



BEHAVIORAL GOVERNANCE AND DIGITAL TRUST: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF PLATFORMS AND CIVILITY NORMS

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>DOI: 10.52932/jfmr.v3i5ene.1120</p> <p><i>Received:</i> October 07, 2025</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> November 07, 2025</p> <p><i>Published:</i> November 25, 2025</p> <p>Keywords: Behavioral governance; Cultural moderation; Digital trust; Online etiquette; Platform affordances.</p> <p>JEL Codes: M31, L86, D91</p>	<p>Digital transformation has changed how trust develops in online environments. Traditional trust models fail to explain digital spaces adequately, where behavioral governance mechanisms, codes of conduct, platform design, legal frameworks, and civility norms shape interactions. Nevertheless, empirical evidence examining how these mechanisms systematically influence digital trust remains scattered across disciplines, limiting comprehensive theoretical frameworks.</p> <p>In this study, a systematic review of 47 studies using PRISMA 2020 guidelines identifies three patterns: bidirectional symbiotic relationships between trust and codes of conduct, cultural moderation effects, and platform design architecture influences. Analysis reveals trust operates hierarchically, with platform trust transferring unidirectionally to peer-user trust (effect observed in 67% of platform studies). Cultural contexts fundamentally shape trust formation pathways and code compliance behaviors. Platform design actively cultivates trust rather than passively facilitating communication, while user substitutability determines reliance on individual goodwill versus reputation signals.</p> <p>These findings advance theory by demonstrating that governance mechanisms shape trust through socio-technical interactions fundamentally different from offline contexts. Practically, they inform culturally adaptive platform design strategies and evidence-based policy frameworks for digital civility.</p>

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1. Introduction

Digital transformation creates unprecedented opportunities for global connectivity. However, it also presents significant challenges: building trust and managing behavior in online environments that lack familiar social cues, where interactions often occur between strangers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Digital trust - the confidence in the security, privacy, and integrity of technology and online interactions - has become the foundation for developing digital ecosystems. This trust encompasses multiple dimensions: competence, benevolence, integrity, and openness (Oesterreich et al., 2025).

The central research question of this study is: How do behavioral governance mechanisms influence digital trust across digital platforms and environments? To address this question, we conducted a systematic review following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, analyzing 47 studies published from 2017 to 2025, focusing on four themes: (1) digital trust formation processes, (2) trust through platform intermediation, (3) digital governance, and (4) digital civility.

While extensive research on digital trust exists (Oesterreich et al., 2025; Guo, 2022), how behavioral governance mechanisms systematically influence trust formation remains unclear. Most studies focus on isolated aspects - technical or psychological factors - without comprehensive integration. However, understanding the governance-trust relationship becomes increasingly critical as new regulatory frameworks emerge, such as the EU Digital Services Act, requiring evidence-based insights for effective implementation.

This study makes three principal contributions. Theoretically, it proposes an integrated framework explaining how governance mechanisms - from formal rules and platform design to informal behavioral norms - collectively shape digital trust.

Empirically, it identifies three important patterns: the relationship between trust and civility, the moderating effect of cultural factors on the governance-trust relationship, and the influence of platform design on trust formation. Practically, it provides evidence-based guidance for platform designers, policymakers, and organizations in building trustworthy digital communities that account for cultural and technological contexts.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical foundations of digital trust and behavioral governance. Section 3 describes research. Section 4 presents findings across four thematic areas: trust formation processes, platform intermediation, digital governance, and digital civility. Section 5 discusses the findings. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Related works

2.1. Digital trust formation and foundational mechanisms

Research on digital trust formation has established trust as a multidimensional construct essential for digital ecosystem success. Meta-analytical evidence synthesizing 74 primary studies reveals that human-like trusting beliefs, including integrity, benevolence, and competence, alongside platform reputation and structural assurance display the strongest effects on trusting intention (Oesterreich et al., 2025). Complementary meta-analysis of 90 e-government studies confirms trust directly affects system use and indirectly affects use via behavioral intention (Hooda et al., 2022).

The cognitive-affective architecture of trust has been empirically differentiated, with ability and behavioral integrity functioning as stronger predictors of cognition-based trust, while benevolence emerges as the strongest predictor of affect-based trust (Tomlinson et al., 2020). User satisfaction mediates relationships between perception, expectation, and digital

trust, comprising distinct cognitive and emotional components (Guo, 2022). Cross-cultural evidence establishes generalized offline trust as the strongest predictor of online trust across five countries (Hadler et al., 2025).

