisors rated their task performance, OCB-I, and OCB-O. All measures were translated into Korean using the back-translation procedures recommended by Brislin (1970) to ensure consistency. A five-point scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," was used for all study variables.

Trust in Coworkers

We used a three-item scale adapted from Butler (1991) to assess employee's trust in coworkers. Example item includes "I believe that my coworkers will deliver on their promises to me" (α = .96).

Perceived Task Interdependence

We focused on individual perceptions of interdependence (e.g., Christensen-Salem et al., 2021; Kim & Vandenberghe, 2018; Ramamoorthy & Flood, 2004) because individuals within a single team may perceive varying degrees of task interdependence. Perceived task interdependence was assessed using Van de Ven et al.'s (1976) five items. An example of task interdependence is the statement, "I have to work closely with my coworkers to do my work properly" and "I depend on my coworkers for the completion of my work" (α = .90).

Task Performance

Employees' task performance was evaluated by their direct supervisors using six items from the scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). Examples of these items include "This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in job description" and "This employee adequately completes assigned duties" (α = .89).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Employees were rated by their direct supervisors using Lee and Allen's (2002) OCB scale, which comprises eight items each for OCB-I and OCB-O. An example OCB-I item is "This employee willingly gives his/her time to help others who have work-related problems" (α = .92), and an example OCB-O item is "This employee offers ideas to improve the functioning of the organization" (α = .91).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was assessed using Quinn and Shepard's (1974) Global Job Satisfaction Scale, which consists of four items that ask employees to rate their overall satisfaction with their job. Example items include "All in all, I am very satisfied with my current job" and "In general, my job measures up to the sort of job I wanted when I took it" (α = .89).

Control Variables

Consistent with prior research (e.g., Forret & Love, 2008; Tan & Lim, 2009), we included employee's demographics of age (in years), gender (0 = female; 1 = male), educational level (1 = high school diploma; 2 = junior college degree; 3 = bachelor's degree; 4 = graduate degree), and tenures in the team and organization as controls to more precisely estimate the impact of trust in coworkers. In addition, we took into account both trust in top management and trust in supervisor as controls to capture the unique contribution of trust in coworkers (Colquitt et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Employing the reference-shift approach (Klein et al., 1994), we used the scale of trust in coworkers to assess trust in top management

and trust in supervisors by substituting the reference to coworkers with top management (α = .93) and supervisors (α = .95), respectively.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

Prior to testing the hypothesis, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) with maximum likelihood estimations to examine the anticipated factor structure underlying the data. The expected six-factor model fits the data well (χ^2 (480) = 1012.22, p < .01, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06), providing evidence of the distinctiveness of our primary study variables. Additionally, all items had significant loadings on their intended latent constructs.

Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis was conducted in a hierarchical manner to examine the interaction between trust in coworkers and perceived task interdependence. We included trust in top management, trust in supervisor, and employee demographics in Step 1, followed by trust in coworkers in Step 2. The trust in coworkers by perceived task interdependence interaction was entered in Step 3. To facilitate the interpretation of the moderation effect, we standardized the study variables and then created the interaction. We drew the simple slopes at the high (+1 *SD*) and low (-1 *SD*) levels of perceived task interdependence to better comprehend the moderation effects (Cohen et al., 2003). Additionally, we employed the Johnson-Neyman (J-N) technique to identify regions of statistical significance (Gardner et al., 2017; Preacher et al., 2006).

Means, SDs, intercorrelations, and alpha reliabilities for the study variables are reported in Table 1. The reliability estimates for all measures were acceptable, ranging from .89 to .96. Trust in coworkers was found to be significantly correlated with job satisfaction (r = .37), task performance (r = .20), OCB-I (r = .16), and OCB-O (r = .14). All correlations were in the expected direction.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that perceived task interdependence strengthens the positive effects of trust in coworkers on (a) task performance, (b) OCB-I, (c) OCBI-O, and (d) job satisfaction. Beginning with task performance, the interaction between trust in coworkers and task interdependence was statistically significant (b = .15, p < .01; see Table 2, Model 3). As displayed in Figure 2a, the relationship between trust in coworkers and task performance was significantly stronger for those with high levels of perceived task interdependence (slope = .36, t = 3.24, p < .01) than for those with low levels of task interdependence (slope = .06, t = .65, p = .51). The 95% CI did not contain zero at values of -.27 or above for perceived task interdependence and the positive effect strengthened as perceived task interdependence increased (see Figure 2b). However, the effect of trust in coworkers on task performance was attenuated and became nonsignificant at lower levels of perceived task interdependence (values below -.27).

