



Research Article

Trust as Social Capital: Enhancing Small Business Performance in South Africa's Enterprise and Supplier Development Programmes

Jabulile Motlhako¹ Jabulile Msimango-Galawe²

^{1,2} Wits Business School, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa Private Bag 3,
WITS, Johannesburg, Gauteng, 2050, South Africa

Abstract

This study investigates the role of trust as social capital in the performance of small enterprises within South Africa's Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) programmes. While ESD programmes are widely implemented to enhance small business competitiveness, limited empirical attention has been paid to the relational dimensions of social capital that underpin effective supplier-buyer collaboration. Addressing this gap, the study examines how trust enhances relational quality, facilitates access to strategic resources, and contributes to the sustainable growth of small enterprises within ESD ecosystems. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was adopted, utilising survey data from 72 small enterprises participating in ESD programmes across multiple sectors in South Africa. Regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of trust on enterprise performance. The results revealed that trust had a significant positive influence on performance ($\beta = 0.392, R^2 = 0.154$). The study contributes to entrepreneurship and social capital scholarship by conceptualising trust as a pivotal social resource and advancing understanding of informal governance mechanisms that shape enterprise success in African contexts. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of institutionalising trust through ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability within ESD frameworks. Strategically embedding trust in ESD programmes can strengthen supplier-buyer partnerships, enhance programme impact, and contribute to inclusive enterprise development and sustainable economic growth in South Africa. The study recommends institutionalising trust-building mechanisms in ESD design to strengthen supplier-buyer partnerships and improve programme impact.

Keywords: *Social Capital, Trust, Enterprise and Supplier Development, Small Enterprise Performance, Intangible asset, Supplier-Buyer Relationships*

1 Introduction

Small enterprises play a vital role in the economic development of emerging economies, particularly in South Africa, where they contribute significantly to job creation, poverty reduction, and inclusive growth (Enaifoghe

& Vezi-Magigaba, 2023; Saah, 2021). In response to the structural barriers facing these enterprises, both the government and private sector have implemented ESD programmes to promote small business competitiveness and integration into corporate value chains (Commission, 2022). These programmes provide financial support, training, and market access opportunities. However, despite their proliferation, many small enterprises continue to underperform or fail to achieve sustainable growth (Bushe, 2019). This underperformance suggests that factors beyond tangible resources influence success, particularly relational assets such as trust as a social capital dimension.

Social capital, understood as the collective value derived from social networks and relationships, plays a central role in facilitating cooperation, reducing transaction costs, and enabling access to information and resources (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Al Rian et al., 2024; Mishi et al., 2023; Schoorman et al., 2007). Within this framework, trust conceptualised as the willingness to be vulnerable based on positive expectations of another's actions is especially crucial for small enterprises operating in resource constrained environments (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Al Rian et al., 2024; Mishi et al., 2023; Schoorman et al., 2007). By conceptualising trust as an intangible yet strategic asset, it has the potential to strengthen supplier–buyer relationships, enhance information exchange, and foster collaborative environments that support enterprise competitiveness. Building trust within ESD frameworks requires intentional mechanisms, ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability that sustain credibility and reduce relational friction.

Within South Africa's ESD programmes, trust helps small enterprises build credibility and navigate corporate procurement structures, mitigating opportunism and enhancing relational governance (Abbas et al., 2019; Herman & Zsido, 2023; Okello Candiya Bongomin et al., 2024; Pooe, 2016). This underscores the need for small enterprises to cultivate and leverage trust responsibly, ensuring that relational advantages are exercised ethically and do not inadvertently reinforce corrupt practices.

Despite its recognised importance, trust as a distinct dimension of social capital remains underexplored within South Africa's ESD programmes. Most studies examine social capital or enterprise support mechanisms broadly, without empirically isolating how trust affects measurable outcomes such as sales growth, profitability, and resilience (Abbas et al., 2019; Herman & Zsido, 2023; Okello Candiya Bongomin et al., 2024; Pooe, 2016). Building trust, particularly linking ties that bridge heterogeneous networks is both challenging and time-intensive, yet crucial for fostering relational dynamics that enhance enterprise performance. This study addresses this gap by investigating how trust, as a dimension of social capital, influences the performance of small enterprises in South Africa's ESD programmes.

