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# Employee trust repair: A systematic review of 20 years of empirical research and future research directions

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## ABSTRACT

Employee trust, and increasingly its absence, is a critical topic for researchers and practitioners interested in social relations in the context of work and organizing. Employee trust repair is particularly important in the current disrupted work environment, due to unpredictable changes such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainty those bring to our lives. It is not surprising that employee trust is attracting increasing interest among researchers and practitioners alike. In this article, we systematically review and take stock of the research on trust repair conducted in the past two decades to provide comprehensive insights and future research directions for researchers and managers. In our review, we propose that early use of trust repair strategies in response to small violations, prevents these violations escalating into larger violations, and hence, enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of trust repair with employees. We conclude by describing future directions.

## 1. Introduction

Technological, economic, and socio-political disruptions challenge contemporary organizations and heighten employee uncertainty and feelings of vulnerability (Gustafsson et al., 2020). Employee trust repair is particularly important in the current disrupted work environment, due to unpredictable changes such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainty those bring to our lives (Rudolph et al., 2020). Organizational responses to such disruptions such as through restructuring and downsizing are prevalent, leading to increased interest in how employee trust can be preserved and maintained in an increasingly complex work environment. Employee trust plays a critical role in organizations as trusting employees are more committed to their work and remain with the organization longer than those lacking trust (Weibel et al., 2016; see also Andiappan & Treviño, 2010; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2017; Reina & Reina, 2015). Trust as a sustainable organizing principle (McEvily et al., 2003) provides many benefits to employees and their organizations enhancing employee cooperativeness, knowledge sharing, and effective problem solving (see, e.g., Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Tremblay, Cloutier, Simard, Chenevert, & Vandenbergh, 2010).

Research shows that while it can take a considerable time to build trust, trust can be quickly eroded in employee–employer relationships

(Robinson, 1996). This realization has spurred increasing research interest in trust repair (see, e.g., Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Mishra & Mishra, 1994; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009). Previous journal special issues, such as the Academy of Management Review Special Issues in 1998, (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998) and 2009 (Dirks, Lewicki, & Zaheer, 2009), the Organization Studies Special Issue in 2015 (Bachmann, Gillespie, & Priem, 2015), as well as reviews on trust repair (Bozic, 2017; Burke, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Gillespie & Siebert, 2018; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010; Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2017) illustrate the increased academic interest in this topic over the past two decades.

Researchers have investigated organizational trust repair empirically at the interpersonal and group levels (Bachmann et al., 2015; Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2017; Gillespie & Siebert, 2018), from the perspective of a number of different trustor viewpoints (e.g., those of employee, leader, customer, citizen, and negotiator) and in a number of trust referents (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012) including leader failure in the context of dyadic leader–follower relationships (Haesevoets et al., 2015); customer trust in high-risk products after negative publicity (Ting, Guicheng, & Yanting, 2014); public trust in organizations (Poppo & Schepker, 2010); senior managers' attempts to rebuild employee trust (Pate et al., 2012); and the use of financial compensation in the aftermath of distributive

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harm between two parties (Desmet, De Cremer, & van Dijk, 2011). The focus of this article is on trust repair from the employee perspective.

Given the increasing challenges to building and maintaining employee trust in the contemporary work and organizing context, a systematic review of the literature seems warranted because it is important to develop a cumulative knowledge base from which to inform future research and practice on employee trust repair. In this paper, we conducted a systematic review of empirical research published over the past 20 years in peer-reviewed journals to analyse the state of the art in the field and propose a future research agenda. We also provide research insights for managers and human resources practitioners.

In comparison to earlier reviews on trust repair, we adopt a multi-level and multi-referent framework as outlined by Fulmer and Gelfand (2012), investigating employee trust repair at individual, group and organizational levels (Bachmann & Inkpen, 2011; Barber, 1983; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009). This is important because employee trust is influenced by various social and impersonal referents at different levels of analysis (see Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Gillespie & Siebert, 2018). For example, employees can be informed about an organization's trustworthiness based on their interpersonal relationships with other individuals and groups, or information about the organizational structures, processes, and culture. The review in the current research focuses on the employee perspective, rather than those of external stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, shareholders, or regulators (see Gillespie & Siebert, 2018).

By synthesizing research findings on employee trust repair, and analysing the commonalities and differences in the findings across organizational levels and referents, we aim to improve the conceptualization of employee trust repair, as well as to identify the most commonly studied trust repair mechanisms and their effectiveness. We propose that early use of trust repair strategies in response to small violations, is likely to prevent those violations escalating into larger violations, and hence, enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of trust repair with employees. We also believe it would be useful to study various active trust repair practices and their effects on preserving and repairing employee trust. We begin our review by describing the key concepts and approaches used in research on organizational trust repair. We then specify our literature selection process, present the findings of our review, and finally discuss the implications of our review for research and practice and identify promising areas of further research.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Conceptualization of organizational trust

Trust definitions vary according to disciplinary backgrounds and research context (Blomqvist, 1997; Castaldo, Premazzi, & Zerbini, 2010). One of the most widely accepted definitions of trust in the management literature, which is based on a cross-disciplinary review, is 'a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another' (Rousseau et al., 1998: 395). This definition is also commonly used for organizational trust (e.g., Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2017), and, in our study, we applied this definition when we investigated employee trust at the individual, team/group, and organizational levels of analysis (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

Rousseau's definitions of positive expectations are typically captured by the three dimensions of trustworthiness identified by the seminal work of Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), namely: ability (or competence), benevolence, and integrity. At the organizational level, these dimensions mean that employees' assessments of their organization's trustworthiness are based on the organization's competencies, for example, to meet its goals and responsibilities, how the organization takes care of the well-being of its employees, and how committed the organization is to following moral principles such as honesty and

fairness (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009). Similarly, individuals and team members within an organization evaluate the trustworthiness of the other party (individual, team and organization) by paying attention to their competence, goodwill and honesty. This fits our focus on trust repair as Mayer et al. (1995) propose that trust is compromised when one party feels their expectations of the other party's trustworthiness have not been met, and such breach of trust has negative consequences for the continuation of the relationship. Accordingly, the employees' future-oriented expectations are a focal element in our review (see also Gillespie & Siebert, 2018). In line with Gillespie and Dietz (2009), we view employees' perceptions of their organization's trustworthiness as capable of being influenced by multiple sources of evidence and actors operating at different organizational levels.

### 2.2. Employee trust repair

Both conceptual and empirical research indicate that trust in work relationships can be repaired (e.g., Dirks et al., 2009; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009), although this process is not always easy (e.g., Bottom, Gibson, Daniels, & Murnighan, 2002). Lewicki and Brinsfield (2017) propose that repaired trust is structurally different from the pre-violation or pristine trust (Dirks et al., 2009; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996), and that, in some circumstances, no trust repair initiatives will be capable of fully restoring trust to its original level (Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998).