Regarding OCB-I, the results similarly indicated a conditional effect of trust in coworkers depending on levels of perceived task interdependence (see Table 2, Model 3). Although the trust in coworkers by perceived task interdependence interaction was significant (b = .18, p < .01; see Table 2, Model 3), simple slopes analysis (see Figure 3a) shows that this moderation effect was not statistically significant at both 1 *SD* above the mean of perceived task interdependence (slope = .19, t = 1.84, p = .07) and 1 *SD* below the mean of perceived task interdependence (slope = -.17, t = -1.97, p = .05). To further explore this relationship, we used the J-N technique. As shown in Figure 3b, trust in coworkers was positively related to OCB-I when perceived task interdependence was 1.12 or higher, with the effect becoming stronger at higher levels. Interestingly, for individuals with low levels of perceived task interdependence (value = -1.01), a reversing effect was found, where trust in coworkers had a negative relationship with OCB-I, and this effect became stronger as perceived task interdependence decreased. The pattern of results suggests that trust in coworkers is positively related to OCB-I only for those with a salient perceived task interdependence.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender	1.65	.48	–												
2. Age	37.91	8.58	.19**	–											
3. Education	2.45	.93	-.16**	-.19**	–										
4. Tenure in team	50.65	69.01	.18**	.26**	-.52**	–									
5. Tenure in organization	132.54	102.86	.18**	.79**	-.24**	.38**	–								
6. Trust in top management	3.71	.91	.05	.04	.03	-.05	.08	(.93)							
7. Trust in supervisor	3.92	.92	.12*	.00	.03	.02	.02	.61**	(.95)						
8. Trust in coworkers	3.99	.87	.09	-.05	.08	-.04	-.05	.53**	.66**	(.96)					
9. Perceived task interdependence	3.82	.70	-.08	.09	.06	-.02	.11	.43**	.43**	.53**	(.90)				
10. Job satisfaction	3.10	.89	.19**	.03	-.02	-.01	.06	.46**	.38**	.37**	.34**	(.89)			
11. Task performance	3.78	.80	-.09	-.02	.01	.00	.01	.09	.18**	.20**	.18**	.13*	(.89)		
12. OCB-I	3.93	.73	-.02	-.07	-.04	.04	-.02	.17**	.26**	.17**	.22**	.19**	.66**	(.92)	
13. OCB-O	3.72	.74	.01	.01	.06	-.04	.07	.24**	.23**	.14*	.17*	.19**	.69**	.83**	(.91)

Note. $N = 297$; Cronbach's alphas are shown on the diagonal; Gender (1 = female, 2 = male); Education (1 = high school diploma, 2 = junior college, 3 = bachelor's degree, 4 = graduate degree); Age, tenure in team, tenure in organization in months; OCB-I: citizenship behavior directed toward other individuals; OCB-O: citizenship behavior directed toward the organization.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (two tailed).

We found a similar pattern of results for OCB-O. The trust in coworkers by perceived task interdependence interaction was statistically significant ($b = .18$, $p < .01$; see Table 2, Model 3), but simple slope analysis (see Figure 4a) found that this moderation effect did not differ significantly at 1 *SD* above the mean of perceived task interdependence (slope = .21, $t = 1.94$, $p = .05$) and 1 *SD* below the mean of perceived task interdependence (slope = -.16, $t = -1.86$, $p = .06$). However, depicted in Figure 4b, the 95% CI did not contain zero at values of 1.02 and the positive effect of trust in coworkers on OCB-O became stronger as perceived task interdependence increased. Conversely, for those with low levels of perceived task interdependence (value = -1.06), trust in coworkers was negatively related to OCB-O. Trust in coworkers was not related to OCB-O at values between -1.05 and 1.01.

Finally, for job satisfaction, the interaction between trust in coworkers and task interdependence was again significant ($b = .14$, $p < .01$; see Table 2, Model 3). Figure 5a demonstrated the relationship between trust in coworkers and job satisfaction was significantly stronger for those with high levels of perceived task interdependence (slope = .26, $t = 2.63$, $p < .01$) than for those with low levels of perceived task interdependence (slope = -.02, $t = -.29$, $p = .77$). Furthermore, as depicted in Figure 5b, the 95% CI did not contain zero at the standardized value of .32 or above for perceived task interdependence and the positive effect strengthened in magnitude as perceived task interdependence increased. The pattern of results was consistent with the hypothesized form of interaction. Taken together, these results provide empirical support for Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d.