2.2. Platform-mediated trust and hierarchical transfer mechanisms

Platform-mediated trust operates through hierarchical mechanisms rather than uniform distribution. Research with 908 French Airbnb users reveals trust flows directionally from platforms to peers, with user interchangeability, the dual buyer-seller role, moderating trust evaluation: interchangeable users rely on benevolence and credibility, while noninterchangeable users depend on reputational signals (Chameroy et al., 2024).

User familiarity emerges as a critical moderator. Inexperienced users exhibit “trust conflation,” perceiving cues as influencing both providers and platforms simultaneously (Möhlmann, 2021). With experience, users develop trust differentiation capabilities. Structural assurance strongly influences trust in digital arbitration technologies, with benevolence shaping attitudes while competence and integrity show no significant effect on intention to use (Ferreira et al., 2022). Online interpersonal trust proves conditional, depending on trust definitions and platform design features like reputation systems and identity mechanisms (Tagliaferri, 2023).

2.3. Digital governance and institutional trust frameworks

Digital governance research documents regulatory evolution from voluntary self-regulation to structured co-regulation. The EU’s shift from the 2018 Code of Practice on Disinformation to the Digital Services Act exemplifies this transformation, though implementation challenges remain in monitoring and enforcement (Brogi & De

Gregorio, 2024). Trust frameworks pursue four core goals, interoperability, certainty, efficiency, and security, through integrated legal, governance, operational, and technical components, though no minimal component set has been identified (van der Peet et al., 2024).

Corporate trust has undergone fundamental transformation from character-based assumptions to measurement-based assessments within polycentric regulatory orders (Backer, 2025). Ethics-by-design principles emerge as central mechanisms where transparency, accountability, and ethical design build sustainable trust in digital ecosystems (Ibircu & van der Made, 2020). EU farm data sharing demonstrates that contracts alone cannot build trust without clarity, responsibility from powerful parties, and broader ethical principles beyond consent (van der Burg et al., 2021).

2.4. Digital civility and behavioral norms

Digital civility research reveals asymmetric trust responses to online behavior. Civil Facebook interactions significantly increased participants’ trust by 22% compared to incivility and baseline conditions, while incivility did not alter trust, reflecting its perception as the online norm (Antoci et al., 2019). This asymmetry demonstrates that civil interactions, even brief, can restore trust, indicating etiquette in online debate has measurable effects on social capital.

Cultural dimensions significantly moderate trust-etiquette relationships through context-specific pathways. Chinese virtual civility mediated by WeChat’s technical affordances operates through three validated dimensions, respect, elegance, and tidiness, within online acquaintance communities (Tian & Guo, 2021). Indonesian digital netiquette combined with UU ITE legal frameworks builds courteous digital culture by integrating formal-informal norm systems (Sinthiya & Ipnuwati, 2022). Professional digital conduct emerges as

essential across multiple domains: healthcare professionals require ethical guidelines to protect doctor-patient trust relationships (Al-Balushi, 2020), while online learners depend on peer trust to reduce conflict and strengthen collaboration.

2.5. Research gaps and study positioning

Despite substantial evidence across these domains, three critical gaps remain. *First*, existing research examines trust antecedents and governance mechanisms in isolation without investigating their interdependence. *Second*, cross-domain synthesis is limited, with reviews focusing on specific contexts (e-government, e-commerce) rather than integrating patterns across digital environments. *Third*, the role of behavioral governance mechanisms, including formal codes, platform affordances, and informal norms, in collectively shaping trust remains undertheorized. This review addresses these gaps through a systematic synthesis of 47 studies to reveal convergent mechanisms governing trust-governance relationships.

3. Research method

3.1. Study design

This systematic review followed Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The protocol was developed and pilot-tested before implementation.

3.2. Research questions

Primary: How do behavioral governance mechanisms influence digital trust in online platforms and digital environments?

Secondary:

What mechanisms govern the relationship between behavioral standards (formal codes, platform design, civility norms) and digital trust across different contexts?

How do cultural dimensions moderate the relationship between governance mechanisms and trust formation?

What role do platform affordances play in shaping trust-governance relationships?

3.3. Search strategy and information sources

Four databases were systematically searched: Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection (primary), plus ACM Digital Library, IEEE Xplore (supplementary) from 2010 to September 2025.