As with the concept of trust itself, prior research has also defined trust repair in several forms. At the organization level, Gillespie and Dietz (2009: 128) define organizational trust repair as 'employees' perceptions of the trustworthiness of their organization and the processes required for repairing these perceptions once they are damaged by an organization-level failure'. Also Dirks et al. (2009: 69) indicate that, 'relationship repair occurs when a transgression causes the positive state(s) that constitute(s) the relationship to disappear and/or negative states to arise, as perceived by one or both parties, and activities by one or both parties substantively return the relationship to a positive state.' These definitions of organizational and relationship repair can help understand employee trust repair.

Research reveals that when employee trust is damaged, employees become unwilling to apply trust-based behaviours promoting effective functional activities such as cooperation, discretionary effort, knowledge sharing, and effective problem solving. In addition, violators' (e.g. employers) future intentions may be unclear to employee and cause uncertainty (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Trust violations may also lead to a variety of retaliatory actions on the part of employees such as sabotage, theft, spreading rumours, and poor commitment to work in general (Bies & Tripp, 1996; Robinson, 1996), and escalate the breakdown of internal and external relationships (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009) critically affecting the organization's performance (Andiappan & Treviño, 2010). Thus, trust repair involves improving both trusting intentions and re-establishing trusting behaviour. Building on Bromiley and Cummings (1995) and Mcknight, Cummings, and Chervany (1998; see also Vidotto, Massidda, Noventa, & Vicentini, 2012) we define trusting intentions as a solid willingness to depend upon the trustee to induce trusting behaviours. Whereas the trusting behaviours are the concrete actions demonstrating that a trustor relies a trustee without control.

Much of the research on trust repair has taken a contingency approach in that it studies how the nature of trust violation affects trust and trust repair (e.g., Grover et al., 2014; Kim, 2018; Sørensen et al., 2011). In this study the nature of trust violations has been distinguished based on the dimension of trustworthiness breached (e.g., was it a violation of ability, benevolence, or integrity). Recently researchers have increasingly paid attention to the effectiveness of trust-repair tactics and learned that, for example, the most suitable trust-repair tactic after an ability-based violation would not necessarily be effective for repairing trust following an integrity-based violation (see e.g., Grover et al., 2014; Sørensen et al., 2011).

The escalating and systemic nature of trust (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009) highlights the importance of studying trust repair from a multilevel and cross-level perspective. To advance both research and the practice of trust repair, it is important to understand if there are divergent or potentially common underlying principles and processes of trust repair across levels of analysis and interpersonal referents of trust. To explore these questions, and to ensure the current review is as comprehensive as possible, we focus on empirical research examining employee trust repair at three levels—individual, team, and organizational—and in multiple interpersonal referents (peers, supervisors, managers). It is also important to note that employee trust includes not only interpersonal referents but also impersonal referents, such as organizational structures and processes (on impersonal organizational trust, see e.g., Vanhala, Puumalainen, & Blomqvist, 2011). Hence, there is a need to understand trust repair strategies and principles that are effective in repairing trust as a multi-dimensional concept, at multiple organizational levels, and in various referents of trust.

### 2.3. Theoretical approaches on trust repair

The early literature on trust repair first emphasized process models illustrating the phases required for trust repair. Subsequent work has refined these models and conceptualized broader theoretical approaches to explaining and mechanisms for undertaking the repair of damaged trust.

In their early seminal paper, Lewicki and Bunker (1996) proposed a model of how trust is developed and repaired in work relationships. Their influential four-stage process model for trust repair includes the following stages: 1) recognizing the violation, 2) identifying the causes of violations and admitting culpability, 3) admitting that the act was destructive and 4) taking responsibility for the consequences. Later, Gillespie and Dietz (2009) took a systems perspective to propose a systemic, multilevel framework for understanding strategies to repair employees' trust in their employing organization after an organizational violation. They proposed four stages: 1) immediate response with verbal responses and actions, 2) diagnosis of the systemic causes of the trust failure, 3) reforming interventions across the organization's infrastructure to ensure a repeat future trust violation would not occur, and 4) evaluation of the effectiveness of the reforms. In contrast to Lewicki and Bunker (1996) dyadic view on trust breakdown and repair in interpersonal relationships, Gillespie and Dietz (2009) propose that the causes of and those responsible for an organizational-level failure are often unclear, and such failures require the input of several actors. They theorize how different internal and external components shape employees' perceptions of the organization's trustworthiness and can subsequently contribute to trust failures and effective trust repair (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009).

### 2.4. Theoretical principles and mechanisms explaining trust repair

Dirks et al. (2009) developed a process model for trust repair that emphasized the temporal nature of the process, distinguishing between: 1) pre-transgression and the state of trust prior to a transgression, 2) disruption, identifying what factors are changed by the transgression and how, 3) trust repair, identifying what actions are taken to repair violated factors, and 4) post-repair, identifying the state of trust after repair. They further identified three key theoretical mechanisms underlying relationship repair: 1) attributional, 2) structural, and 3) social-equilibrium perspectives (Dirks et al., 2009). The attributional mechanism draws on the principles of attribution theory (Heider, 1958) and can be applied to different levels of analysis and when the violator is an individual, a group, or an organization. From the perspective of attribution theory, the trustor tries to explain the situation by using sentiments, motives, and external factors and by changing attributions, the violator seeks to re-cast understanding of the violation events to present themselves in a more trustworthy light through tactics such as denials,

explanations and social accounts (Dirks et al., 2009; Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009). Second, the social-equilibrium perspective is suited to addressing negative affect and exchange, although it might indirectly address the repair of trust (Ren & Gray, 2009). Social equilibrium involves engaging in social rituals (e.g., apologizing, punishment and penance, and offering compensation) to atone for the violation and restore balance in the relationship and help to settle the account and re-establish the expectations of the relationship after the violation (Dirks et al., 2009). Third, from the structural perspective, trust violation leads to a breakdown in positive exchange and increases negative exchange. Therefore, trust is most effectively repaired when structural processes in which negative exchange is discouraged and positive exchange is encouraged are put in place (Dirks et al., 2009). Trust repair practices include legalistic remedies such as policies, procedures, contracts, and monitoring (Sitkin & Roth, 1993) that increase the reliability of future behaviour and therefore advance the rebuilding of trust (Gillespie & Dietz (2009) discuss a similar concept they term distrust regulation).

Building on and extending these three trust repair mechanisms, Bachmann et al. (2015) suggested an integrative framework of six mechanisms to repair trust among stakeholders after organizational and institutional trust failures. The first mechanism, *sense-making* (Weick, 1995), involves a collective learning process leading to a shared understanding and an accepted account of what went wrong and why. Sense-making incorporates the attributional trust repair mechanism and includes practices such as investigations, public inquiries, explanations, and accounts. Second, the *relational* mechanism incorporates the social-equilibrium approach and involves engaging in social rituals and symbolic acts aimed at addressing the negative emotions caused by the violation and re-establishing the social equilibrium between the parties (Dirks et al., 2009). Relational trust repair strategies include for example public explanations and apologies, punishment and penance, and also the compensation of victims (Bachmann et al., 2015). The third mechanism is that of *regulation and controls*, which involves formal rules and controls to constrain untrustworthy behaviour and prevent future trust violation. This incorporates the structural mechanism and includes practices such as laws, rules, policies, process and output controls, contracts, codes of conduct and sanctions, which serve to deter or constrain untrustworthy behaviour and/or incentivize trustworthy behaviour (Dirks et al., 2009; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009).

