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Building trust in the classroom: perspectives from students and teachers

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Abstract
The importance of fostering trust between students and teachers is a growing focus in education. However, practitioners and researchers hold different understandings of this research topic that often neglect the viewpoints of both students and teachers. Addressing this, we explored the nuanced nature of trust from the perspectives of students and teachers, including antecedents and consequences they associated with trust. We conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve participants: two teachers and five students each from two ninth-grade classes in a German intermediate school ("Mittelschule"). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis highlighted the relevance of trust for challenged populations in the aftermath of COVID- 19 in particular and suggests that, from student and teacher perspectives, trust may encompass more elements than recognized in previous scientific literature. Based on student and teacher perspectives, we propose an extended definition of trust as a willingness to be vulnerable to, or to confide in, others based on their openness, honesty, reliability, benevolence, and competence. Students and teachers identified similar trust-related behaviours inside and outside the classroom, linking trust with engagement, overall well-being, and attitudes towards making mistakes. These findings underscore the importance of actively cultivating trust in educational settings to foster supportive learning environments and meaningful student–teacher relationships.

Keywords Trust · Student–teacher-relationship

Introduction

Trust plays a vital role in our complex and interdependent society (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Nevertheless, recent data points to a crisis of trust in politics, the economy, and the media, attesting a rising sense of injustice and helplessness that also threatens education (MacKenzie & Bhatt, 2020; Niedlich et al., 2020). Schools are a fundamental setting where trust is developed—and without this development, learning and educational progress will

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be hindered. Furthermore, trust is also an outcome of the educational process that is critical to a functioning society, as schools aim to transmit societal norms and develop the cognitive capacities necessary for trust to be recognized as an individual and collective resource. Niedlich et al. (2020) proposes that both educational governance and educational institutions rely on societal trust, where students are entrusted to schools for their education, guidance, and protection (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Within the classroom, trust serves as the cornerstone of strong student–teacher relationships and helps ignite motivation and engagement (Romero, 2010). Therefore, schools play a critical role in society, fostering trust not only to further students' learning outcomes but also to build functional communities.

The relevance of trust for education has become especially clear during the COVID- 19 pandemic and the subsequent shift to distance learning—a challenge most schools were not prepared for (Danchikov et al., 2021; Daumiller et al., 2023a, 2023b). As classrooms migrated to virtual platforms, meeting students' needs became an especially daunting task (Janke et al., 2022). While many teachers, succeeded in mediating subject matter via digital platforms with a great deal of work, it became increasingly clear that school is about more than just curriculum. As social structures became more distant, the role of trust in maintaining connections became clearer. This heightened relevance of trust aligns with increased research attention being paid to this construct in recent decades (Brito et al., 2021), and a consensus that the nature and quality of students' relationships with their teachers play a central role in their motivation and engagement in learning (Wentzel, 2016).

Previous studies on trust have primarily focused on adults in the school context (e.g., Byrk & Schneider, 2003; Durnford, 2010; Goddard et al., 2000; Kochanek, 2005; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2012), while an explicit consideration of students' perspectives—for example, through qualitative methods—and comparisons of students' and teachers' views on trust are lacking. Such perspectives, however, are vital, as trust is not a one-directional experience, but rather a reciprocal process in which students and teachers evaluate each other's trustworthiness (Durnford, 2010). Furthermore, it is possible that students and teachers also use different benchmarks, making the relationship of trust between students and teachers even more dynamic. Through qualitative interviews, our study aims to compare trust-related perspectives held by students and teachers, behaviours that foster trust, and consequences of trust. By focusing on the subjective realities of both students and teachers, we seek to generate insights not only regarding the intricate nature of trust, but also concerning the interconnectedness of their perspectives. In doing so, we specifically focused on the personal experiences of the main stakeholders in school life in the aftermath of Covid- 19. A German intermediate school (Mittelschule) was chosen as the source of our study because students there are more likely to encounter specific challenges related to cultivating trust. This is because German intermediate schools often include students with diverse social backgrounds, poorer self-regulatory skills, and lower academic performance compared to other educational environments in Germany (Protsch & Solga, 2016). This specific context is thus suitable to provide another perspective to existing literature about the nature and meaning of trust. Furthermore, the results of our study give rise to ideas for the practical implementation of trust-based behaviour in schools.

Trust: What is it and what does it encompass?

While the importance of trust for human conduct is seldom questioned, there is a widespread lack of agreement on a suitable definition of the construct (Hosmer, 1995). Trust is a complex phenomenon with varying definitions across disciplines. Through synthesizing

reoccurring facets of trust from literature, we believe it is possible to approach a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999), Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) were pioneers in this endeavour whose extensive analysis of definitions of trust led to the following conceptualization: "Trust is one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p.189). Crucially, this definition can be applied to both individuals and groups.

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) emphasize that trust cannot emerge without vulnerability. This argument extends to the absence of interdependence. This is especially relevant in educational contexts. Firstly, students are vulnerable due to their knowledge and skill gaps. For these deficits to be compensated, they are dependent on their teachers. Secondly, students are vulnerable because they are not able to discern the accuracy and quality of knowledge and skills being taught. Vulnerability and interdependence hold the potential for betrayal and harm. Similar dynamics apply to teachers. By operating under constant observation and evaluation of students, while also opening up to them and encouraging participation, teachers assume vulnerability and dependence (see Butler, 2007; Daumiller et al., 2023a, 2023b). Consequently, trust involves a willingness to embrace vulnerability under conditions of risk and interdependence. Vulnerability, and the willingness to embrace it, is the precondition for any trust relationship. This willingness is manifested when the following 'faces of trust' (Hoy & Tschannen Moran, 1999) are, either partly or completely, present.

Benevolence is centred around the assurance that the trusted party will safeguard one's well-being or any matter of personal importance instead of causing harm. This involves refraining from capitalizing on unforeseen advantages to the detriment others, even when having the ability to do so (Cummings & Bromiley 1996). Benevolence is closely intertwined with vulnerability, signifying the refusal to exploit vulnerability despite the existence of an opportunity. It embodies a broad attitude that, in an ongoing relationship, specific future actions may not be explicitly defined, but a mutual disposition of goodwill is expected (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

At a fundamental level, trust is related to predictability, which is the consistency of behaviour and knowing what to expect from others (Hosmer, 1995). Predictability is combined with benevolence to form *reliability*, meaning "the extent to which one can count on another to come through with what is needed" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p.187). Most interactions do not take place simultaneously, but rather unfold over time. Thus, there is lag between when a commitment is made and when the outcomes are perceived. Reliability serves to bridge this gap (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Competence is also important for the development and nurturing of trust. In situations where interdependence exists and a certain level of skill is required to fulfil an expectation, an individual who possesses benevolence alone may still not be regarded as trustworthy (Baier, 1986). This especially holds true in organizational and professional contexts, in which individuals and groups deal with complex tasks.