The search strategy combined digital trust terms (“digital trust” Or “e-trust” Or “online trust” Or “cyber trust”) Or codes of conduct terms (“code of conduct” Or “ethics code” Or “behavioral guidelines” Or “netiquette” Or “digital governance”) using database-specific syntax. The broad OR strategy was employed to capture the full spectrum of relevant literature, given that studies explicitly examining both concepts together were limited.

Search Refinement: Initial search results were refined through systematic application of inclusion/exclusion criteria during the screening process. Studies were retained only if they demonstrated clear relevance to trust-conduct relationships in digital environments, either through explicit examination of both concepts or clear implications for understanding their interaction.

Supplementary Searches: Forward and backward citation searching was conducted on final included studies (n=37), seminal papers in digital trust theory (n=7), and key systematic reviews in related domains (n=3). Author searching was performed for identified key researchers in digital trust and online behavior domains.

3.4. Eligibility criteria

Inclusion: Empirical studies examining trust-conduct relationships in digital contexts; peer-

reviewed articles and conference papers; English language; January 2010-September 2025.

Exclusion: Studies focusing solely on technical security without behavioral components; offline trust studies; editorials without empirical data; insufficient methodological detail.

3.5. Study selection

Two reviewers screened the records independently and did so manually. Title and abstract screening used a liberal inclusion rule to reduce false exclusions. Full text assessment relied on standardized eligibility forms. The reviewers solved disagreements through discussion, and they invited a third reviewer if needed. The researchers assessed inter-rater agreement with Cohen's kappa. The kappa formula is:

$$\kappa = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e}$$

Here, P_o is the observed proportion of agreement, and P_e is the expected agreement by chance. Agreement was substantial at title abstract screening ($\kappa = 0.78$) and high at full-text screening ($\kappa = 0.84$).

3.6. Data extraction

We developed standardized extraction forms capturing study characteristics, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, sample details, trust-conduct relationship evidence, and practical implications. Forms were pilot tested on 10 studies and refined. Two reviewers independently extracted data with discrepancies resolved through discussion.

3.7. Quality assessment

Study quality was assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) version 2018 (Hong et al., 2018) for empirical studies ($n=38$) and adapted Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) criteria for conceptual papers ($n=9$). Two reviewers independently evaluated each

study across five criteria specific to study design: quantitative studies were assessed on sampling strategy, sample representativeness, measurement appropriateness, nonresponse bias, and statistical analysis; qualitative studies on approach appropriateness, data collection adequacy, findings derivation, interpretation substantiation, and methodological coherence; mixed-methods studies on rationale, integration, interpretation, divergence handling, and tradition adherence; and conceptual papers on aims clarity, logical structure, concept definitions, literature adequacy, evidence support, limitation acknowledgment, and theoretical advancement. Studies scoring $\geq 4/5$ (MMAT) or $\geq 6/7$ (CASP) were classified as high quality ($n=32$, 68%), $3/5$ or $4-5/7$ as moderate quality ($n=13$, 28%), and $<3/5$ or $<4/7$ as low quality ($n=2$, 4%). Inter-rater agreement was substantial (Cohen's $\kappa=0.78$), with discrepancies resolved through discussion. No studies were excluded based on quality; instead, sensitivity analysis excluding moderate and low-quality studies confirmed robustness of thematic findings, with all four major themes and three convergent patterns remaining consistent).

3.8. Data synthesis and analysis

Given methodological heterogeneity across 47 included studies, narrative synthesis served as the primary approach, supplemented by quantitative analysis where appropriate.

Thematic Analysis: This study employed a hybrid computational-interpretive approach following Braun and Clarke's framework (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Initial coding utilized Python-based text analysis to identify preliminary patterns, which two reviewers then independently assessed and refined through manual interpretation. Final themes emerged through constant comparison and iterative analysis.

Convergent Evidence Synthesis: Cross-study patterns were identified and synthesized, with quantitative effect sizes calculated using random-effects models where sufficient homogeneous studies existed (minimum $n=3$).

Geographic and Quality Mapping: Studies were mapped by region, publication year, and application domain to assess evidence distribution. Quality assessment results contextualized findings rather than determining exclusions, with higher-quality studies receiving greater interpretive weight.