2 Literature review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation: Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory, as developed by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam (1995), provides a multidimensional framework for understanding how relational assets such as trust, norms, and networks generate both economic and social returns (Grenfell, 2009; Putnam, 1994; Siisiainen, 2003). In entrepreneurial contexts, social capital facilitates cooperation, reduces transaction costs, and enables access to resources and information that enhance enterprise performance (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Rasdien et al., 2024).

In emerging economies such as South Africa, where institutional inefficiencies often constrain formal business support systems, social capital compensates for weak formal institutions and supports entrepreneurs in navigating high risk business environments (Welter & Smallbone, 2011). Central to this is the concept of trust, defined as the willingness to be vulnerable based on positive expectations of others' behaviour (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Al Rian et al., 2024; Mishi et al., 2023; Schoorman et al., 2007) which functions as a key relational mechanism across all dimensions of social capital.

Not all social capital is the same; the strength and type of ties vary according to the dimension, influencing the resources and opportunities available to entrepreneurs. Building on this foundation, Putnam (2001) and Woolcock (2001) argue that there are three interrelated dimensions of social capital: bonding, bridging, and

linking, which provide a nuanced lens for understanding relational assets within ESD contexts (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Eklinder-Frick et al., 2011; Putnam, 2001; Woolcock, 2001). Social capital is often underpinned by goodwill and grounded in integrity, reflecting the ethical foundations that sustain trust based relationships within networks (Molina-Morales & Martínez-Fernández, 2009).

Bonding social capital involves strong ties within homogeneous groups, such as small enterprises operating in similar contexts, which foster cohesion, mutual support, and the reliable exchange of resources and information (Eklinder-Frick et al., 2011). **Bridging social capital**, by contrast, encompasses weaker, cross cutting ties that connect entrepreneurs to diverse external networks, facilitating knowledge transfer, innovation, and access to new market opportunities. Relational bonds are strongly shaped by reciprocity and relatability within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Linking social capital refers to vertical connections with institutions or actors in positions of authority, such as corporate buyers, government agencies, or funders, enabling small enterprises to access resources, legitimacy, and strategic opportunities within formal structures (Williams et al., 2022). This is where Trust social capital locates itself from the ESD ecosystem perspective as small enterprises need to put effort to attain such. Linking ties are particularly challenging to establish because they extend beyond internal, homogeneous groups and require sustained effort to build trust over time in less dense ties (Foster et al., 2003; Molina-Morales & Martínez-Fernández, 2009). This inherent difficulty suggests a potential area for future research to investigate the effort and processes involved in trust-building across different social capital dimensions, which was beyond the scope of the current study.

The bonding, bridging, and linking dimensions of social capital function synergistically to enable small enterprises to surpass growth constraints, enhancing their performance, resilience, and integration within entrepreneurial and ESD ecosystems (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Eklinder-Frick et al., 2011; Putnam, 2001; Woolcock, 2001). Within ESD programmes, linking social capital assumes particular significance as it connects small enterprises to corporate supply chains and institutional frameworks, facilitating resource mobilisation, long-term partnerships, and enhanced programme impact (Nkwinika & Olufemi Akinrinde, 2023; Rasdien et al., 2024).

This theoretical framework positions trust as a pivotal relational mechanism underpinning all three social capital dimensions, thereby shaping small enterprise performance in the ESD ecosystem. While social capital networks can provide privileged (Eklinder-Frick et al., 2011) and access to otherwise unavailable opportunities (Mlotshwa & Msimango-Galawe, 2020), caution that overreliance on external networks may come at the expense of developing internal competencies, which are essential for sustainable enterprise growth.

2.2 Social Capital – Trust as Strategic Resource

Social Capital - Trust functions as a relational asset that reduces risk, fosters stable partnerships, and enhances access to resources (Mumcu, 2025). Trust facilitates collaboration, knowledge sharing, and reputational capital, which are critical for small enterprise performance in uncertain environments (Gorondutse & Hilman, 2019; Sallah & Caesar, 2020).