In addition to these first three mechanisms that overlap with the three trust repair mechanisms identified by Dirks et al. (2009), Bachmann et al. also identified three additional trust repair mechanisms. *Ethical culture* highlights that trust repair often requires informal cultural controls to constrain untrustworthy behaviour and promote trustworthy behaviour, rather than simply structural controls. Here organizational leaders can repair trust and signal organizational trustworthiness by developing and communicating a strong shared ethical culture. *Transparency*, that is, sharing relevant information about organizational decision processes and functioning with stakeholders, can also function as a mechanism to help restore trust. Transparent organizations share accurate, timely, relevant information in a way that allows stakeholders to make informed decisions on their relationships with the organization. Trust repair strategies include for example corporate reporting, external audits, public inquiries and protection of whistle-blowers. The final mechanism, *transference*, facilitates trust repair by transferring trust from a credible party to the discredited party. This concept encapsulates various ways in which trust can be transferred from one actor or institution to another: for example, through practices such as certification, membership, affiliations, awards, and endorsements.

## 3. Methodology

A systematic review of literature is designed to be replicable and transparent and provide a clear structure and approach to the literature selection and review process (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003), and accordingly we took a number of steps to ensure our review process was

replicable and transparent. We followed the systematic literature review paper process published recently in the high-impact management journals on across research fields such as R&D internationalization and innovation (Vrontis & Christofi, 2019), service innovation (Snyder, Wittell, Gustafsson, Fombelle, & Kristensson, 2016) and mental illness in the workplace (Follmer & Jones, 2018).

### 3.1. Conceptual boundaries

In order to set boundaries on review of trust repair literature, we included the studies that examine: 1) employee trust repair in organizational personal and impersonal relationships, 2) employee trust repair in leader–follower relationships, 3) employee trust repair in superior-subordinates relationships, 4) employee trust repair in employee-employee relationships, 5) employee trust repair within teams/groups, and 6) employee trust repair between teams/groups. Thus, we examine violators' responses and employee trust repair at: 1) individual, 2) team or group, and 3) organizational levels. Studies focusing on trust repair with organizations' external stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, shareholders, or regulators are excluded (see Gillespie & Siebert, 2018).

### 3.2. Search protocol

#### 3.2.1. Formulation of the research question

According to Nguyen et al. (2018) a high-level review is based on clear research questions being developed at the start of the review process. When developing our research question we focused on the employee trust repair within organization. The research question was formulated through dialogue between the authors and other academic experts. Based on this question formulation process, the research question in this paper is: 'What repair mechanisms and responses were used in different organizational levels in order to repair trust?'

#### 3.2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

First, to be included, each research article had to meet our six inclusion criteria, namely: 1) offering empirical research providing evidence on trust repair, 2) including an employee perspective on trust repair or relationship repair, 3) conducted within the context of work or an organizational context, 4) being peer reviewed, 5) being available in English, and 6) located within the disciplines of business, management and accounting, social sciences, and/or psychology. We searched for literature published in the past two decades, from 2000 to 2020. We excluded 1) non-empirical papers, 2) papers that represented only external stakeholders (e.g., citizens, suppliers, customers, shareholders, and regulators) without an employee perspective, and 3) papers on trust repair between organizations. Papers were also excluded if it was unclear whether an employee perspective was included (e.g., experimental designs where the stakeholder role of the respondent was not clear).

#### 3.2.3. Search strategy and selection process of relevant articles

We followed the structured literature review process proposed by Tranfield et al. (2003) which involves five stages and is shown in Fig. 1. Each stage served to select relevant articles according to the pre-defined criteria. In the first stage, we conducted a search of the relevant databases for literature published during the last two decades, the period during which the large majority of empirical research on intra-organizational trust repair has been conducted. To ensure a comprehensive search, we used two of the dominant databases in social sciences, Web of Science and Scopus (Falagas, Pitsouni, Malietzis, & Pappas, 2008). The search terms 'trust AND repair' OR 'trust repair' OR 'trust AND rebuild\*' OR 'trust rebuild\*' OR 'trust AND restor\*' OR 'relationship repair' were used. The search strings were targeted at article titles, abstracts, and keywords. The first search produced 1285 potentially relevant articles, a number reduced to 947 after removing duplicates.

In the second stage of the literature selection process, 947 articles

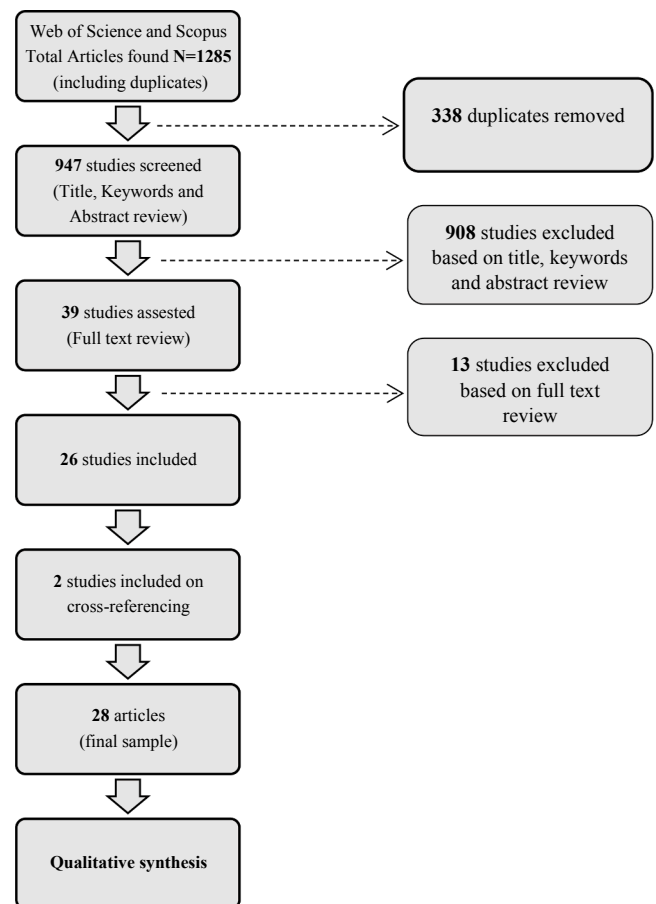


Fig. 1. The systematic literature selection process.

were screened by title, keywords and abstract. 908 studies excluded based on title, keywords and abstract review because it turned out that they 1) were not empirical papers, 2) papers represented only external stakeholders, 3) papers were without an employee perspective, or 4) trust repairing was focused between the two organizations. In the third stage 39 accepted papers were scanned, and articles that failed to meet the inclusion criteria were eliminated. In this stage 13 studies excluded based on full text review because papers did not include an employee perspective on trust repair or because the context was of trust repair but not within an organization.