4. Research results

4.1. Study selection and characteristics

The systematic search identified 9,703 records across all databases. After removing 5,066 duplicates and irrelevant records, 4,637 records were screened by title and abstract, resulting in 156 full texts sought for retrieval. Of these, 126 articles were assessed for eligibility, and 37 studies were finally included. An additional 10 studies were identified through snowballing, yielding a total of 47 studies for analysis (see *Appendix 1 online*).

As illustrated (see *Appendix 2 online*), digital trust research has experienced a significant upward trajectory from 2017 to 2025, with a pronounced peak in 2020. The majority of studies were concentrated

between 2020 and 2024, reflecting heightened scholarly engagement during this period. Most contributions were published in peer-reviewed journals, and quantitative methodologies dominated the research landscape, indicating a preference for empirical rigor in the field.

The systematic analysis of 47 studies revealed four distinct main themes with varying empirical foundations across application domains (see *Appendix 3 online*). Digital Trust Formation demonstrates the strongest evidence base with broad coverage across social media platforms, business contexts, and governance applications. Platform-Mediated Trust shows concentrated strength in social media and platforms, while Digital Governance exhibits focused application in governance and legal contexts. Digital Civility emerges as a developing research area with limited but growing evidence across multiple domains.

4.2. Thematic analysis and evidence distribution

An analysis of 47 studies reveals four distinct main themes and 15 sub themes that characterize digital trust-etiquette relationships (see *Appendix 4 online*). Among these, Digital Trust Formation demonstrates the strongest empirical foundation, while Digital Civility emerges as a dynamic and evolving research frontier (Table 1).

Table 1. Main themes evidence summary and quality assessment

Main Themes	Studies (n)	Geographic Coverage	Sample Range	Key Evidence Types	Methodological Strength
Digital Trust Formation	18	Asia, Europe, Americas, Africa	205-2,194 + MA (k=74-90)	MA, SEM, Cross-cultural validation	High
Platform-Mediated Trust	12	Europe, Americas focus	17-908 (mixed methods)	Mixed methods, Longitudinal, Cross-platform	Moderate High

Main Themes	Studies (n)	Geographic Coverage	Sample Range	Key Evidence Types	Methodological Strength
Digital Governance	8	Europe, Americas concentration	8-2,194	Policy analysis, Case studies, Expert interviews	Moderate
Digital Civility	9	Limited (China, Indonesia, Oman, USA)	60-348	Qualitative interviews, Cultural studies	Emerging

Note: MA = Meta-analysis; SEM = Structural Equation Modeling.

The thematic analysis reveals substantial variation in empirical foundation and geographic representation across the four domains (Table 2). Digital Trust Formation demonstrates the strongest evidence base with 18 studies spanning four continents and high methodological rigor through large-scale samples (205-2,194 participants) and meta-analyses ($k = 74-90$ studies). Platform-Mediated Trust follows with 12 studies concentrated in Europe and Americas, showing moderate-high methodological strength through mixed-methods and longitudinal designs. Digital Governance encompasses 8 studies with moderate strength, primarily utilizing policy analysis and case studies, while Digital

Civility represents an emerging frontier with 9 studies limited to four countries and relying predominantly on qualitative approaches. This distribution pattern suggests Digital Trust Formation as the most mature research domain, while Digital Civility requires broader geographic and methodological expansion to establish robust theoretical foundations.

4.3. Key convergent findings across main themes

Three critical patterns emerged consistently across the 47-study corpus, each supported by robust empirical evidence from multiple contexts (Table 2).

Table 2. Key convergent findings - supporting evidence

Convergent pattern	Supporting studies	Key finding	Effect size/statistical evidence
Trust-Etiquette Symbiosis	Chen et al. (2025), Tian & Guo, 2021, Antoci et al. (2019)	Civil interactions increase trust; platform affordances mediate etiquette	+22% trust increase ($n=412$); $n=60$ WeChat users; $n=2,194$ rural residents
Cultural Moderation	Hadler et al. (2025), Sinthiya & Ipnuwati (2022), Al Shishany et al. (2020)	Cultural dimensions moderate trust-etiquette relationships	$n=1,546$ + international pretests; UK-Jordan comparison; Indonesian legal framework
Platform Affordance Architecture	Chen et al. (2025), Chameroy et al. (2024), Möhlmann (2021)	Platform design shapes trust formation and etiquette compliance	Four mediators identified; $n=232$ trust conflation; $n=908$ hierarchical trust

Trust-Etiquette Symbiosis: Robust bidirectional relationship demonstrated where civility in Facebook discussions significantly raised participants' trust (+22% compared to

incivility and baseline) while incivility did not alter trust, reflecting its perception as the norm (Antoci et al., 2019, n=412). This symbiotic mechanism operates independently of platform type, with civil interactions, even brief, capable of restoring trust and indicating that etiquette in online debate has measurable effects on social capital.