Within South Africa's ESD programmes, trust helps small enterprises build credibility and navigate corporate procurement structures, mitigating opportunism and enhancing relational governance (Abbas et al., 2019; Adler & Kwon, 2002; Rasdien et al., 2024). Conversely, low-trust environments marked by corruption and weak institutions increase transaction costs and hinder collaboration (Bruton et al., 2010). However, the benefits of social capital and trust are not automatic; they exist within a grey area where networks and relationships can be misused or co-opted for unethical purposes. This underscores the need for small enterprises to cultivate and leverage trust responsibly, ensuring that relational advantages are exercised ethically and do not inadvertently reinforce corrupt practice (Majaja & Msimango-Galawe 2022).

Despite its significance, trust remains underexamined in ESD literature, often treated as a secondary construct rather than a distinct performance driver (Otto, 2024). This study, therefore, positions trust as a strategic, intangible resource that strengthens social capital, enabling small enterprises to overcome institutional barriers and secure sustainable growth.

Empirical studies consistently show that enterprises embedded in trust-based networks achieve superior performance across indicators such as sales growth, profitability, and resilience (Nkwinika & Olufemi Akinrinde, 2023; Rasdien et al., 2024). Trust thus operates as a “hard economic enabler,” influencing tangible outcomes like market access and supplier integration (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Putnam, 2001).

2.3 Small Enterprise Performance in ESD Programmes

Small enterprises are integral to South Africa’s economic transformation under the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) framework, which includes ESD as a key element (Chimboza, 2023). Despite this strategic role, persistent barriers like limited access to finance, markets, and capacity continue to constrain growth.

ESD programmes aim to address these challenges through mentorship, funding, and procurement support. Yet, their success often depends more on the quality of relational trust than on material inputs (Mishi et al., 2023; Nkwinika & Olufemi Akinrinde, 2023; Whittaker & Van der Walt, 2020). Trust fosters effective communication, reliability, and long-term collaboration between small enterprises and corporates (Mishi et al., 2023; Nkwinika & Olufemi Akinrinde, 2023; Whittaker & Van der Walt, 2020).

When institutionalised through ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability, trust strengthens linking social capital, reducing relational friction and enhancing programme impact resilience (Khlystova et al., 2022; Mchunu et al., 2025; Munyanyi et al., 2021). Grounded in social capital theory, this study conceptualises trust as a deliberately cultivable resource that enables small enterprise performance through enhanced network integration, reputational capital, and access to strategic opportunities.

H1: Higher levels of trust (independent variable) are associated with improved small enterprise performance (dependent variable) within ESD programmes.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional design was used to examine the influence of trust on small enterprise performance in South Africa’s ESD programmes. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire at one point in time. This design supports hypothesis testing and generalisable insights in resource-constrained contexts (Bryman, 2016; Hair, 2009; Levin, 2006).

3.2 Population

The study focused on small enterprises in South Africa participating in ESD programmes. Consistent with the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Codes of Good Practice, the population comprised start-ups, Exempted Micro Enterprises (EMEs), and Qualifying Small Enterprises (QSEs) with annual turnover below R50 million (Chimboza, 2023; Trade & Industry, 2009). These enterprises constitute a strategically important segment of the national small business sector, particularly with respect to transformation and supplier integration objectives. Specific statistics detailing how many of these SMMEs participate in ESD programs are not readily available. A total of 72 enterprises participated in the study, comprising 63 EMEs (87.5%), eight QSEs (11.1%), and one enterprise (1.4%) that did not disclose its classification.

3.3 Sampling Strategy and Recruitment Criteria

Purposive sampling, a non-probability technique, was employed to recruit small enterprises directly engaged in ESD programmes. No corporate or database systems were used during this process. The inclusion criteria required that participants (a) had previously participated in a corporate-sponsored ESD programme and (b)

were currently active in ESD programmes. This ensured that all respondents possessed sufficient experience and understanding of ESD processes and trust dynamics within enterprise corporate relationships. The questionnaire included an exclusion criterion that required respondents to confirm whether they were currently in an ESD programme and had been in one before.