TABLE 2
HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION RESULTS

	Task Performance						OCB-I					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Variable	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Constant	.39	.23	.42	.23	.39	.23	.14	.22	.14	.22	.07	.22
Gender	-.23	.13	-.25	.13	-.28*	.14	-.08	.13	-.08	.13	-.10	.13
Age	-.08	.10	-.08	.10	-.09	.10	-.18	.10	-.18	.10	-.19*	.10
Education	-.00	.07	-.01	.07	.03	.07	-.02	.07	-.02	.07	.03	.07
Tenure with the team	.00	.08	.00	.08	.01	.07	.04	.07	.04	.07	.06	.07
Tenure with the organization	.13	.11	.15	.11	.15	.10	.17	.10	.17	.10	.16	.10
Trust in top management	-.09	.08	-.13	.08	-.16*	.08	-.03	.08	-.03	.08	-.08	.08
Trust in supervisor	.24**	.08	.15	.09	.17	.09	.29**	.08	.29**	.09	.31**	.08
Trust in coworkers (TC)			.19*	.08	.21*	.09			.00	.08	.01	.08
Perceived task interdependence (PTI)					.07	.07					.13	.07
TC x PTI					.15**	.05					.18**	.05
R^2	.05		.07		.11		.10		.10		.16	
F	2.06*		2.51*		3.07**		4.03**		3.51**		4.84**	
ΔR^2			.02		.03				.00		.06	
ΔF			5.42*		5.00**				.00		9.26**	

	OCB-O						Job Satisfaction					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Variable	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Constant	-.04	.22	-.05	.22	-.06	.22	-.54**	.20	-.52*	.20	-.60**	.20
Gender	.03	.13	.03	.13	-.02	.13	.33**	.12	.32**	.12	.32**	.12
Age	-.16	.10	-.17	.10	-.18	.10	-.04	.09	-.04	.06	-.05	.09
Education	.07	.07	.07	.07	.13	.07	-.05	.06	-.06	.07	-.02	.06
Tenure with the team	-.05	.07	-.05	.07	-.04	.07	-.04	.07	-.05	.07	-.03	.07
Tenure with the organization	.29**	.10	.29**	.10	.30**	.10	.02	.09	.04	.09	.03	.09
Trust in top management	.10	.08	.10	.08	.08	.08	.35**	.07	.32**	.07	.28**	.07
Trust in supervisor	.17*	.08	.18*	.09	.21*	.08	.14*	.07	.08	.08	.09	.08
Trust in coworkers (TC)			-.03	.08	.02	.08			.13	.07	.12	.08
Perceived task interdependence (PTI)					.03	.07					.15*	.06
TC x PTI					.18**	.05					.14**	.05
R^2	.10		.10		.15		.24		.25		.29	
F	4.30**		3.77**		4.62**		12.06**		11.07**		10.95**	
ΔR^2			.00		.05				.01		.04	
ΔF			.15		7.30**				3.40		8.11**	

*Note. N = 297; * p < .05, ** p < .01* (two tailed).

Supplementary Analysis

Following best practice recommendations (Becker et al., 2016) regarding the use of control variables, we conducted a robustness check of the results by removing all control variables. The patterns of results, excluding control variables, were similar. Trust in coworkers by perceived task interdependence interaction was still significantly related to job satisfaction ($b = .17$, $p < .01$), task performance ($b = .12$, $p < .05$), OCB-I ($b = .16$, $p < .01$), and OCB-O ($b = .16$, $p < .01$). These findings confirmed that our results were robust even when we did not include control variables.

FIGURE 2A
CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF TRUST IN COWORKERS ON TASK PERFORMANCE: SIMPLE SLOPES

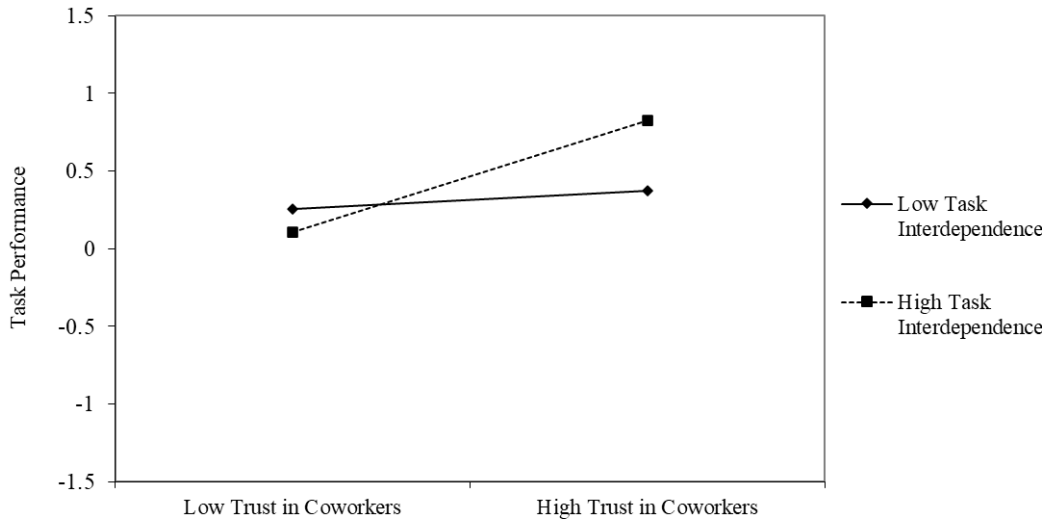


FIGURE 2B
CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF TRUST IN COWORKERS ON TASK PERFORMANCE: REGIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