Cultural Moderation Effects: Cross-cultural evidence demonstrates cultural dimensions significantly moderate trust-etiquette relationships. Chinese virtual civility mediated by WeChat's technical affordances operates through three validated dimensions, respect, elegance, and tidiness, within online acquaintance communities (Tian & Guo, 2021, n=60). Indonesian digital netiquette combined with UU ITE legal frameworks builds courteous digital culture by integrating formal-informal norm systems (Sinthiya & Ipnuwati, 2022). Generalized trust emerges as the strongest predictor of online trust across five countries, with cultural variations in institutional trust becoming secondary once generalized trust is accounted for (Hadler et al., 2025, n=1,546 Austria plus international pretests).

Platform Affordance Architecture: Platform design features systematically shape both trust formation and etiquette compliance. Digital governance platform usage significantly enhances rural social trust through four mediators: information cognition, village affairs participation, external political efficacy, and villagers' interaction, with effects stronger among disadvantaged groups and less developed villages (Chen et al., 2025, n=2,194). WeChat's selective sharing, blocking, and granular audience control techniques facilitate etiquette rules that reproduce acquaintance-community norms, demonstrating how platform affordances mediate etiquette performance.

4.4. Theme-specific evidence patterns

Digital trust formation and mechanisms

Digital Trust Formation emerged as the most empirically robust theme in this study, encompassing 18 studies that investigate the foundational mechanisms through which trust develops in digital environments. This domain demonstrates comprehensive methodological diversity including meta-analyses, structural equation modeling, and cross-cultural validation spanning multiple continents (see *Appendix 5 online*). The geographic distribution reflects true global representation with studies conducted across Asia (8 studies), Europe (6 studies), Americas (3 studies), and Africa (1 study), establishing this as the most mature research domain in digital trust scholarship. These studies employ rigorous methodologies with sample sizes ranging from 205 to 2,194 participants for individual studies, complemented by two large-scale meta-analyses synthesizing 74 and 90 primary studies respectively. The empirical evidence reveals that human-like trusting beliefs, platform reputation, and structural assurance display the strongest effects on trusting intention, while user satisfaction serves as a critical mediator between user perception, expectation, and digital trust formation.

Platform-mediated trust relationships

Platform-Mediated Trust constitutes the second major theme with 12 studies that achieve methodological triangulation through mixed-methods approaches, longitudinal designs, and cross-platform comparisons (see *Appendix 6 online*). This research demonstrates concentrated strength in developed economies, particularly Europe and North America, with studies employing appropriate sample sizes that combine qualitative components (n=17-

60) and quantitative components (n=232-908). The studies summarized in Table 5 reveal a critical finding: trust operates through hierarchical mechanisms rather than as a single uniform construct, with trust flowing directionally from platforms to peers. Notably, user familiarity with platforms moderates trust formation processes-inexperienced users exhibit “trust conflation”, perceiving digital trust cues as influencing both service providers and platform intermediaries simultaneously, while experienced users differentiate trustees and assign cues appropriately. Interchangeable users (those who act as both buyers and sellers) rely more on benevolence and credibility, whereas noninterchangeable users depend on reputational signals, demonstrating how platforms fundamentally shape trust evaluation strategies.

Digital governance and institutional trust

Digital Governance and Institutional Trust represents the third theme, comprising eight studies that examine how formal regulatory structures and institutional frameworks shape trust in digital environments (*see Appendix 7 online*). This domain demonstrates moderate methodological strength through policy analysis, case studies, and legal framework investigations, with studies concentrated primarily in European and North American contexts. The research detailed in Table 6 documents a significant regulatory evolution, particularly the EU’s shift from voluntary self-regulation (2018 Code of Practice on Disinformation) to structured co-regulation under the Digital Services Act, exemplifying how institutional approaches to trust governance have matured. Key findings reveal that digital trust systems work like agreements between multiple parties, aiming to achieve four key goals: interoperability, clarity, efficiency, and security. These systems combine legal, governance, operational, and technical elements to build a reliable digital

environment. Trust in business has shifted from being based on personal impressions to being measured through specific indicators, especially in environments with multiple management systems. A growing trend is “ethics by design,” where digital platforms are built from the ground up with principles like transparency, accountability, and ethical design. These principles help create long-term trust in the digital ecosystem.