In the fourth stage and after the full text examination, the number of relevant articles was reduced to 26. Our last stage of the selection process involved scanning the reference lists of the 26 accepted articles (Wohlin, 2014) as well as seven conceptual and review papers on trust repair (Bachmann et al., 2015; Dirks et al., 2009; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Gillespie & Siebert, 2018; Kim, 2018; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010; Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2017), to locate additional suitable empirical works. This snowballing method increased the accepted number of relevant articles to 28 which was the final sample. In order to avoid possible selection bias, the screening and selection of the articles were verified independently by two researchers.

## 4. Findings

We start with a description of the articles and then discuss different types of trust repair responses and mechanisms. We then categorize past empirical research on trust repair into different levels of analysis: at an individual level, in groups and teams, and in organizations following integrity-based, competence-based, and benevolence-based trust violations.

### 4.1. Descriptive findings

Table 1 shows that classic laboratory experiments are the methods most often used to examine trust repair. Laboratory experiments were used in the early years (2004–2009) especially among North American scholars, when research on trust repair was still in its infancy. As the field matured, more qualitative studies emerged. The use of qualitative studies is understandable because applying an experimental design to trust repair beyond an individual referent of analysis can be challenging. Qualitative studies are especially useful in studying processes like trust repair and can provide rich empirical insights that can then guide further experimental research. We found qualitative studies were utilized in 32% of the articles reviewed. We also note that surveys (14%) and a combination of surveys and laboratory experiments (4%) were used to a lesser extent than laboratory experiments alone (50%).

Several of the selected articles were published in high quality journals such as *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Human Resource Management*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Organization Studies* and *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. These journals are presented on the current list of the top-tier journals the Financial Times use for business school rankings.

### 4.2. Level of analysis and response types

In terms of the level of analysis most trust-repair studies (20) have focused on the individual level (71%). Only five papers (18%) examine trust repair from the perspective of the team or group, and one of them was a comparison between teams and individuals. Furthermore, of the four papers that investigated trust at the organizational level (14%), most also examined external stakeholders' trust in the organization (for

**Table 1**  
The research approach used and regional distribution in the sample.

Methodology (total prevalence,%)	Author(s), year of publication	Country
Laboratory experiment (14/50%)	Bagdasarov et al. (2019); Henderson et al. (2020); Kim et al. (2004, 2006, 2012); Krylova et al. (2016); Lewicki, et al. (2016); Schweitzer et al. (2006)	United States
	De Cremer (2010)	Netherlands
	Dirks et al. (2011); Ferrin et al. (2007)	United States and Singapore
	Haesevoets et al. (2015)	Belgium, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and United States
	Maddux et al. (2011)	Japan and United States
	Monzani et al. (2015)	Spain
	De Cremer and Schouten (2008)	Netherlands, United States
	Pate et al. (2012); Webber et al. (2012)	United States
	Elangovan et al. (2015)	Austria, Germany
	Grover et al. (2019)	France
Qualitative case study (3/11%)	Gillespie et al. (2014)	United Kingdom
	Goodstein et al. (2015)	United States
	Petriglieri (2015)	United Kingdom, United States
Qualitative grounded theory approach (2/7%)	Grover et al. (2014)	France, New Zealand, Germany
	Eberl et al. (2015)	Germany
Qualitative illustration (1/4%)	Six and Skinner (2010)	Netherlands
	Sørensen et al. (2011)	Denmark
Longitudinal multimethod case study (1/4%)		
	Holten et al. (2016)	United States, Denmark, Sweden
Longitudinal qualitative study (2/7%)		
	Sverdrup and Stensaker (2018)	Norway

example, they dealt with catastrophes or scandals, such as oil spills, fraud, or data manipulation). This is understandable as major catastrophes have wide-ranging effects that extend beyond those on employees.

The main trust repair mechanism (*Relational approach*, see Bachmann et al., 2015) was applied in twenty-four papers (86%). The other applied mechanisms were *regulation and controls* in five papers (18%), *ethical culture* in fourteen papers (50%) and *sense-making* in five papers (18%). We find that most empirical research (82%) has focused on *verbal trust repair responses* such as apology, denial, reticence, promise, explanation, excuse, creating clear and explicit expectations, constructive voice, resolving inconsistencies in speech, and emotional support. *Substantive responses* are not only verbal but also concrete actions taken to remedy damaged trust which often involve tangible elements. Substantive responses identified in our review included offering penance, financial compensation, open investigations, regulation, increasing the social exchange quality by renegotiating the psychological contract, preventive and repair actions focusing on increasing the social exchange quality and accepting responsibility for actions. Substantive trust repair responses have been studied less frequently than verbal responses and their prevalence in our review was 36%. The third approach to trust repair involves *organizational reforms*, which appeared in 18% of the reviewed papers. They mostly focused on the need to repair leadership and management practices (see Sørensen et al., 2011) and changing organizational structures, policies, and processes (see Gillespie et al., 2014). Organizational reforms identified in our review were for example, replacing senior leaders, goal-oriented leadership, amendments to organizational rules, and cultural reforms.

### 4.3. Qualitative meta-synthesis and integrated framework

In this section we synthesise findings from the studies included in this review into an integrated, multi-dimensional framework (Table 2). Our aim is to better understand and explain phenomena related to the present research topic. We look at selected studies in light of similarities and differences to build a convincing overall picture of the topic (Walsh & Downe, 2005). The framework integrates information derived from our systematic review and our categorization of trust violations, trust repair mechanisms, trust responses, moderators and contextual factors. In the first part of the framework, we explain reasons for the decline in employee trust. All trust violations are categorized based on the level of analysis they fall under. Next, we present the trust repair mechanisms, trust repair practices and response types studied that were used in order to repair employee trust after trust violations. Third, we integrate the positive and negative moderators that may improve or diminish effectiveness of trust repair. We also report the contextual dimensions that extant literature has found and which affect trust repair. The developed framework is dynamic and can be further expanded with new findings, serving as a theoretical basis to guide future research. We organize the findings regarding trust violations and trust repair mechanisms from extant literature into three categories. The first category, the individual level, incorporates all findings that relate to the individual level of analysis. The other two categories, the team/group level of analysis and organizational level of analysis, are treated in the same manner.

#### 4.3.1. Repairing trust in individuals and leaders

We found that apologies were one of the most common forms of verbal response at the individual level and were studied in some form in each article either alone or in combination with another trust repair strategy. Researchers have found that the effectiveness of apologies in restoring trust often depended on different moderators and the context (see Table 2).