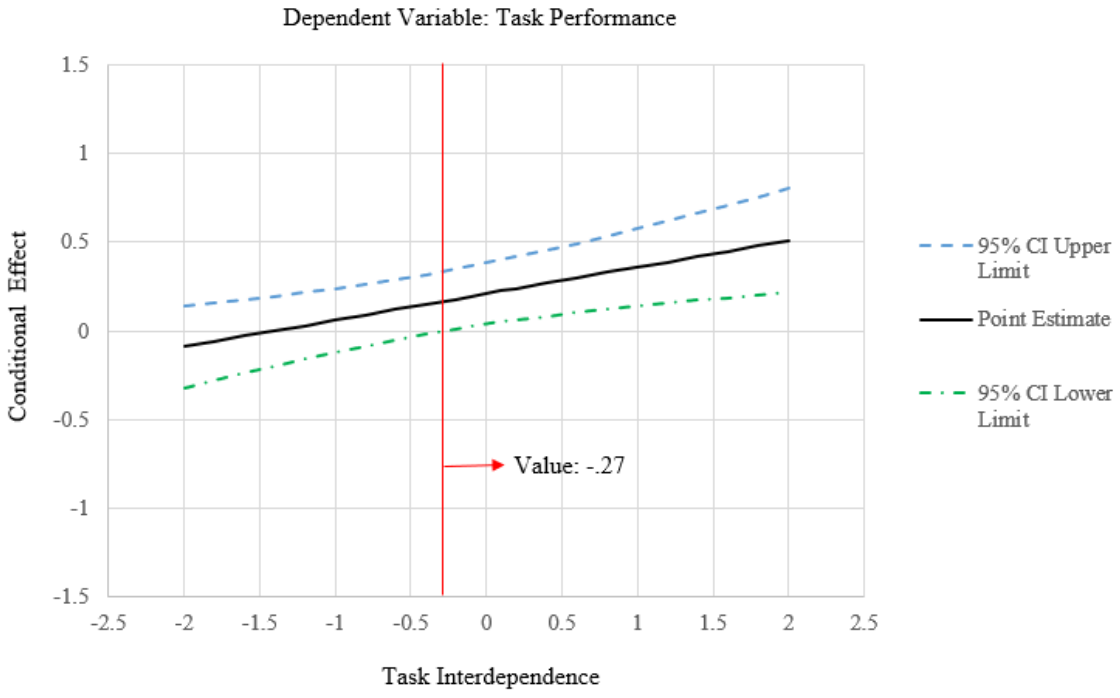


FIGURE 3A
CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF TRUST IN COWORKERS ON OCB-I: SIMPLE SLOPES

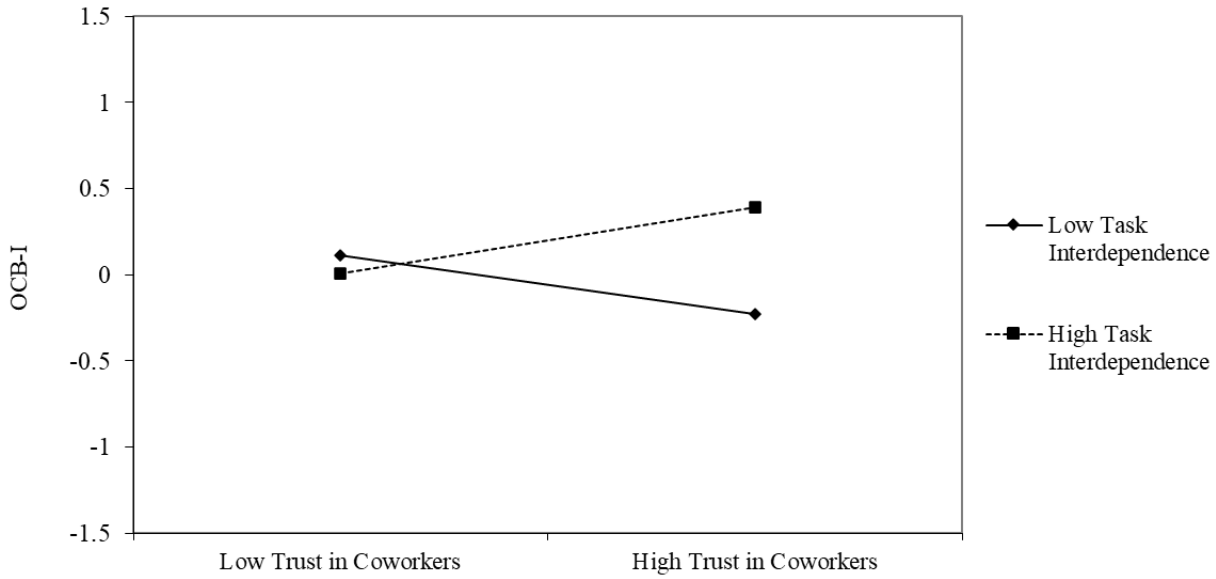


FIGURE 3B
CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF TRUST IN COWORKERS ON OCB-I: REGIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