Honesty is perceived as an essential element of trust by many scholars and researchers (Baier, 1986; Cummings & Bromiley 1996; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). A simplified understanding of the concept might solely equate trust with refraining from lying. However, an appropriate definition reveals greater complexity. Honesty can have different dimensions related to character, integrity, and authenticity (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Integrity means alignment between statements and actions, specifically that statements are made truthfully and reflecting events as perceived by the individual. It also implies that commitments about future actions will be honoured (Tschannen-Moran &

Hoy, 2000). Authenticity in turn refers to a willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions and avoid distortion of the truth or shifting blame to others.

Openness is the final facet within this multidimensional definition of trust. It can be defined as "the extent to which relevant information is not withheld" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p.558). Openness signifies a form of mutual trust, reflecting a belief that neither the individual nor the information itself will be misused, and that recipients can reciprocate the same level of confidence.

Trust is bound to temporal and context-specific factors. These factors are crucial for analysis, as trust is a dynamic and complex construct. Trust can vary depending on an individual's predisposition,, emotional states, personal values, attitudes, diversity-related factors, calculative motivations, knowledge, and the level of institutional support for trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). For example, for some students trust is a relatively stable part of their personality, while others are only able to trust while they are in positive emotional states (see Thielmann & Hilbig, 2015). Furthermore, people are more likely to trust when their counterpart shares similarities with them (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In some cases, trust involves a rational calculation of costs and benefits, where the amount of information and knowledge about the counterpart is essential in decisions. The institutional context is particularly important for shaping trust relationships in schools, with social structures and systems being highly influential. To gain a comprehensive understanding, these fundamental aspects and degrees of trust should be considered and subsequently applied to individual relationships.

Trust in the context of schools: Previous research

Research on student trust and its consequences is limited. While the scientific focus has primarily been on adult actors in the context of schools (Romero, 2010), recent studies have started to investigate the implications of student trust and its importance. Most studies focusing on the student perspective have investigated the relationship between trust and academic performance using quantitative research methods. Lee (2007) demonstrated that students' sense of trust positively influences their school adjustment, academic motivation, and consequently, their academic performance. Similar findings were observed by Romero (2010), drawing on data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS). Besides providing indications that students with higher levels of trust have better grades, trusting students were more likely to graduate, have more ambitious postsecondary plans, and higher grade point averages. Focusing on the social dimension of trust, Adams (2014) investigated collective student trust and found that a culture of collective student trust enhanced identification with school, internal control over learning tasks, and math and reading achievement. While Basch's (2012) findings concerning the relationship between personal trust and student success were inconclusive, trust and student achievement remained significant even after student background, prior achievement, race, and gender were considered (Leithwood et al., 2010).

Further studies have investigated consequences of trust apart from academic performance. For example, Ahmadi et al. (2020) identified trust between students and teachers as a central factor for the development of a sense of belonging in school. In relation to this, Prickett (2016) investigated the relationship between teacher leadership, student trust, and student commitment to ethical goodness with a focus on the student perspective. As opposed to student perception of teacher leadership, student trust was not a statistically

significant predictor for a student's commitment to ethical goodness. Hongwidjojo et al. (2018) extended research on trust to consider its impact on well-being, uncovering a positive relationship between student–teacher trust and school well-being as perceived by students.

Research on trust and its consequences in the context of schools has predominantly focused on adults. A meta-analysis by Sun et al. (2023) focusing on teachers as trustors, both in groups and individually, that includes research from the last 35 years and demonstrates that teacher trust has a moderate effect size regarding student learning. In a qualitative study, Durnford (2010) explored the trust relationship between individual middle school teachers and students, revealing that when trust was present from the teacher's perspective, it correlated with increased student achievement at the secondary level. This connection between teacher trust and student achievement is also evident in Goddard et al.'s (2000) work, which shows that higher teacher efficacy leads to higher relational trust among colleagues (faculty trust), subsequently resulting in improved student achievement. The teacher perspective of trust also played a role in studies by Kochanek (2005) and Byrk and Schneider (2003), where they identified relationships between faculty trust and leadership abilities as well as student performance, particularly when integrity, respect, personal regard, and competence were emphasized. These studies also highlighted strategies for building trust, including facilitating communication and interaction, removing trust barriers, and fostering comfort. Van Maele and Van Houtte (2012) investigated the impact of trust at the level of both the teacher and the faculty in vocational and academic tracks, revealing positive links between teacher trust in students, parents, colleagues, and the principal and satisfaction. The work of Vostal et al. (2019) emphasized the process character of collegial trust: according to them, the formation of trust requires long-term effort. Concerning the relationship between trust and well-being, Yu and Chen's study (2023) found that trust in Chinese pre-schools significantly influenced emotional well-being and job performance of middle leaders. This nuanced overview underscores the significance of teacher trust and its impact on student achievement and professional satisfaction.

Additional insights from trust research in schools, encompassing perspectives beyond solely students or teachers, suggest that relational trust is a central element for school reform and improvement (Byrk & Schneider, 2003). The role of principals and the extent to which they trust and are trusted are essential for shaping school identification and student performance (Dabney, 2008). Tschannen-Moran (2014) further emphasized the interconnected nature of trust relationships within schools, highlighting the necessity of considering all stakeholders for a comprehensive understanding.

As the above overview shows, previous research on trust in schools has largely focused on adults and on the consequences of trust, mainly student performance. Most studies adopted quantitative research approaches and paper-and-pencil questionnaires. While these studies generally revealed a positive relationship between trust and student performance, they only partially captured the subjective nature of trust as perceived by both students and teachers. This limitation is noteworthy, considering potential differences in how trust is perceived and understood by individuals of different ages, life experiences, and educational backgrounds. This gap in understanding also encompasses a lack of investigations into specific trust-related behaviours as perceived by students and teachers.