Digital civility and trust practices

Digital civility and trust practices have emerged as the fourth and newest theme in the research, with nine studies mainly using qualitative methods. These studies show that this is an active area that needs more data-based investigation (*see Appendix 8 online*). Research in this field is currently focused on specific cultural contexts such as China, Indonesia, Oman, and the United States. This limits how broadly the findings can be applied but provides valuable local insights. The studies use small but suitable sample sizes (between 60 and 348 participants), helping to identify important patterns in how online behavior and etiquette influence trust. One notable finding is that polite interactions on Facebook increase trust by 22 percent compared to normal conditions, while rude behavior does not reduce trust, suggesting that incivility has become a common part of online life. Table 7 also shows that professional digital behavior is important in many areas: doctors need ethical guidelines to maintain trust with patients, online learners rely on peer trust to avoid conflict and work together, and systems that regulate online behavior help connect content awareness with responsible actions. Although more research is needed across different cultures and methods, these findings show that digital civility is a key but still underdeveloped area for understanding how trust and etiquette interact in digital environments.

4.5. Discussion

Addressing research gaps and key findings

This study analyzes 47 studies conducted between 2017 and 2025, aiming to clarify the role of codes of conduct in shaping digital trust. Four major thematic areas were identified: digital trust formation, platform-mediated trust, digital governance, and digital civility. Each domain exhibits varying levels of empirical development, with digital civility emerging as a promising frontier.

Three prominent trends were identified. First, the symbiotic relationship between trust and etiquette suggests that civil behavior can significantly enhance digital trust. Second, cultural moderation effects reveal that generalized trust is a strong cross-cultural predictor. Third, platform design architecture plays a direct role in shaping trust through validated mediating factors.

Theoretical insights

One notable finding is the “Trust–Civility Paradox” and the mechanism of asymmetric recovery. In digital environments, even brief civil interactions can increase trust by up to 22%, as users tend to perceive incivility as the norm. This makes civil behavior stand out and exert a disproportionately positive impact. In contrast, offline trust tends to respond more evenly to both positive and negative behaviors.

The study also demonstrates that digital trust operates through a three-tiered structure: generalized trust, platform-mediated trust, and interaction-specific trust. Users gradually learn to distinguish these layers through accumulated experience with digital platforms.

Another theoretical contribution lies in differentiating between universal mechanisms and culturally contingent factors in digital trust. While the foundational processes of trust formation are consistent across contexts, the

interpretation and weighting of trust signals vary by culture. For example, digital civility on China’s WeChat platform, expressed through respect, elegance, and tidiness, differs from Western norms but achieves comparable outcomes via culturally specific pathways.

5. Conclusion and implications

This study affirms that digital trust operates through sophisticated mechanisms that differ fundamentally from offline trust. The identification of platforms as trust architects, combined with asymmetric recovery and hierarchical trust structures, offers a new framework for understanding how technology contributes to social capital. Civil interactions can restore trust (+22%), and cultural factors systematically moderate these effects. These insights provide both theoretical foundations and practical guidance for designing trustworthy digital environments and culturally responsive policy frameworks.

For policymakers, cultural moderation effects underscore the need for culturally adaptive legal frameworks rather than one-size-fits-all approaches. The European Union’s shift from voluntary self-regulation to structured co-regulation exemplifies this principle.

For platform developers, the findings highlight that platforms are not neutral channels but active architects of trust. Features such as selective sharing and audience control help users adhere to etiquette norms. The asymmetric recovery mechanism suggests that promoting civil behavior proactively is more effective than punishing incivility reactively.

For organizations, particularly in healthcare, unprofessional online conduct by professionals can erode public trust through breaches of confidentiality and misinformation. Mandatory training in digital conduct and enforceable social media policies are therefore essential.

This research faces several limitations. First, geographic bias, especially in digital civility studies concentrated in four countries, limits generalizability. Second, methodological diversity, while offering broad coverage,

hinders direct statistical comparisons. Third, the temporal concentration of studies (with over 93% published between 2020 and 2024) may not fully capture long-term trends in the trust-etiquette relationship.

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