In the hiring context, researchers found that repairing trust was more successful when 1) the mistrusted parties apologized for violations concerning ability but denied culpability for violations concerning integrity (Kim et al., 2004), 2) mistrusted parties apologized for violations when there was subsequent evidence of guilt but denied culpability

**Table 2**  
Integrative framework.

<b>1. Individual level (prevalence in the sample 20/71%)*</b>					
Author(s) and year	Reason for the decline in trust (freq)	Violated dimension of trustworthiness	Trust repair mechanism Bachmann et al., (2015)	Trust repair response used (response type)	Moderators/variables that can affect efficiency of trust repair (+ positive effects, - negative effects)
Ferrin et al. (2007); Kim et al. (2004); (2006; 2012;); Krylova et al. (2016); Maddux et al. (2011)	Employees' previous errors in the hiring context (6)	Ability, integrity	Social relations	Apology, denial, reticence, excuse (verbal), accepting responsibility (substantive)	Prior wrong doing (-), guilty (-) or not (+), apology after competence (+) or integrity-based violation (-), repentance (+) or indifference (-), cultural differences: relevant (+) or insignificant (-) apology, repairing trust with groups (-) or individuals (+), accepting responsibility (+) or excuse-making and denial (-) Respectful (+) or disrespectful (-) behaviour
De Cremer and Schouten, (2008)	Disrespectful behavior even when presented with an apology (1)	Benevolence, integrity	Social relations	Apology (verbal)	Series of trustworthy actions used (+) or not used (-), prior (-) or no prior deceptions (+), trust never fully recovers (-)
Schweitzer et al., (2006)	Untrustworthy actions and deception (1)	Integrity	Social relations	Apology, promises (verbal)	Losses (-) or gains (+) in bargaining, apologies with more components (+) or with fewer components (-), apologies following competence-based trust violations (+) or apologies following integrity-based violations (-)
De Cremer (2010); Lewicki et al. (2016)	Violations in negotiation context (2)	Ability, benevolence, integrity	Social relations	Apology (verbal), financial compensations (substantive)	Clear (+) or unclear (-) expectations, positive (+) or negative (-) interactions by both individuals, perceived repentance (+) or no any repentances (-)
Six and Skinner (2010); Dirks et al. (2011)	Troubles between two employees (2)	Ability, integrity	Social relations, regulation and controls	Apology (verbal), penance, regulation (substantive)	Intentional (-) or unintentional (+) violation, serious (-) or minor (+) violation, remedies implemented (+) or not implemented (-), timely (+) or delayed (-) apology, followers' emotional competencies are high (+) or low (-), mistrusted party's empathy (+) or absence of empathy (-).
Bagdasarov et al. (2019); Grover et al. (2014, 2019); Haesevoets et al. (2015); Monzani et al. (2015)	Managers violations and weaknesses in decision-making and goal-setting (5)	Ability, benevolence, integrity	Social relations, ethical culture	Apology, denial, emotional support (verbal)	Remedies implemented (+) or not implemented (-), ability (+) or inability (-) to forgive, motivation of violators' to repair trust is high (+) or low (-), quality of social exchange is high (+) or weak (-), guilty (-) or not (+), strong (+) or weak (-) communications and other personnel skills, financial (+) or non-financial (-) responses
Elangovan et al. (2015); Goodstein et al. (2015); Holten et al. (2016)	Various internal disturbances (3)	Ability, benevolence, integrity	Social relations, ethical culture, sense-making	Increasing the social exchange quality, penance (substantive), explanations, apology (verbal)	
<b>2. Team/group level (prevalence in the sample 5/18%)*</b>					
Sørensen et al. (2011); Sverdrup and Stensaker (2018)	Organizational change (2)	Ability, benevolence, integrity	Ethical culture	Strong management actions (organizational reforms), increasing the social exchange quality (substantive)	Active attempts to protect trust (+) or low trust turns into distrust (-), successful (+) or failed (-) change management
Kim et al. (2012)	Employees' previous errors in the hiring context (1)	Ability, integrity	Social relations	Apology, denial (verbal)	Competence-based violation (+), integrity-based violation (-), repairing trust with individual (+) or groups (-)
Pate et al. (2012)	The founding principle of respect had been contravened in an organization (bullying, harassment) (1)	Ability, benevolence, integrity	Ethical culture	Strong management actions (organizational reform), emotional support for employees (verbal)	Strong (+) or weak (-) communications and other personnel skills, emotional intelligence strong (+) or weak (-)
Webber et al. (2012)	The lack of support (1)	Ability	Ethical culture	Emotional support for employees (verbal)	Perceived repentance (+) or no any repentances (-)
<b>3. Organizational level (prevalence in the sample 4/14%)*</b>					
Eberl et al. (2015); Gillespie et al. (2014)	Fraud, data manipulation and corruption scandals (2)	Integrity	Social relations, regulation and controls, ethical culture, sense-making	Explanations, apologies (verbal), penance, investigations (substantive), systemic reforms, cultural reforms, replacing senior leaders, organizational rule	Procedural modifications (+), new rules were difficult to implement in practice (-), number of trust remedies used is high (+) or low (-)

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

Petriglieri (2015)	Oil rig explosion and spill (1)	Ability	Social relations	adjustments (organizational reforms) Co-created positive social information (verbal)	Positive (+) or negative (-) attitudes
Henderson et al. (2020)	Psychological contract breach in the employer-employee relationship (1)	No specifications	Social relations, regulation and controls	Penance (substantive), denial, apology, excuse (verbal)	Repentance (+) or indifference (-), denial (-) or granting with apology (+)
*) Kim et al. (2012) Both, individual and team levels are involved					

for violations when there was subsequent evidence for innocence (Kim et al., 2004), and, 3) job applicants apologized for their past wrongdoing and accepted responsibility instead of attempting to make excuses for or deny their past behaviour (Krylova et al., 2016). In a hiring context, on the contrary, researchers found that the apology was not always effective for trust repair. For example: 1) In some cultures an apology was regarded as “cheap talk”, while in others it implied guilt (Maddux et al., 2011). 2) After an integrity-based violation, reticence was a suboptimal response because, like apology, it failed to address guilt, and after a competence-based violation, it was a suboptimal response because, like denial, it failed to signal atonement (Ferrin et al., 2007). 3) Being guilty of an integrity-based violation could be so detrimental to trust that there was no response at all capable of mitigating the damage caused (Kim et al., 2006).

De Cremer and Schouten (2008) found that the tone of the apology matters too, and that after an individual employee’s benevolence-based and integrity-based trust violations (disrespectful behaviour), apologies enhanced perceptions of fairness only when the authority was perceived as respectful. Later, De Cremer (2010) studied the effect of apologies versus offers of financial compensation in a bargaining context and found that apologies can have positive effects on trust behaviour after a transgression has occurred but that effects depended on moderators (losses or gains in bargaining). However, similarly in a bargaining context, Lewicki et al. (2016) proposed that especially after an integrity-based trust violation, a mere apology is not likely to be sufficient to repair trust but would require more tangible methods.