Moreover, most of the previous research on trust has been conducted in a US-based context, with only some studies emerging from Asia, and even fewer from Europe. Additionally, much of the existing research is relatively dated. Thus, our current investigation, which is based in the EU, addresses a crucial gap by providing contemporary insights from a European perspective. To this end, we focus on students in a German Mittleschule,

which can be considered particularly meaningful for studying trust between teachers and students for two reasons. Firstly, in the German three-track educational system, the Mittelschule typically serves students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and with poorer prior academic performance. These students often face unique challenges and have higher educational and social needs, making the development of trust between teachers and students particularly critical for their academic and personal growth. Secondly, the class teacher principle employed in the Mittelschule further underscores the importance of trust. According to this homeroom principle, one teacher is responsible for teaching multiple subjects to the same group of students. This approach allows for trust to be cultivated and observed more readily compared to systems where students have different teachers for each subject. Accordingly, such a context should provide a broad and rich ground to study the relevance and facets of trust through the subjective reality of students.

The present study

We investigated the following research questions and hypotheses in the present study:

1. What is the nature of trust as perceived by students and teachers?

We expected that the 'five faces of trust', as defined by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999), would be integral to the conceptualizations of trust held by the interviewed students and teachers. We followed up on that by investigating whether students or teachers emphasized additional elements that necessitate inclusion or further differentiation.

2. What are the situations and behaviours that students and teachers associate with trust?

We expected that trust, as perceived by students and teachers, is associated with specific behaviours inside and outside the classroom.

3. What are the consequences of trust, as mentioned by students and teachers?

We expected that trust influences students' willingness to engage with their teachers, overall well-being, and attitudes towards making mistakes.

Given the potential variation in students' and teachers' perspectives, as an additional research question, we compared their perspectives regarding all research questions on an exploratory level.

Method

To answer our research questions, we conducted two multi-perspective, qualitative case studies. The interviews were semi-structured and entailed parallel guidelines for students and teachers, focusing on their personal perceptions of trust, trust-associated behaviours, and distinct consequences of trust. A total of eight questions were posed in each interview. We provide the complete interview guidelines and transcripts of all interviews as supplementary materials in an open repository at https://osf.io/k8zgq/?view_only=78529b9cef3b461a9c254b92c0f9941c

Sample

The study was conducted at a Mittelschule in southern Germany. As noted, we were particularly interested in the perceptions of students and teachers in the Mittelschule track as the students attending those schools tend to come from the lower socioeconomic strata of German society. Mittelschule prepares students for vocational careers, technical trades, and practical jobs instead of an academic career. Students have the same teacher for two or three school years, who teaches them in almost all school subjects.

In each of the two case studies, five ninth-grade students were interviewed as well as their respective class teachers. The sample accordingly consisted of 12 participants. Five students, Luisa, Nico, Adrian, Marco, and Fiona were selected from class A. Luisa, Adrian, and Marco were 15 years old, while Nico and Fiona were 16 years old. All students were in their last year of school. The class teacher, Teacher A, taught the subjects Maths, German, English, Economics, Informatics, and NT (Nature and Technics). He was 33 years old, had been at the school for six years, and had already taught the classes in previous years. The students, Ronja, Lara, Josy, Markus, and Thiago were selected from the parallel class, class B. Again, all students were either 15 (Josy and Thiago) or 16 (Ronja, Lara, Markus) years old. The class teacher, Teacher B, had been teaching them since the school year 2021/2022 in the subjects English, Maths, German, and PBC (Physics, Biology, Chemistry). Teacher B was 37 years old and had been at the school for 9 years. All names mentioned are pseudonymized.

Procedure

The interviews with members of class A were conducted while an oral test took place in the adjoining room. Teacher A gave the class a work assignment while he brought the students individually into the room next door to do an oral test. The interviews were conducted at Teacher A's desk in the classroom while the students engaged in their tasks. A deliberate distance was maintained from the class to ensure privacy and minimal disruption during the interviews, which were conducted at a subdued volume. The participants of class B were extracted from their lesson in the other adjoining room and interviewed at the same place and with the same procedure as participants of class A. The general procedure of the project was explained to classes A and B. After explaining that all data would be anonymised, five students who were willing to take part in the project were selected from each class under consideration of an equal gender distribution. The interviews adhered to the semi-structured format outlined in the respective interview guidelines The interviewer made an effort to establish a coherent dialogue by interweaving the different questions. Consequently, the sequence of questions was adapted to suit the flow of each specific interview conversation. Individual interviews lasted between five and ten minutes.

The interviews were guided by the following key questions, which were adapted slightly for students and teachers (teacher-specific formulations are provided in square brackets):

1. What does "trust" mean to you personally?
2. Would you say that certain behaviours, characteristics, or qualities are generally associated with trust? If so, which ones?
3. Would you describe your relationship with your teacher [your ninth-grade students] as generally trusting?

4. What kinds of situations or behaviours in class or beyond support this perception?
5. Are you generally willing to approach your teacher when you have a problem or need help? [Are you available when students seek help or advice? Do you feel students are generally willing to approach you?]
6. Do you feel comfortable in class [this classroom]?
7. Would you describe the error culture in your class as positive?
8. What was your average grade in your half-year report? [Do you think there is a connection between trust in the teacher-student relationship and students'academic success?]

Analysis

The interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysisf (IPA; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021) to assess interviewee's subjective experiences and conceptualisations. This involved a systematic and iterative process of engaging with the data to distill key insights while retaining the richness of participants' narratives. We paid particular attention to identifying and interpreting different perspectives, enabling us to extract underlying narrative patterns that illuminate the phenomenon of interest. For the first research question concerning the perceived nature of trust, we created formulated categories deductively. These categories largely built upon Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) 'faces of trust' and entailed further aspects as inductively generated categories. For the second research question, which focused on trust-related behaviours, we adopted an inductive approach. Categories emerged directly from participants' statements through close reading and detailed analysis of the transcripts. This process enabled us to capture participants'authentic expressions and interpretations, allowing for the emergence of patterns grounded in their lived experiences. The associated consequences (research question three) were predominantly examined deductively, also involving a comparison with prior research findings. This step not only facilitated data reduction but also allowed us to critically assess and integrate participants'insights into the broader knowledge base on trust dynamics.