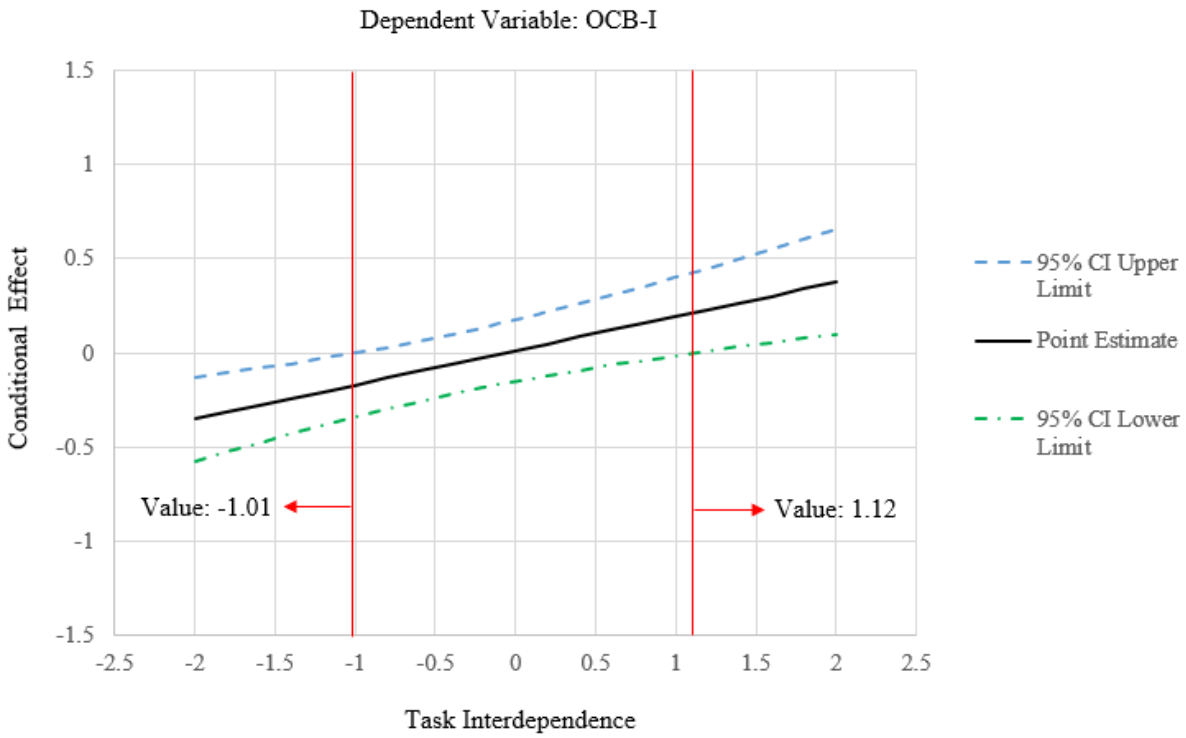


FIGURE 4A
CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF TRUST IN COWORKERS ON OCB-O: SIMPLE SLOPES

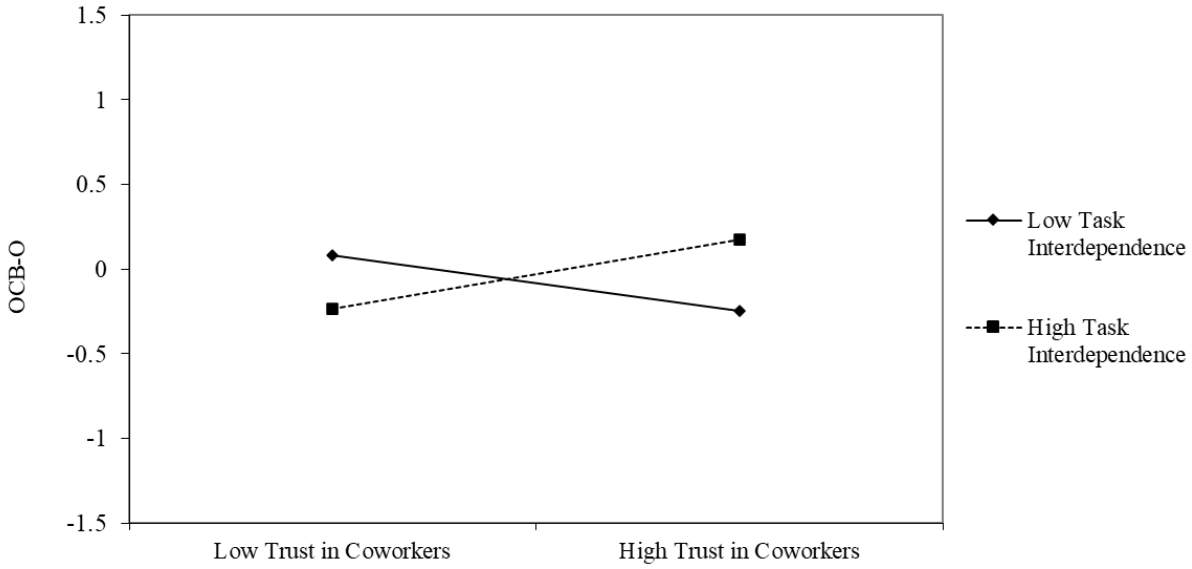


FIGURE 4B
CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF TRUST IN COWORKERS ON OCB-O: REGIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