In leader–follower relationships, researchers have found: 1) After leaders’ inadequate or incorrect decisions, when a long time has already passed, followers express the greatest need for an apology, but, at the same time, expect an apology to be less effective at enhancing trustworthiness than when one is offered in a timely manner (Haesevoets et al., 2015). 2) In the recovery process, leaders must first openly discuss the violation(s), apologize and demonstrate support for followers, but similar to Kim et al.’s (2006) proposal, some trust violations destroyed trust to such a degree that it cannot be restored and cause followers to withdraw from the relationship (Grover et al., 2014). 3) The effectiveness of apologies depends on the leaders’ intentionality and the severity of the consequences of the violation of trust. Moderate combinations of severity and intentionality accommodate a greater likelihood of forgiveness compared to mild or intense violations (Grover et al., 2019). 4) When violations are of a personal nature, apologies and empathy demonstrated by the mistrusted party aid the repair of trust more effectively than if there is no evidence of empathy and, when coupled with a denial of culpability, produce markedly increased perceptions of the violator’s integrity (Bagdasarov et al., 2019). 5) Followers’ emotional competencies have largely positive effects on followers’ trust in leadership, and only setting goals in a directive way compensates low levels of followers’ emotional clarity and repair (Monzani et al., 2015). 6) Apologies with explanations by the trustee significantly reduced the erosion of trust compared to efforts that did not employ such behaviours. Erosion of trust was minimized when the trustee engaged in more trust repair behaviour (Elangovan et al., 2015).

In bilateral relationships, researchers have found: 1) Clear and explicit expectations and constructive voices by both parties help repair trust when troubles arise between two employees (Six and Skinner,

2010). 2) Penance and regulation can be effective to the extent that they elicit the crucial mediating cognition of perceived repentance (Dirks et al., 2011). 3) Specific preventive and repair actions focusing on increasing the quality of social exchanges could offer a remedy for trust violations (Holten et al., 2016). 4) Promises to change behaviour can significantly speed the trust recovery process (Schweitzer et al., 2006). 5) Moderators such as communications skills and the response type (financial/nonfinancial responses) affect trust repairing (Goodstein et al., 2015). Schweitzer et al. (2006) noted that prior deception hinders the effectiveness of a promise in accelerating trust recovery. They also argued that trust never fully recovers, even when deceived participants receive a promise or an apology, if promises made by a violator are not kept and trust harmed again with the same untrustworthy actions and deception as before.

The above review reveals that, at the individual level, by far the most commonly studied trust-repair strategies are verbal responses, especially apologies. Studies conducted outside of laboratory contexts are needed and future research should examine trust repair with field studies and sampling of the real working environment. Future investigations should also examine trust repair tactics other than apologies. A mere apology is often not effective, at least on its own, to repair trust and can be experienced as “cheap talk”. For example, Krylova et al. (2016) found substantive responses to be more effective than verbal ones. In terms of verbal responses, the findings indicate that the type of apology plays a role in the success of trust repairing, and some components of an apology are particularly important, for example, an acknowledgement of responsibility. Thus, more concrete trust repair strategies than an apology are required at the individual level. In future studies, there is a need to focus on moderators and contextual variables that may improve the effectiveness of the trust repair practices used.

#### 4.3.2. Repairing trust in groups and teams

Kim et al. (2012) investigated trust repair in the work group context and found that it is not sensible to deny guilt especially after a competence-based trust violation. Both groups and individuals were less trusting when trustees denied culpability for a competence-based violation rather than apologized for it. Importantly, Kim et al. (2012) found that repairing trust is usually more difficult with groups than with individuals because groups can share their opinions in a way that can further reinforce negative feelings.

Webber et al. (2012) investigated the lack of top management support for the group of managers (34 supervisory managers and 8 department directors) in the hotel industry. Their results demonstrate that after competence-based trust violations, perceived organizational support was significantly and positively related to trust in top management. Similarly, Pate et al. (2012) found that after employees’ perceived bullying and harassment, a senior management group’s support provided to employee had a significant effect on trust. Further, Pate et al. (2012) found that strong management actions demonstrating integrity, competence, consistency, loyalty, openness, and respect had positive trust outcomes on employee loyalty, benevolence and openness and thus, improved employee trust in management in the trust dimension of benevolence, but no significant changes found in other trust dimensions (ability and integrity).

In the context of strategic change Sverdrup and Stensaker (2018)



proposed that the trust restoration process is a three-stage process consisting of (1) restoring reciprocity, (2) renegotiating the transactional terms of the psychological contract, and (3) extending the psychological contract to include relational terms. In the organizational change context, similarly than Pate et al. (2012) in the bullying context, Sørensen et al., (2011) found that strong management actions conveying integrity, competence, and benevolence can rebuild trust in such situations.

Current research on trust repair in groups suggests that verbal responses such as apology and denial, and organizational reforms such as strong management actions can rebuild trust at the group level. However, repairing trust in groups is more challenging than repairing individual trust, and thus a combination of trust repair mechanisms could be a useful approach. Overall, much more research is needed at the team level and e.g. Sørensen et al., (2011) found that more qualitative trust repair studies are needed in the change context in particular for understanding the process of distrust and the possible means of breaking the negative cycle it creates. In conclusion, similarly to the individual level, team level studies also need to focus on moderators and contextual variables that may underpin the effectiveness of trust repair practices used.

#### 4.3.3. Repairing trust in organizations

Particularly at the organizational level, effective trust repair seems to require a move beyond verbal responses to substantive responses and perhaps even organizational reform. There is also an interesting dyadic perspective that may warrant research attention. Petriglieri (2015) examined during and after the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil rig explosion and spill whether and how the relationship between an organization and its executives can be repaired once damaged. She found that the incident destabilized executives' organizational identification, leading them to doubt the alignment between their own identity and organization, and generated feelings of ambivalence toward the organization and their role in it. Executives resolve their ambivalence only when active co-creation takes place between executives and the organization. Co-created positive social information was key mechanism to resolving executives' ambivalence and destabilized identification.

Gillespie et al. (2014) found that verbal, substantive and organizational reforms played an important role in organizational trust repair after an integrity violation. The case studies conducted by Gillespie et al. (2014) suggest that after large-scale scandals, such as fraud and data manipulation, substantive trust repair, for example, open investigations and penance, and combining multiple and concrete trust-repair remedies can deliver the optimal trust outcomes. The study further highlighted that even if the focus is on organizational reforms in trust repair, verbal and substantive responses are also required to restore trust. The study contributes seven trust-repair practices including open investigations, accurate explanations, apologies, penance, replacing senior leaders, systemic reforms and cultural reforms. Finally, Gillespie and colleagues note that trust violations related to fraud and data manipulation affect the functioning of an organization in a systemic way that also undermines external stakeholders' trust in the organization.