To ensure legitimacy and access, recruitment leveraged the researcher's own social capital networks and professional affiliations within the ESD ecosystem. Eligible small enterprises were invited through LinkedIn and WhatsApp, with a Qualtrics survey link provided for voluntary participation. Participants were further encouraged to share the survey link with other qualifying enterprises to enhance reach and representation across diverse sectors and provinces. This snowball effect expanded the respondent pool while maintaining the focus on verified ESD participants. Of the 300 enterprises contacted, 246 responded, and 72 complete and valid responses were retained after screening for completeness and eligibility.

3.4 Sample Size Justification

Although the realised sample ($n = 72$) was smaller than targeted, it satisfied the methodological thresholds for regression analysis. Prior literature suggests 5 - 10 observations per variable (Everitt, 1975; Nunnally, 1978; Tinsley & Kass, 1979) and at least 20:1 participant-to-variable ratio for stable estimation (Hair, 2009).

A post hoc power analysis (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Cohen, 1992; Lakens, 2022) confirmed statistical adequacy, with observed power exceeding 0.80 ($\beta > 0.8$) for medium effect sizes ($f^2 = 0.15$, $\alpha = 0.05$). This supports the sufficiency of the sample for explanatory inference.

3.5 Measurement Scales and Reliability

The survey instrument incorporated validated Likert scale items to measure the key constructs of trust, social capital, and small enterprise performance. Trust and social capital scales were adapted from Siisiainen (2003) and Bhandari and Yasunobu (2009), while enterprise performance indicators such as sales growth, profitability, and financial sustainability were drawn from Abbas et al. (2019) and Nkwinka and Akinrinde (2023). Reliability analysis confirmed strong internal consistency: Trust ($\alpha = 0.88$), Social Capital ($\alpha = 0.82$) and Enterprise Performance ($\alpha = 0.85$). All Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the 0.70 threshold recommended for exploratory research (Everitt, 1975; Nunnally, 1978), indicating acceptable reliability.

3.6 Data Collection Process

Data were collected via a self-administered online questionnaire distributed through Qualtrics, enabling access to geographically dispersed small enterprises across South Africa (Evans & Mathur, 2005). The survey was distributed via LinkedIn and WhatsApp between October and December 2024. Ethical clearance was granted by the Wits Business School Research Ethics Committee, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data were processed and analysed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS V30). Missing data were examined using Little's MCAR test and imputed where appropriate (Mishra et al., 2019). Descriptive statistics summarised the sample profile, while Pearson correlations examined bivariate relationships among variables (Castro Torres & Akbaritabar, 2024; Field, 2013).

Prior to regression, assumptions of normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity were tested to ensure that none were violated. Results indicated no violations in relation to multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, linearity and normality. A simple linear regression analysis was then conducted to test the hypothesis that trust has a positive influence on small enterprise performance at 95% confidence interval. This multi-step analytical procedure combining validated measures, reliability assessment, and diagnostic testing ensured robustness and

credibility of findings, aligning with accepted quantitative research standards in enterprise development studies (Field, 2024; Hair, 2009).

4 Results

Regression analysis was conducted to test the study's hypothesis. The sample comprised 72 small enterprises (100%) participating in South Africa's ESD programmes. Gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 51% male, 44% female, and 5% undisclosed or other. The majority of participants (58%) were aged 36 - 45, with the remainder distributed across younger and older age groups.

Most respondents (79%) held tertiary qualifications, while 21% had secondary or vocational education. Annual turnover varied: 29% earned below R150,000, 25% between R150,000 and R1 million, 20% between R1 million and R10 million, and 11% between R10 million and R50 million. The remaining 15% did not disclose turnover. Geographically, enterprises were concentrated in Gauteng (53%), followed by the Eastern Cape (15%), KwaZulu-Natal (10%), Western Cape (8%), and other provinces (14%).

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation coefficients for the key study variables. Social Capital -Trust was positively and significantly correlated with small enterprise performance ($r = 0.392, p < 0.001$), supporting the hypothesised relationship.