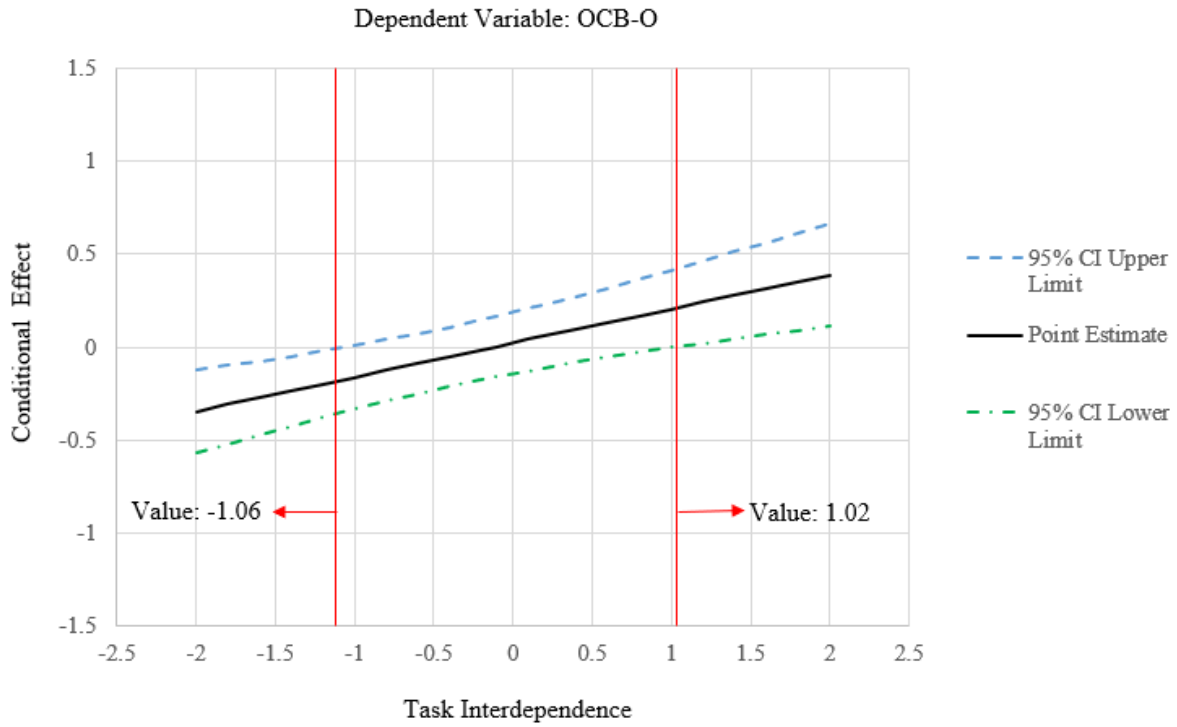


FIGURE 5A
CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF TRUST IN COWORKERS ON JOB SATISFACTION: SIMPLE SLOPES

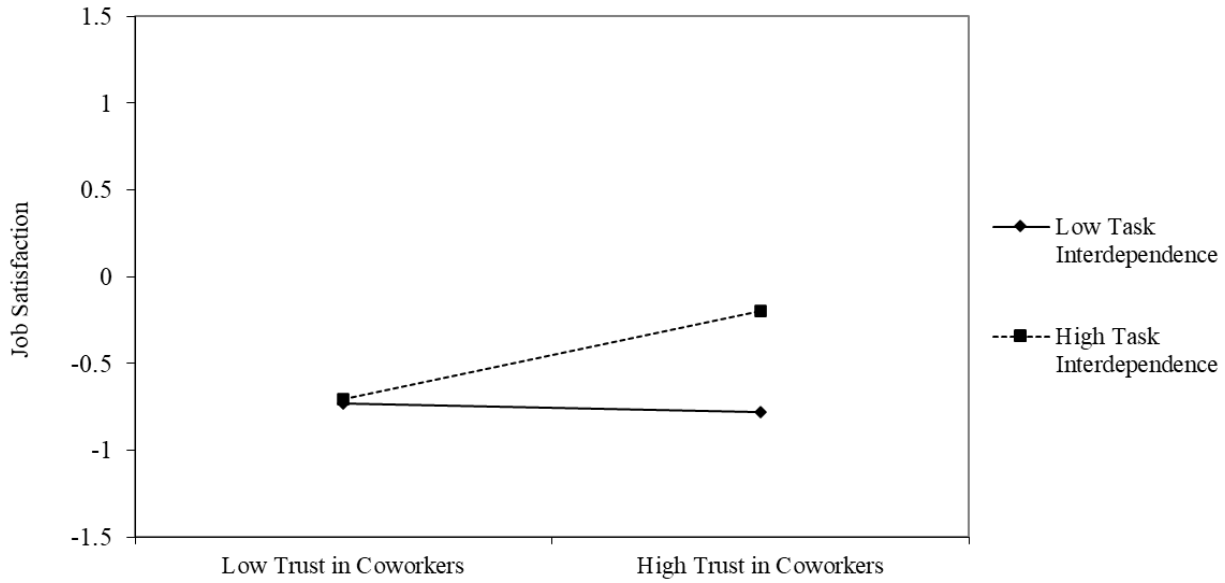