Results

The nature of trust as perceived by students and teachers

The first two questions of the interviews focused on the nature of trust and participants' subjective interpretations. The subsequent analysis categorises the responses and highlights recurring themes and response patterns. Table 1 summarizes the main findings.

The most frequently mentioned category can be summarized as the 'willingness to confide in someone'. Apart from one student, all participants included this aspect in their personal understanding of trust, either directly or indirectly. This factor was particularly emphasized by the students. The understanding of trust as 'willingness to confide in someone' was consistently mentioned in conjunction with two further factors: firstly, that the trusted individual does not disclose information to a third party and, secondly, that the shared information remains confidential when involving personal matters or problems not meant to be disclosed publicly.

Another key aspect recognized by several participants was 'openness'. The term 'openness' or 'open', was directly mentioned by six participants and indirectly by five

Table 1 Summary of the deductively formed categories on the components of trust

Category	*n* (*S* = *student*) (*T* = *teacher*)	Description	Examples of students	Examples of teachers
Willingness to confide in someone	S: 9 T: 2	Personal information is shared with somebody, and the trusted party keeps it for him- or herself	"[…] that you can confide in people like friends, family members, people who are there for you, for example problems." (Lara, ll. 427–428.) "Trust for me means that you tell a certain person a thing, for example a secret, and then I trust them not to tell anyone else and to keep it to themselves." (Markus, ll.524–525) "[…] that you confide in someone without them telling anyone and that they keep it to themselves and that no one else should really know anything about it." (Fiona, ll.253–255)	"[…] you know that the other person is careful with your intimate things and does not try to play them off against you […]" (Teacher A, ll. 304–305) "Even if it is not necessarily easy to address difficult things, to say them anyway." (Teacher B, ll.618–619)
Openness	S: 9 T: 2	General attitude or quality as well as extent to which relevant and intimate information is not withheld	"I think I can tell everything openly and honestly to a person I trust." (Adrian, l. 126) "And you can actually confide in the person and know that they won't tell anyone if you tell them something personal or a secret." (Marco, ll.190–191) "[…] that you can talk to someone when something is bothering you." (Niko, l.67)	"To be open, to be honest. Even if it is not necessarily easy to address difficult things, to say them anyway." (Teacher B, ll. 618–619) "I have the feeling that when I reveal things about myself personally, they are not used against me […]" (Teacher A, ll.318–319)

Table 1 (continued)

Category	*n* (*S* = *student*) (*T* = *teacher*)	Description	Examples of students	Examples of teachers
Vulnerability	S: 8 T: 2	Possibility of being harmed	"I must know that the person does not exploit me or harm me […]" (Lara, ll. 431–432) "I can be completely open without fear that the person will harm me by telling somebody else." (Luisa, ll.9–10) "And I would also say that a person I trust must be respectful and doesn't harm me even if he could." (Ronja, l.386–387)	"[…] but where you can also allow weakness and do not have to build up a protective shield, but can be as you want to be." (Teacher A, ll. 305–306) "You make yourself vulnerable and trust that the other person will not take advantage of that." (Teacher B, ll. 628–629)
Honesty	S: 6 T: 1	Statements are made truthfully, and commitments over future actions are held	"[…] that they also don't lie to you." (Marco, l. 201) "[…] trust has to do with respect and honesty" (Fiona, l. 269) "I can tell everything openly and honestly to a person I trust" (Adrian, l.126)	"To be open, to be honest. Even if it is not necessarily easy to address difficult things, to say them anyway." (Teacher B, ll. 618–619)
Reliability	S: 5 T: 1	Extent to which one can count on another to come through with what is needed	"[…] if you are close friends with a person and then it falters and he doesn't want to do anything with you anymore, then you automatically don't trust him anymore." (Fiona, ll. 265–267) "He should not tell others about the things I confide in him and yes, that's it." (Lara, ll.439–440) "When you can actually rely on a person" (Marco, l.190)	"[…] it's a process of building up trust, but then it actually lasts and you know that you can rely on someone and trust them" (Teacher A, ll. 313–314)

Table 1 (continued)

Category	*n* (*S* = *student*) (*T* = *teacher*)	Description	Examples of students	Examples of teachers
Benevolence	S: 6 T: 0	Confidence that one's well-being, or something one cares about, will be protected instead of harmed by the trusted party	"I must know that the person does not exploit me or harm me and that he wants good things for me." (Lara, ll. 431–432) "He should be sympathetic, honest, and not hurtful (Fiona, l.270–271)" "And I would also say that a person I trust must be respectful and doesn't harm me even if he could." (Ronja, l.386–387)	/
Respect	S: 2 T: 1	Attitudinal disposition towards a close relationship partner who is trustworthy, considerate, and accepting	"I would say too that trust has to do with respect and honesty" (Fiona, l. 269) "And I would also say that a person I trust must be respectful and doesn't harm me even if he could." (Ronja, l.386–387)	"Yes, something like vulnerability, seriousness, respect for each other." (Teacher A, l. 311)
Others	S: 2 T: 1	Altruism, Loyalty, and Competence	"For me, it also has something to do with altruism." (Lara, ll.428–429) "Loyalty for example, so being at my side even in difficult times and situations." (Luisa, l. 14)	"And it's also about recognizing competence, not just from me but from themselves, that they can get their lives together on their own." (Teacher B, ll. 643–644)

participants. A further component that played a role in many of the interviews was 'vulnerability'. Nine participants included this component implicitly, and one of the teachers mentioned it explicitly. Vulnerability was often connected to the nature of the shared information being a secret, problem, or, more generally, something intimate. 'Honesty' as another essential component of trust was mentioned in a total of seven out of the twelve interviews. In contrast to other components, 'honesty' was often mentioned as a keyword without further elaboration. The concept of 'reliability' was indirectly or directly mentioned in six of the twelve interviews. All participants perceived it as necessary for a person who is trusted to also be reliable. For instance, Fiona combined the aspect of 'reliability' with the earlier investigated category of 'willingness to confide in someone'. She stated that in this context, the person placing trust relies on the fact that the trustee will keep information confidential. 'Benevolence' was closely linked to some previously investigated aspects, especially 'vulnerability' and 'reliability'. While this component was not explicitly mentioned by the participants, in six of the interviews, they referred to the importance of this goodwill in trust relationships.