Table 1: Correlation Coefficients

Variable	Mean	SD	Trust
Social Capital - Trust	4.12	0.68	–
Enterprise Performance	3.95	0.72	0.392*

Note: $p < 0.05^*$.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Linear regression was conducted to examine the influence of trust on the performance of small enterprises within ESD programmes. Results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression results showing the effect of trust on enterprise performance.

Model	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	p (F)	β	t	p (β)	95% CI for β
Trust → Small enterprise performance	0.154	0.148	15.414	<0.001	0.392	3.926	<0.001	[0.203, 0.581]

Note. Authors' own analysis. Dependent variable: Small enterprise performance.

The model explained 15.4% of the variance in enterprise performance ($R^2 = 0.154$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.148$), and the overall model was significant ($F = 15.414, p < 0.05$). The 95% confidence interval for the regression coefficient did not include zero ([0.203, 0.581]), further confirming the robustness of the effect. The coefficient results indicate that trust has a statistically significant positive influence on enterprise performance ($\beta = 0.392, t = 3.926, p < 0.05$). This means 39% of the change in enterprise performance is a result of a change in social capital trust.

These findings provide strong empirical support for the hypothesis that higher levels of social capital trust are associated with improved performance among small enterprises engaged in ESD programmes in South Africa.

5 Discussion

5.1 Trust and Small Enterprise Performance

Conceptualised as a core dimension of Social Capital, trust functions as a strategic intangible asset that enables collaboration, reduces uncertainty, and enhances relational credibility within entrepreneurial ecosystems, especially in ESD programmes. It facilitates access to contracts, strengthens reputational standing, and improves communication efficiency, each contributing to profitability, sales growth, and financial resilience.

The study empirically confirms the hypothesis that higher levels of trust are significantly associated with improved performance in small enterprises within ESD programmes. This finding reinforces theoretical propositions advanced by Adler and Kwon (2002), Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), and Rasdien et al. (2024), who argue that trust acts as a relational governance mechanism that reduces transaction costs and strengthens cooperative behaviour (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Kotcharin et al., 2024; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Rasdien et al., 2024). The results also correspond with empirical evidence linking trust to supply chain coordination, resource mobilisation, and enterprise sustainability in emerging markets (Gorondutse & Hilman, 2019; Lumineau & Oliveira, 2020; Rasdien et al., 2024).

By showing that trust influences enterprise performance, this study extends the explanatory power of Social Capital Theory in contexts characterised by institutional voids. In such environments, relational governance serves as a substitute for formal institutional mechanisms, highlighting the dual role of trust as both a theoretical construct and a strategic performance lever in South Africa's entrepreneurial landscape.

5.2 Trust Practical Implications for ESD

Beyond theoretical confirmation, the findings have strong practical relevance for corporate ESD practitioners, policymakers, and development partners. The evidence demonstrates that institutionalising trust building mechanisms is essential to strengthening supplier-buyer relationships and enhancing programme outcomes. Without a foundation of trust, ESD programmes risk perpetuating exclusion, inefficiency, and corruption, ultimately undermining the transformation agenda they seek to advance.

Corporates must embed trust within programme design through transparent communication, ethical leadership, and consistent engagement practices. Doing so enhances collaboration, reduces relational friction, and fosters sustainable supplier performance. Importantly, given South Africa's historical inequalities, cultivating institutional trust between corporates and Black-owned suppliers remains a central challenge in achieving inclusive ESD outcomes.

Building such trust requires a shift beyond transactional compliance toward authentic, partnership driven models grounded in accountability and fairness. By institutionalising trust through transparent procurement processes, mentorship, and feedback mechanisms, ESD frameworks can contribute meaningfully to enterprise competitiveness, transformation, and economic inclusivity.