Eberl et al. (2015) studied a corruption scandal and confirmed the need to rebuild trust by reorganizing organizational structures, policies, and processes. The study found that following integrity violations organizational rules adjustments are an appropriate signal for external stakeholders despite the fact that for employees the rule adjustments were a source of dissatisfaction because they were often difficult to implement. Eberl et al. (2015) contribute particularly to research on trust repair by paying attention to an effective interplay between formal and informal rules in order to safeguard and repair trust and satisfaction among both employees and external stakeholders.

Henderson et al. (2020) studied psychological contract breach in the employer–employee relationship by investigating six general repair tactics (full penance, partial penance, denial, apology, excuses, a combined apology/excuse) in terms of whether they improve trust and

diminish the negative emotions following a breach. The study concluded that in breaches of trust, all five other tactics than denial, are capable of repairing trust. Similarly to what Kim et al. (2006) and Grover et al. (2014) proposed at the individual level, Henderson et al. (2020) argued that at the organizational level avoiding breach altogether would be optimal as even after a repair tactic was used, trust did not return to its pre-breach level.

Furthermore, organizations' external reputation and image also often require restorative treatment after violations by organization or line management. Among other things, employees may worry about their employer's ability to continue employing them if the organization acquires a poor reputation among the public. Therefore, after an organizational-level violation, an apology is unlikely to be sufficient (see also De Cremer and Schouten, 2008 at the individual level) and more rigorous and holistic ways to repair trust that take all levels of the organization into account are likely to be required. We conclude that at the organizational level, there are multiple trust-repair strategies capable of restoring trust. Most effective trust repair mechanisms combine informal and formal, verbal and substantive practices and confer agency to both the trustee and the trustor.

## 5. Discussion

We organized our review based on the multilevel approach to organizational trust (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Based on the framework presented in Table 2, we offer a critical analysis of the trust-repair mechanisms and responses used within organizations to enable future scholars clarify the various trust-repair responses and their effectiveness at different organization levels. Next, we discuss the state-of-the art in empirical research on employee trust repair to provide a point of departure for future research. Further, we highlight promising new research avenues and discuss the managerial implications for HR and management involved in the everyday practice of work and organizing.

### 5.1. State-of-the art and point of departure for research on employee trust repair

The largest number of empirical studies on trust repair have focused on the individual level. Most of those studies highlighted integrity-based and competence-based violations (e.g., Kim et al., 2004; 2006), with fewer addressing benevolence-based trust violations (e.g., Goodstein et al., 2015). At the team level, trust repair practices were studied mostly following competence-based violations (e.g., Webber et al., 2012). It seems that both integrity-based and benevolence-based trust violations are still under-researched (Pate et al., 2012). Interestingly, at the organizational level, there are more trust repair studies focusing on integrity-based trust violations (e.g., Gillespie et al., 2014) but far less research on employee trust repair after competence-based and benevolence-based trust violations. Benevolence and competence are typically personal attributes. If there is an erosion of trust in bilateral interactions, it does not necessarily undermine trust in the whole organization. However, as Petriglieri (2015) suggests, competence-based and benevolence-based trust violations by management might also erode employee trust in the organization. We also noticed that research on the processes of trust violations and repair (Dirks et al., 2009) is still relatively scarce.

### 5.2. Multilevel trust repair practices

The analysis we conducted reveals much of the past research on organizational trust repair focused on a single level of analysis, even though Dirks et al. (2009) highlighted the need for a multilevel approach a decade ago. We propose that understanding how different types of employee trust violations are linked to trust-repair actions merits further examination, especially at the team and organizational levels. At the individual level, it is important to note that forgiveness following a trust violation depends on bilateral relations: that state encompasses how

heartfelt the apology is and how receptive the trustor is to forgiving the trustee and continuing the interaction (Kim, 2018). Past research also suggests that individual and organizational trust repair practices such as the repair of trust in top management requires complementary actions and organizational support (Webber et al., 2012). As trust is a concept that integrates micro- and meso-levels (psychological process and group dynamics) with macro-level (organizational and institutional forms, see e.g., Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Rousseau et al., 1998) access to various repair strategies is necessary, because diverse violations and their effects diffuse easily across levels. Therefore, trust repair between an employee and a leader should be approached in the broader context of a group or a team, and trust repair at the team level in the organizational context.

### 5.3. Towards more comprehensive trust repair practices

Past research shows the need to combine different types of trust repair practices, for example, an apology with compensation (Dirks et al., 2011; Lewicki et al., 2016). The most common practices applied to advance trust repair are still verbal, such as apologies (Haesevoets et al., 2015). However, empirical studies on employee trust repair suggest substantive measures are also important, in this specific field and especially in the context of more severe trust violations (De Cremer, 2010; Gillespie et al., 2014). Substantive responses, such as financial compensation, provide an important signal of repentance and thereby repair trust (Dirks et al., 2011; Gillespie et al., 2014; Gillespie & Siebert, 2018).

### 5.4. Early action to address common trust violations

A notable issue in past research on trust repair is also the focus on catastrophes and scandals. Our research offers illustrative cases on trust repair yet we want to emphasize that in the current dynamic and unpredictable environment trust violations are becoming far more common, reported more frequently in the media and demanding frequent attention from HR and the management of organizations. Instead of major transgressions and failures of trust we propose that there may be multiple little events and signals that may build up to undermine trust if they are not carefully monitored, understood, and addressed.

There is evidently a need for future research to investigate strategies for dealing with more mundane and smaller trust violations before they escalate to become major trust transgressions; acting early to redress transgressions also requires less costly and extensive measures. In parallel with the need for trust repair mechanisms to become more comprehensive, and the need for ordinary management practices to deal with potentially severe consequences, we advocate for trust repair to focus on minor and potentially trust-harming issues.

### 5.5. Limitations

As in all research, there are limitations to our review. The first limitation concerns the choice of databases. The literature search was conducted using the citation databases Web of Science and Scopus. This choice of databases could be seen as a limitation, but according to Falagas et al. (2008), Scopus and Web of Science provide accurate and comprehensive documentation of high quality published academic literature in social sciences. In reviewing articles, there is always the risk that the selected keywords could have caused some potentially relevant articles to have been omitted, although we did attempt to address the issue by extending the search terms and including synonyms. The exclusion phase based on titles, abstracts, and full texts followed carefully pre-set criteria, yet the researchers' personal judgements might also have been an influence, although again we addressed the issue by having two independent researchers verify candidate articles during the selection process.

### 5.6. Further research directions

During the analysis of the review findings we identified several research gaps that provide fruitful research avenues for scholars to further research. We classified research gaps as follows: 1) research methods, data and sample, 2) contextual issues, and 3) moderators. The latter two are the most important as they can play a crucial role in the success of a trust repair.