Another significant aspect of trust for both students and teachers was 'respect'. Respect was named as an essential part of trust in three of the interviews. All participants explicitly mentioned the keyword without providing further explanation about their understanding of it. Other aspects were named in isolated cases and were grouped under the category of 'others'. Three notable characteristics were 'loyalty', 'altruism', and 'competence'. 'Loyalty' and 'altruism' were provided as keywords without additional specification or explanation. Teacher B elaborated that 'competence' was a fundamental component of trust for him, encompassing both the teacher's abilities and the students' capabilities.

The results of the interviews highlighted certain distinctions between teachers and students that we examined on a highly exploratory level. Notably, the interviews with Teacher A and Teacher B were significantly longer, with their responses covering a broader scope than those of the ten students. Concerning the nature of trust as perceived by the participants, it became evident that the similarities outweighed the differences. However, when asked about their understanding of trust, the teachers included a greater number of components. Despite this, the shared content between teachers and students was more pronounced than the differences. Only seldomly were there aspects exclusively mentioned by either teachers or students, such as the generally infrequent mentions of 'competence', 'loyalty', or 'altruism'.

Behaviours associated with trust

The fourth question asked in the interviews referred to specific situations or behaviours inside or beyond the classroom from the perspective of the students and teachers that were related to the development of trust.

As summarized in Table 2, in nine of the interviews, the participants emphasized the role of 'individual and private conversations between students and teachers' in fostering trust within their relationship. Teacher A, for instance, explained that he often takes five minutes to talk with his students about a range of topics, both personal as well as school-related (ll. 325–326). This pattern was consistent among the other participants as well. Consequently, most participants considered it crucial that, for trust to develop between students and teachers, communication and interaction extended beyond the confines of the classroom setting.

Among the twelve participants, five highlighted that student trust in teachers is dependent on the degree to which teachers help with personal or school-related issues. Specifically, five participants explicitly identified 'help when there are problems' as a behaviour that fosters trust. These participants indicated that they feel comfortable approaching their teachers with various problems, sometimes distinguishing between personal and school-related concerns. Moreover, referred to this assistance being so important due to their general vulnerability which arises especially in problematic situations.

Four participants highlighted the relevance of 'extracurricular activities' in nurturing trust within the student–teacher relationship. Examples such as hiking trips and other activities conducted outside of the classrooms were mentioned in this regard. Teacher A similarly explained that he can "connect with students differently" (l. 326) during extracurricular activities like hiking days and sport lessons. For the participants, the contact enters a new level in those instances, the curriculum becomes secondary, and interpersonal dynamics are shifted into the centre.

In two of the interviews, students explained that having a fun and relaxed atmosphere in class is essential for the development of trust. Adrian mentioned that he can only build trust in the teacher when he knows something about them personally. For him, a specific behaviour that fosters trust is when teachers reveal personal information about themselves (ll. 158–159). Teacher A's statements align with this perspective; he noted that trust, for him, also involves revealing things about himself. He stressed that if there is trust, these things are not used against him, and even if they are, it is within a respectful framework (ll. 318–320). Again, 'openness' and 'vulnerability' determine this trust-related behaviour.

Some situations and behaviours were mentioned only once. Teacher B emphasized that open forms of work and independence are connected to an improvement of the trust relationship (ll. 640–641). Nico explained that a behaviour that supports trust, in his opinion, is when teachers allow breaks when students' concentration wanes (l. 88–90). A differing viewpoint regarding question four was expressed by Fiona. She argued that there are no behaviours that can nurture or foster trust. In her view, "trust is something that is either given or not" (l. 286–287). She firmly believed that trust cannot be forced or supported by external factors.

Regarding behaviours and situations that support trust, the three most frequently mentioned aspects appeared in both the answers of students and the teachers. It is noteworthy that a 'relaxed atmosphere and fun in class was important for trust development in the eyes of one of the students but not for the two teachers. On the other hand, Teacher B exclusively considered 'open forms of work and independence' as essential. The overall picture illustrates that in aspects with high frequency, the seemingly most evident behaviours and situations supporting trust showed minimal difference between the teachers' and the students' perceptions.

Consequences associated with trust

Questions five to eight of the interviews focused on exploring the potential consequences of trust from the perspectives of the students and teachers. Eleven participants clearly indicated that they would classify their student–teacher relationship as trusting in general. Fiona was the only one who seemed hesitant in this regard, responding with "it depends" (l. 277). Her subsequent explanations suggest that this hesitation is rooted in her general attitude rather than a specific reason.

Table 2 Summary of the inductively formed categories on situations or behaviours in class or beyond which are associated to trust

Situation/behaviour	*n*	Example of a student	Example of a teacher
Individual and private conversations between students and teachers	9	"Sometimes when there are activities outside of school, we can talk to him also about our hobbies and so on [..]" (Lara, ll. 402–404)	We've already done that, we took five minutes and then talked about all sorts of things, such as how are you doing or how are things going at home." (Teacher A, ll.326–328)
Help with private and school-related problems	5	"And I also think that you can always come to him if there is a problem and then we sort it out with him and find a solution or he helps you to feel better again." (Nico, ll. 91–93)	"Students often come to me, more with school-related topics than others, but it definitely occurs." (Teacher B, ll. 654–655)
Extracurricular activities	4	"[…] activities outside of classroom are good, because it's not a lesson and if you do something different outside of school, I think that trust is strengthened because you can talk to the teacher about other things than learning material." (Marco, ll. 217–220)	"Definitely extracurricular activities like hiking days but also sports lessons, where you meet students differently." (Teacher A, ll, 325–326)
Relaxed atmosphere and fun in class	2	"And I also think that the fun we often have in the classroom is good for the relationship because there is a relaxed atmosphere." (Luisa, ll. 35–36)	/
Revelation of private information by the teacher	2	"I believe that you can build trust in the teacher if you know something about the person" (Adrian, ll.158–159)	"[…] when I reveal things about myself personally, they are not used against me and if they are, then in a framework where it is not disrespectful." (Teacher A, ll. 318–320)
Open forms of work and independence	1	/	"Open forms of work, independence. Not necessarily educating the students in every aspect, but making them understand that they are doing this not only for me but for themselves." (Teacher B, ll. 640–642)
Taking breaks when concentration decreases	1	"[…] when he notices we are out of concentration he takes breaks and waits again until everyone is concentrated." (Nico, ll. 88–90)	/

In question five of the interview guidelines, students were asked whether they would approach their teachers in case of problems. Fiona was the only one to respond with "No, not really" (l. 280). In contrast, all other participants, nine of the ten students as well as both the teachers, generally answered question five with 'yes'. The students' answers varied in terms of the reasons why they would approach their teachers. An important distinction was made between private problems and school-related issues. While some students indicated that they would approach their teachers with any issue, the majority had other individuals that they would turn to in the case of personal problems, a sentiment confirmed by the teachers. These findings indicate that trust in the student–teacher relationship for most of the participants has clear boundaries; limitless trust is not given in most cases.