5.3 Risks and Limitations of Trust

Although trust enhances performance, it also carries inherent risks when unbalanced or unregulated. Over reliance on interpersonal trust can lead to complacency, reduced vigilance, and increased exposure to opportunistic behaviour (Foster et al., 2003; Molina-Morales & Martínez-Fernández, 2009; Mayer et al., 1995; Schoorman et al., 2007; Zaheer et al., 1998). In weak institutional environments, such as those characterising segments of the South African economy, misplaced trust may inadvertently facilitate opportunism, fraud, or contractual non-compliance networks (Analia et al., 2020; Mlotshwa & Msimango-Galawe, 2020).

Furthermore, trust may reinforce in-group bias, leading to exclusivity and limiting access to diverse knowledge networks and innovative opportunities (Putnam, 2001; Woolcock, 2001). These findings suggest that while trust is a critical enabler of collaboration, it must be balanced with robust governance, monitoring, and accountability frameworks.

Future research should examine how digital trust mechanisms, including blockchain verification systems, e-contracting platforms, and AI-enabled supplier due diligence, can complement relational trust to strengthen transparency and mitigate risk within ESD partnerships. Integrating such technologies could enhance accountability while preserving the relational foundations essential to effective supplier development.

5.4 Conclusion

In summary, the study confirms that trust operates as a performance enhancing lever embedded within ESD partnerships and supply chain ecosystems. Its value lies in creating transparent, credible, and mutually beneficial relationships that enable small enterprises to thrive in resource constrained and institutionally weak environments. However, trust's benefits are maximised only when balanced with oversight, accountability, and adaptive governance mechanisms that safeguard against its potential downsides.

The study underscores trust's pivotal role in advancing South Africa's inclusive growth agenda and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) objectives. Strengthening relational trust within supplier ecosystems not only improves firm level performance but also contributes to the development of collaborative entrepreneurial networks capable of driving industrialisation, regional value chain integration, and socio-economic transformation. By foregrounding trust as both measurable and actionable, the study offers a framework for policymakers, corporates, and development practitioners to promote sustainable enterprise development and inclusive economic participation across the African continent.

Trust emerges as both a relational catalyst and a strategic lever for the success of small enterprises in South Africa's evolving entrepreneurial landscape. Institutionalising trust through transparent systems, relational metrics, and ethical governance can enhance the effectiveness of ESD programmes, promote supplier inclusivity, and contribute to building sustainable, high performance enterprise ecosystems.

6 Study Contributions and Recommendations

6.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study extends social capital theory by isolating trust as a measurable and actionable form of capital within supplier development ecosystems. It demonstrates that trust is not merely a social or relational by-product but a quantifiable driver of enterprise performance, particularly within heterogeneous and externally oriented ESD networks where building linking ties requires time, reciprocity, and ethical consistency. By situating trust within South Africa's ESD context, the study broadens the applicability of social capital theory to emerging economy environments characterised by institutional voids, power asymmetries, and historical inequalities. The findings affirm that trust contributes directly to firm competitiveness and indirectly to systemic transformation through stronger and more transparent inter-organisational relationships.

6.2 Practical Contribution

For practitioners and policymakers, cultivating trust must be both intentional and measurable. Corporates should:

- Integrate relational trust metrics such as transparency indices, supplier satisfaction surveys, and dispute resolution efficiency scores into ESD monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- Establish supplier feedback and accountability systems that promote continuous two way communication, reinforce mutual understanding, and strengthen relational governance.
- Institutionalise ethical leadership and governance audits to reinforce credibility, mitigate opportunism, and enhance fairness in procurement processes.

Given South Africa's historical inequalities, fostering institutional trust between corporates and Black-owned suppliers remains a central challenge to achieving inclusive and transformative ESD outcomes. Embedding measurable trust mechanisms can promote equity, transparency, and mutual respect within procurement systems, mitigating the grey areas where social capital, ethical practice, and corruption may intersect.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study employed a cross-sectional design and relied on self-reported data, which limits causal inference and introduces potential perceptual bias. Future research should adopt longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches to examine how trust evolves and influences enterprise performance over time. Further investigation of mediating variables, such as communication quality, leadership ethics, and power asymmetries, across industries would deepen the understanding of how trust operates within complex ESD ecosystems.

7 Disclosures Statements

Competing interest We declare that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose

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Data availability

Data will be made available upon reasonable request

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