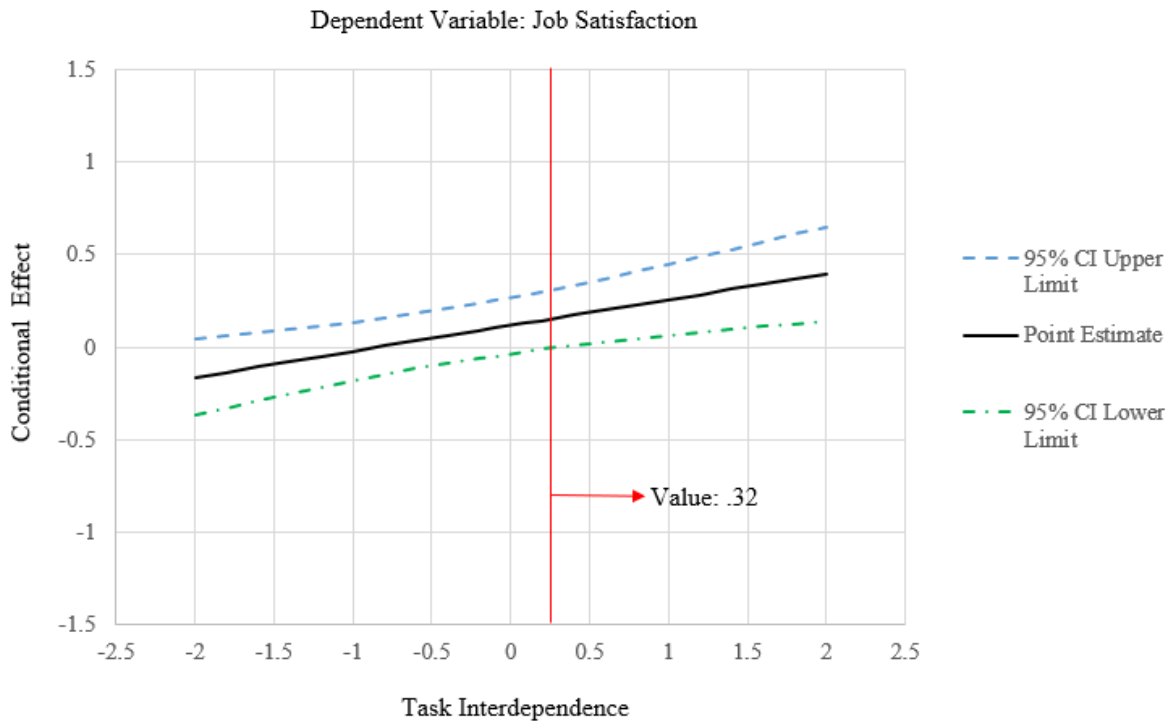


FIGURE 5B
CONDITIONAL EFFECTS OF TRUST IN COWORKERS ON JOB SATISFACTION: REGIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE



DISCUSSION

Research has shown that trust is a key component of effective organizations and offers numerous benefits to both organizations and their members (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). In the workplace, employees distinguish between various social exchange partners, including top management, immediate supervisors, and coworkers. However, compared to the extensive literature on trust in leadership, trust in coworkers has received relatively little scholarly attention (Ferres et al., 2004; Parker et al., 2006). Moreover, researchers have largely overlooked the role of contextual factors that may influence when trust in coworkers becomes more impactful. To address this gap, this study investigates how perceived task interdependence moderates the relationship between trust in coworkers and employees' attitudes and behaviors beyond the effects of trust in top management and supervisor.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the trust literature by enriching our understanding of trust in coworkers and emphasizing perceived task interdependence as a key factor that promotes social exchange among coworkers. Specifically, this study identifies perceived task interdependence as a critical boundary condition in the relationship between trust in coworkers and individual outcomes. The findings indicate that trust in coworkers is significantly more effective in enhancing task performance, OCB, and job satisfaction when employees perceive high levels of task interdependence. Task interdependence facilitates the exchange of materials, information, and support among employees—resources that are especially valuable in trust-based coworker relationships. These exchanges reinforce the impacts of trust in coworkers on attitudes and behaviors, making perceived task interdependence an important amplifier of its effectiveness. The findings also show that trust in coworkers has a significant positive relation with task performance, controlling for trust in top management and supervisor, which highlights the distinct and unique role of trust in coworkers in promoting organizational effectiveness. Consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), this study suggests that employees who trust their coworkers appear to reinforce that trust by engaging more in performance-related behaviors. They also carry out their responsibilities more effectively when they receive valued resources, such as information, advice, and support, from trusted coworkers (Dirks & Skarlicki, 2009).

Managerial Implications

Our findings highlight that the positive effects of trust in coworkers are particularly pronounced when employees perceive high levels of task interdependence. As organizations increasingly rely on teams as the primary unit of work, many have adopted team-based reward systems in which a portion of employees' compensation is tied to collective performance outcomes (DeMatteo et al., 1998). In such settings, where employees must rely on one another to complete shared tasks, trust in coworkers becomes especially critical for the successful implementation of these reward systems (Merriman, 2008). Similarly, trust in coworkers is crucial for the effectiveness of team structures, such as cross-functional and self-managed teams, particularly when team members rely heavily on one another to coordinate tasks and share resources. In these highly interdependent contexts, trust facilitates cooperation, improves coordination, and reduces the need for extensive monitoring (Williams, 2001). Without sufficient trust, the challenges of interdependence may lead to inefficiencies, conflict, or disengagement. To enhance trust among coworkers—especially in teams with high task interdependence—organizations can implement targeted team-building strategies. In addition to conventional training programs, informal social events (e.g., after-work gatherings or celebrations) can provide opportunities for team members who do not regularly interact to build rapport (Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall, 2003). Pairing new employees with "buddies" can also help foster early trust and integration. These activities promote a sense of unity within the team, which in turn cultivates trust—particularly important when collaboration is essential.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study is not without limitations. First, the data were collected in South Korea, a highly collectivistic country (Hofstede, 2001). In such cultural contexts, relational constructs like trust in coworkers and task interdependence may be more salient, potentially amplifying their effects on employees' outcomes. Thus, the findings in this study may not be completely generalizable to less collectivistic countries. Ideally, future research should replicate and extend our findings using multiple samples differing in cultural values. Second, the data used in this study are cross-sectional, although not from the same source (all behavioral outcomes were reported by supervisors). This design limits the ability to draw definitive causal conclusions. To better establish causality, future studies should consider using longitudinal or experimental designs. Lastly, this study demonstrates that trust in different referents is uniquely associated with distinct workplace outcomes. For example, trust in coworkers was significantly associated with task performance, while trust in the supervisor was significantly related to OCB-I. These findings highlight the importance of examining multiple referents of trust simultaneously to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its impact. Future research should continue to incorporate a multiple-foci perspective (Lavelle et al., 2007; Stinglhamber et al., 2006) to deepen our understanding of how different forms of trust influence employee effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the literature on trust in coworkers by highlighting perceived task interdependence as a factor that can promote the social exchange process among coworkers. Our findings indicate that trust in coworkers becomes especially important when employees must rely on one another to accomplish their tasks. In other words, trust is not equally influential in all situations. The impact of trust in coworkers depends on the work environment and social dynamics, particularly the level of perceived task interdependence. In contexts of high interdependence, trust in coworkers is not merely beneficial but essential for maximizing employee effectiveness.

DISCOURSE STATEMENT

A portion of the data used in this paper was also used in another study published in *Group & Organization Management*, which investigated the effects of group-level perceived organizational support (POS) climate level on individual job performance, with group-level POS climate strength and task interdependence examined as moderators.

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