Question six of the interview guidelines dealt with another potential consequence of trust, namely well-being in class. All ten students indicated that they generally feel comfortable in class with the two teachers. The teachers in turn also stated that they themselves experience a sense of well-being with their respective classes. Nevertheless, the degree of well-being differed among the participants. Fiona, who indicated a relatively low level of trust in question three, answered "generally yes but on some days I don't" (l. 290). This might suggest a relationship between trust and well-being, as many of the participants who reported a high level of trust also perceived a high level of well-being.

The interviews also supported attitudes towards mistakes as another potential outcome of trust between students and teachers. Situations in which mistakes are made often involve vulnerability, making an investigation into the connection between trust and attitudes towards making mistakes highly relevant. All participants, except for Marco, Fiona (again, the student who displayed a relatively low level of trust) and Josy, who expressed some reservations, indicated a generally positive attitude towards mistakes in class and tied this to them trusting their teacher. Most of the students and teachers shared further details: Teacher B, for example, explained that the attitudes towards making mistakes in his classes are mostly positive but that the students are not reflective enough to realize that it is inappropriate to laugh about classmates (l. 668–670). He personally traced this handling of mistakes back to a lack of openness and trust. Nevertheless, he emphasized that fostering positive attitudes towards making mistakes is a central goal for him.

Regarding the willingness to engage with teachers in the case of problems and the teachers' availability, the responses from students and teachers were consistent. Nine of the ten students indicated that they do approach their teachers, and both teachers stated that they do not only offer their availability but also that this offer is accepted by most students, especially with school-related topics. Similarly, perceptions towards well-being as a consequence of trust were congruent. While perceptions of attitudes towards errors differed between students and teachers, both parties understood them as a function of trust between students and teachers.

Discussion

Trust is a foundational element in relationships and human functioning, shaping both student and teacher experiences. Existing research predominantly focuses on adults in school contexts, often neglecting the reciprocal nature of trust as it is negotiated between students and teachers. We addressed this gap by qualitatively examining how trust is perceived, fostered, and experienced in the unique context of a German intermediate school (Mittelschule) following the COVID- 19 school closures. By incorporating both

student and teacher perspectives through two multi-perspective qualitative case studies, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of trust in education. Our findings extend the existing literature by highlighting how trust-related behaviours and outcomes are co-constructed, contextualized, and influenced by the socio-educational challenges of a specific school environment, offering practical implications for fostering trust in diverse educational settings.

The subjective perceptions of trust by both students and teachers largely aligned with the proposed theoretical foundations. Trust, as understood by the participants, was associated with specific behaviours inside and outside of the classroom. Notably, behaviours such as 'individual and private conversations between students and teachers', 'help with private and school-related problems', and 'extracurricular activities' emerged as prominent indicators of trust. Our findings suggest that trust, to varying degrees, influences willingness to engage with teachers, overall well-being, and attitudes towards making mistakes. Of particular interest is the exploration of attitudes towards making mistakes as another function of student–teacher trust. This aspect, despite its intrinsic link to trust through vulnerability, has received limited scholarly attention thus far. Moreover, there was a clear overlap between student and teacher perceptions of trust, which is a necessary foundation for practical applications. While generally affirming similar perceptions of students and teachers in this respect, more research with larger and more diverse samples are necessary.

Confirmation and extension of the definition

'Vulnerability' is an essential component of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) definition, serving as the base on which the 'five faces of trust' are constructed. This willingness to embrace vulnerability is manifested when one or more of these 'five faces' are present within a specific relationship. Our interviews spoke to such an importance of 'vulnerability': Ten of the twelve participants considered 'vulnerability' as essential when describing the nature of trust, for example, stating, "I must know that the person does not exploit me or harm me […]" (Lara, ll. 431–432) or "I can be completely open without fear that the person will harm me by telling somebody else" (Luisa, ll. 9–10).

The participants' interpretation of 'openness' also mirrored the framework outlined in the theoretical background. While prior literature often focused on the transparent exchange of information and the withholding of relevant details (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), certain participants in our study extended this conceptualization. Some considered trust a basic personality trait (Fiona, ll. 286–287), while others incorporated aspects such as body language (Teacher B, ll.628–630). Niko, (l. 67) for example, described how important it is for him "[…] that you can talk to someone when something is bothering you." (Niko, l.67).

The theme of 'honesty' emerged prominently in the interviews when asked about participants' personal understanding of trust, with a frequency of $n = 7$. Interestingly, the participants' understanding of 'honesty', particularly among students, was narrower than the emphasis found in previous trust research. For many students, 'honesty' predominantly equated to 'not lying' ("[…] that they also don't lie to you." (Marco, l. 201) or "[…] trust has to do with respect and honesty") (Fiona, l. 269). This contrasts with the broader view in the literature where adhering to commitments over future actions takes precedence (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

'Reliability' emerged as the second most prominent component, with a frequency of $n = 6$. An extension to the existing literature was observed in participants who directly

linked the degree of 'reliability' to the duration of a relationship. While Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) conceptualisation of 'reliability' combines 'predictability' and 'benevolence' without temporal reference, the inclusion of this time-related element warrants further exploration, for instance, through longitudinal studies. An indication to this was also provided by our interview participants who characterized the role of reliability as follows: "[…] if you are close friends with a person and then it falters and he doesn't want to do anything with you anymore, then you automatically don't trust him anymore" (Fiona; ll. 265–267); "He should not tell others about the things I confide in him and yes, that's it" (Lara, ll. 439–440).