#### 5.6.1. Focus on research methods and data

Several researchers have proposed that there is a need for qualitative field studies and case studies on trust repair in different relationships (see, e.g., Kim et al., 2004; Ferrin et al., 2007; Gillespie et al., 2014). Qualitative research such as focus groups could provide an understanding of how employees perceive different trust repair practices in various contexts, as well as offering a basis on which to build measures for trust repair practices. It is not easy to explain the extent to which trust violation affects trust, and which trust repair tactics are effective. We agree with Gillespie et al.'s (2014) proposal that a longitudinal design using multiple methods to collect data would be especially helpful in understanding the trust repair process because this approach takes better into account the dynamic nature of trust and measures trust at multiple points in time. We also suggest mixed designs that first acquire contextual understanding through qualitative research, then take the knowledge to lab experiments to isolate the causal effect of specific repair practices, and/or test qualitative insights through empirical field studies.

It is also clear that gaining timely access to organizations struggling with trust repair issues can be challenging for researchers. For this reason, experimental laboratory studies dominate early empirical studies on trust repair (see, e.g., Ferrin et al., 2007), and data were often collected from students. Given the contextualized nature of trust repair, we suggest future research complement laboratory studies with field studies within organizations in which method and sampling are based on the real working environment (Webber et al., 2012).

#### 5.6.2. Focus on contextual issues

Researchers have proposed that more trust repair studies are needed in the contexts of organizational change and negotiations (Lewicki et al., 2016; Sørensen et al., 2011). Thus, we suggest that future research on employee trust repair pay attention to various organizational changes. There are already some studies on organizational changes and their impact on employee trust (e.g., Sørensen et al., 2011; Saunders, Dietz, & Thornhill, 2014), as well as some new investigations regarding trust repair following negotiations in which negotiators do not keep their promises (see, e.g., Lewicki et al., 2016). However, we currently have little research to inform the understanding of employee trust repair in the context of (and after) organizational change. In addition, change processes often do not proceed as planned; for example, new technologies and organizational changes often affect employee work design, yet we found no studies addressing this aspect of trust repair. Organizational changes related to workplace automation can cause employees to become wary and undermine their trust. Another timely issue is the lack of transparency and questions related to bias when artificial intelligence is used in recruitment and HR processes. How can HR and management repair employee trust in such increasingly common situations?

Organizational changes also often lead to restructuring and employee layoffs. How does the repair of trust differ for those who keep their jobs and those who lose them? Increasingly, organizations pursue flexibility and use temporary task forces and freelancers on short-term contracts. How can an organization's positive image and trustworthiness remain sufficiently strong in the eyes of temporary workers to ensure they are willing to return to the same employer in the future? What combination of trust repair practices offers the best strategy to repair trust in this context?

Technological change is not only impacting work design,

interpersonal interaction, and communication, but also transparency and immediacy in communications. Organizational trust issues may become public and transparent with a single post on social media by one employee. This means that the time span for trust repairing actions can reduce to hours instead of days or weeks. Future research and HR should also consider how to observe levels of trust and related incidents closer to real time, and what kind of trust repair practices can be launched immediately? This field of research could draw from crisis communications. Who are the organization's spokespersons, and what are the messages? How can apologies be sincere, and what are the trust repair actions following breaches of trust?

### 5.6.3. Focus on moderators

Researchers have suggested several moderators that should be further explored. For example, Lewicki et al. (2016) called for more information about whether the number of apology components depends on other potential moderators, and Goodstein et al. (2015) proposed more studies regarding the relationships between the severity of the wrongdoing and the willingness to forgive. Dirks et al. (2011) proposed that future research could consider whether and how penance and regulation change when stronger emotion between parties is involved. Also Schweitzer et al., (2006) and Dunn and Schweitzer (2005) have emphasized the scarce research on the relationship between emotions and trust in trust recovery. Similarly, Monzani et al. (2015) found that in terms of trust formation, a leader's ability to understand and manage others' emotions elicits positive affective states in followers, which is essential for the formation of trust in followers. However, researchers have proposed that there is still a great need to further investigate the role of emotions in the trust recovery process as well as the role of emotional competencies and emotional intelligence in trust repair (Monzani et al., 2015). We also believe that there is a great need for future work investigating the impact of emotions on trust formation and repair.

Another issue that is becoming pertinent is the impact of the macro level and institutional trust outside the organization, that is, how macro-level forces affect trust dynamics at the organizational level (Bachmann et al., 2015; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009). There is already some evidence that different external events and conditions affect employees' levels of trust even if there were no negative signs or trust breaches within organization. Technological change (e.g., automation and loss of jobs), lack of industry renewal, lack of predictability in national politics, or even pandemics, may influence reducing employee trust within organizations. The role of the media in covering more negative and sensational news or even so-called fake news also has an impact on people, whether in their private capacity or as employees.

We acknowledge the diversity of employees and their differing access to information, power and vulnerabilities having a possible impact on how they perceive and interpret breaches of trust and the repairing mechanisms deployed. Further, we acknowledge that not only intra-organizational, but also extra-organizational factors such as an organization's reputation and institutions, such as regulation and control may have an effect on the employee's perception of organizational trust (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Gillespie & Siebert, 2018). Gillespie and Dietz (2009) note that external governance such as laws, rules, regulations, and public reputation can be critical to organizational trust. Compliance with general rules and regulations, including ethical behaviour, reflects the reliability of the organization both within the organization and in to external stakeholders.

Finally, recent discussion of stakeholder trust is highly relevant for future academic and practical interest in employee trust repair. The relationships between different organizational stakeholder groups (e.g., Bachmann et al., 2015) have an impact on employee trust repair: for example, trust breaches among suppliers will become known and have an effect on both buyers' and suppliers' employees. Again, transparency and interconnectedness mean that an organization must often consider several stakeholder groups in their employee trust repair strategies.

## 5.7. Implications and conclusion

In this study, several trust repair practices are identified and synthesized. Thus, we contribute to the trust repair literature, and we believe that the synthesized information provided in this study together with the integrative framework presented in Table 2 will be useful and valuable for future researchers. Here in the context of employee trust repair, we define trust repair practices as active organizational and managerial practices to repair employee trust. They are thus comparable to HRM practices and focus on restoring employee positive perceptions (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009) and expectations of the trustworthiness of the organization, team, or an individual (see e.g., Gillespie & Siebert, 2018; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). Currently, researchers have measured levels of trust pre- and post-violation, generally focusing on one or a few trust repair practices through which, for example, actions/verbal statements positively influence trust levels or restore violated trust (Elangovan et al., 2015; Haesevoets et al., 2015; Webber et al., 2012). We suggest the need to develop a validated 'trust repair practices scale' in order to measure the effectiveness of the trust repair practices identified and synthesized in this study. This validated trust repair practices scale can be used in further trust research and applied also by practitioners. Researchers could also study the contingencies and how various trust repair practices fit different situations, comparable to research on HR practices as bundles (see e.g., Guest, Conway, & Dewe, 2004; MacDuffie, 1995). Researchers' close collaboration with HR practitioners and managers operating in the everyday context of work and organizing could provide mutual benefits in the form of data access and improving practices to support the repair of employee trust.

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