'Benevolence', a part of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2000) conceptualization, also appeared in the interviews with a frequency of $n = 6$. However, these references were implicit, with participants expressing the need for goodwill without explicitly using the term 'benevolence'. This was especially the case for Lara (ll. 431–432): "I must know that the person does not exploit me or harm me and that he wants good things for me" and for Fiona (ll. 270–271): "He should be sympathetic, honest, and not hurtful." The omission of the term 'benevolence', particularly among students, might stem from the term's formal connotation.

The final 'five face of trust', 'competence', was mentioned the least, with a frequency of $n = 1$. Only Teacher B deemed 'competence' as essential component of trust, arguing that students' recognition of competence, not only from him but also from themselves, is needed for trust to develop (ll. 643–644). This low frequency might indicate that the association between trust and performance was not as prominent as the more emotionally-loaded components for the participants. Nevertheless, the inclusion of 'competence' by Teacher B supports findings by Van Maele and Van Houtte (2010), which indicate that teacher perceptions of students' teachability strongly predict teacher trust.

Overall, all 'five faces of trust' were confirmed in the interviews, although their whether they were explicitly mentioned or not varied among participants. This validation, derived from the lived experiences shared by students and teachers, offers tangible support for the relevance and existence of the 'five faces of trust' in shaping individuals' perceptions of trust. Our confirmation of the 'faces of trust' is thus based on the direct statements of a substantial part of the participants. Those direct statements reflect the subjective realities; the counts of the respective components are secondary.

Furthermore, our findings also suggest 'willingness to confide in someone' as a further component of trust. Like 'willingness to risk vulnerability', 'willingness to confide in someone' functions both as a precondition for and a result of the 'five faces of trust'. This emphasizes the power of trust as self-reinforcing resource.

Together with 'openness', 'willingness to confide in someone' was the most frequently described aspect ($n = 11$). Illustrative examples for this were provided by Lara (ll. 427–428) who remarked "[…] that you can confide in people like friends, family members, people who are there for you, for example problems" or Markus (ll. 524–525) for whom "trust […] means that you tell a certain person a thing, for example a secret, and then I trust them not to tell anyone else and to keep it to themselves." Against this background, it is surprising that this aspect was not considered by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999). One plausible explanation is the conceptual proximity of 'confiding' and 'vulnerability'. Our decision to differentiate the concepts is grounded in the recognition that the 'willingness to confide in someone' has a narrower focus compared to the broader concept of 'willingness to risk vulnerability'. Nevertheless, 'confiding' can happen without necessitating personal vulnerability, as seen when discussing the actions of a third party. The 'willingness to confide' was explicitly mentioned by a substantial number of the participants. Therefore,

it specifically reflects the subjective reality of most of the participants' trust experiences. Against this background, equating 'confiding' with 'vulnerability' would not have satisfied the evident importance of the component.

To summarize, there is a high degree of alignment between Hoy and Tschannen-Moran's (1999) conceptualization and our interview findings. However, our study suggests expanding their definition by incorporating two additional, frequently mentioned components: willingness to be vulnerable and willingness to confide in someone. These components function as fundamental prerequisites for trust, as they set the stage for the five original facets. Additionally, our findings indicate a slight reordering of these facets based on subjective participant perceptions, placing openness and honesty at the forefront. Given this, we propose the following refined definition:

> *Trust is one party's willingness to be vulnerable to, or to confide in, another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (1) open, (2) honest, (3) reliable, (4) benevolent, and (5) competent.*

This refined definition integrates insights from both the existing literature and our empirical findings, suggesting that the five facets of trust could be expanded into a 'two plus five components of trust' model of trust. Future research—particularly quantitative studies—should further investigate whether willingness to confide in someone is a distinct and essential component of trust, as indicated by our qualitative findings.

Trust-related behaviours and situations

The second research question inquired about the behaviours that students and teachers associate with trust. In this regard, the subjective perspectives of students and teachers and their comparison extends the literature and constitutes the main value of our study.

Among the 12 participants, eleven indicated that they felt trust towards their teachers and classes. A notable exception was Fiona, who responded with "it depends" (l. 277), suggesting a more static perspective on trust. She believed that trust cannot be influenced by specific behaviours or situations, and that it is either present or not. This viewpoint contrasts the theoretical foundations discussed in earlier sections. Existing literature views trust as a dynamic and complex construct with varying facets and degrees. While Fiona's opinion was unique among the participants, it indicates that specific trust fostering behaviours conductive to trust are acknowledged only when trust itself is recognized. In light of this, the second hypothesis of our study, namely that trust and its perception by students and teachers are embedded in specific behaviours inside and outside the classroom, was confirmed by eleven participants.

The practical relevance of our study lies in the specific behaviours and situations highlighted by the participants. Notably, it is not only crucial that there exist behaviours and situations that support trust, but also how they are perceived by students and teachers. The most significant aspect identified by participants was the occurrence of 'individual and private conversations between students and teachers. 'Extracurricular activities' played a vital role here, ranking third in terms of specific situations that can foster trust. The second-ranking aspect, 'help with private and school related problems' is also linked to the close interaction between students and teachers, as evident in their 'individual and private conversations'. It is worth noting that the top three most mentioned behaviours primarily occur outside of the classroom setting. Although expressed less frequently, our findings also suggest that the aspects 'relaxed atmosphere and fun in class', 'open forms of work and

independence', and 'taking breaks when concentration decreases' may be relevant proxies for students' trust formations to be considered as well. While these aspects predominantly take place inside the classroom, others, like the notion of the 'revelation of private information by the teacher', can take place both inside and outside of the classroom. This illustrates a balance that concerns all mentioned behaviours and situations, a point emphasized by Teacher A.

Our results provide indications for certain behaviours and situations, within and beyond classroom, that students and teachers alike perceive as supportive of trust. Interestingly, the findings suggest that behaviours and situations occurring outside of class hold greater importance in building trust compared to those within the classroom. The identified aspects hold high practical relevance: teachers can leverage them to enhance trust in their relationships with students, while also setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries. These boundaries can help to establish an optimum degree of trust for both sides, which is especially important as naive trust can have negative consequences, for example being an obstacle and limitation counteracting school democracy (Thornberg & Elvstrand, 2012).

Furthermore, our findings support the results by Farini (2012), who indicated that creating conditions for trust relationships means promoting possibility for social action and interaction, including an avoidance of alienation and of loss of confidence in the educational relationship. Additionally, Byrk and Schneider's (2003) findings, which emphasize strategies to build trust including facilitating communication, eliminating trust barriers, and promoting ease of interaction, align well with the results of our study. In light of this, future studies should focus on corroborating identified trust-related behaviours. The practical aspects of teacher-student trust and the implementation of specific measures to foster trust development are areas that have not been extensively explored thus far and warrant further attention.

Moreover, a strong congruence between the perspectives of teachers and students can be seen in the present study. This alignment was particularly evident in the high-frequency responses, while certain behaviours were only mentioned by either students ('relaxed atmosphere and fun in class') or teachers ('open forms of work and independence'). These subtle differences may emerge from the different roles (student and teachers) along with different ideas about work ethic, presenting a potential area for future research to explore in more depth.

Consequences and comparisons to previous research

The third research question asked about the consequences of trust for both students and teachers. Specifically, the study explored how trust impacts students' willingness to engage with their teachers, their overall well-being, and their attitudes towards making mistakes. The first aspect investigated was the relationship between trust and students' willingness to engage with their teachers when facing problems or seeking help. Notably, only Fiona, who hesitated to characterize the relationship as trusting, initially expressed a strong aversion to approach the teacher for any type of problem. This suggests trust matters regarding students' willingness to approach their teachers, especially concerning school-related problems. Both teachers emphasized their availability whenever required, with a focus on academic concerns. They also mentioned that this support extends to certain personal issues, albeit infrequently. This suggests that the level of trust that students feel towards their teachers is connected to their willingness to engage with them. Conversely, the findings

indicated that teachers who have trust in their students tend to be more receptive to students' concerns and challenges.

Regarding trust and well-being, the answers of the interviews had a consistent pattern. All participants conveyed a general feeling of comfort and well-being in the classroom environment to varying degrees—even Fiona, who seemed to trust the least. The connection observed between trust and well-being among students aligned with the results of Hongwidijojo et al.'s (2018) study, which established a significant positive relationship between student–teacher trust and school well-being. This implies that higher levels of student–teacher trust contribute to enhanced well-being within the school context from the students' perspectives, and notably also from the two teachers. These findings complement the results of Hopkins et al.'s (2019) study, which indicated that teachers who experience a high level of relational trust are less likely to leave a school, thus suggesting ties of trust with not only student well-being but also teachers' well-being.

The relationship between attitudes towards making mistakes and trust has not been considered in previous research. The results of our qualitative study suggest including this as another relevant consequence of trust in further studies, as all participants who identified the student–teacher relationship as trusting in general also reported predominantly positive attitudes towards making mistakes. Moreover, the interviews suggested that the trust that students felt towards their teachers was tied to their willingness to engage with their teachers on a deeper level, motiving the inclusion of trust to better understand differential effects of learning and instruction processes.

Limitations

There are several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results of our study. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that the validity of the responses may be subject to questioning. Among the twelve participants, eleven expressed a general sense of trust in their counterparts, and the majority reported positive attitudes towards mistakes and a willingness to engage with their teachers. Additionally, all participants indicated feeling comfortable in class. Although these trends may mirror actual experiences, they could also be influenced by factors such as social desirability biases.

Furthermore, the impact of the COVID- 19 pandemic should be considered. The interviews were conducted in spring 2022, during a period marked by ongoing pandemic-related regulations that affected daily school life. These regulations, along with several lockdowns in the months leading up to the study, might have influenced the participants' responses. For instance, certain aspects like the perceived importance of 'extracurricular activities' could have been amplified due to their absence in prior months.

Another limitation of our study concerns generalizability of our findings which is inherently limited due to the nature of the qualitative research design and the characteristics of our sample. Our findings are based on in-depth interviews with only two classroom contexts within a single German intermediate school (Mittelschule). While our findings speak to the existence of certain trust-related aspects in student–teacher relationships, they cannot reflect the predominant experiences of most students and teachers. Rather, our results highlight potential patterns that warrant further investigation in broader and more diverse educational contexts. In particular, students in this type of school often face distinct social and academic challenges, which may make trust particularly salient in their educational experiences. Investigating whether similar trust-related processes occur in other school types is essential to determine the transferability of our conclusions to different educational

contexts (particularly comparing homeroom vs non-homeroom classrooms). Similarly, cross-cultural studies are necessary to establish whether trust in student–teacher relationships is perceived and cultivated similarly depending on the respective cultural and educational contexts.

Conclusion

This context-specific case study provided insights into the intricate nature of trust between students and teachers. The findings underscore the multidimensional nature of trust within the subjective realities of both students and teachers, extending beyond the established five facets of trust to also include the willingness to be vulnerable and the willingness to confide in someone as fundamental preconditions for trust. Beyond theoretical contributions, this also provides a basis for practical interventions aimed at cultivating trust within educational settings. The identified trust-associated behaviours, such as 'individual and private conversations between students and teachers' or 'help with private and school-related problems' help map the facets of trust in diverse samples while offering tangible ways to enhance the school experience. To this end, it is worth noting that building trust can thrive through simple day-to-day interactions, such as brief conversations between a student and a teacher, as exemplified by Teacher A. Such interactions could occur during moments when the rest of the class is engaged in tasks or even during extracurricular activities like hiking days. By deepening our understanding of trust dynamics, this line of research enriches the discourse on educational trust-building, offering actionable strategies to strengthen student–teacher relationships, cultivate positive learning environments, and support student growth.

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Data availability We provide all materials underlying the presented findings in an open repository at https://osf.io/k8zgq/.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate Ethical standards for research involving human subjects by the American Psychology Association (APA) and the German Psychology Society (DGPs) were carefully followed.

Consent for publication All authors have reviewed the manuscript and given their consent for publication. Additionally, participants were informed that the data collected would be used for publication purposes, and their consent for publication was obtained as part of the informed consent process.

Competing interests The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Current themes of research:

Motivation and fostering of motivation in educational settings. Self-regulated learning. Instructional research. Learning with digital media. Profession research in educational contexts.

Most relevant publications in the field of Psychology of Education:

Daumiller, M., Nett, U., & Putwain, D. (2024). Complex dynamics: Investigation of within and between person relationships between achievement emotions and emotion regulation during exam

preparation through dynamic network modelling. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000883.

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