



SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

Building trust when facing violence: Insights from the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces

Ebba Keller

Hedda Olsson Mäkinen

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Supervisor: Rikard Larsson

Examinator: Christine Blomquist

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Abstract

The study investigates employees' perceptions of trust within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces. Trust is critical for organisational success, yet there is a lack of research comparing different dimensions of trust within these public sectors. This topic is particularly relevant given the rising threats to Sweden's national security, resulting in military rearmament and increased police efforts towards the deadly violence linked to gang criminality.

To examine perceptions of trust and how it is perceived to be affected by heightened security threats the study explores three dimensions: team, leadership, and organisational trust. The participants include personnel from patrolling police, military units, police office and military office. Using an abductive qualitative approach, we conduct 16 semi-structured interviews, with four interviewees from each group.

The first main finding reveals that team trust varies the most by context. Patrolling police and military in units accordingly reported high team trust, emphasising its necessity due to the inherent risks and interdependence in their work. Among the interviewees in the office groups, there were more individual variations. Additionally, the study shows that high leadership trust positively affects team and organisational trust, but high team or organisational trust did not necessarily indicate high leadership trust. This highlights both the interconnectedness and distinctiveness of these dimensions. Lastly, the findings also show that the current threat levels in Sweden underscore the need for trust, yet many interviewees had low leadership trust due to dissatisfaction and increased workloads.

These results suggest the importance of considering different dimensions of trust and specify the context when studying it from an interpersonal standpoint. Lastly, the findings show the vitality of trust in organisations and suggest that fostering leadership trust has the biggest positive effects, extending to both organisational and team dimensions.

Keywords: Trust, Team trust, Organisational trust, Leadership trust, High-reliability settings, Police, Armed Forces, Organisational challenges, Workplace fun

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Ebba Keller



Hedda Olsson Mäkinen

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1. Introduction

The year is 2024 and Sweden is currently facing a serious security situation, marked by threats from multiple fronts. The gravity of these threats cannot be overstated, and their implications are particularly tangible for employees within security-sensitive operations, such as the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces. The threat stems partly from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Sweden's recent accession to NATO but also from increased terrorist threats, where Sweden's terror threat level was raised from 3 to 4 in 2023 (Säkerhetspolisen, 2024; Regeringen, 2023). Additionally, gang-related criminality and the deadly violence from gang shootings have increased in recent years (Stockholm Stad, 2024; Brå, 2023). To handle these threats there is a heavily increased pressure on the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces, resulting in changes in the organisations and their work processes (Säkerhetspolisen, 2024).

When facing critical situations such as national crises, or organisational transitions, organisations are put to the test as their daily operations are confronted with new challenges. Employees' trust in leadership is crucial for engaging employees in organisational changes, which is vital in order to manage crises effectively (Islam, 2023). However, during high-pressure situations, employees' trust in the organisation and the leadership face high risks of faltering (de Villartay, Abid-Dupont & Berger-Remy, 2024). With the escalating security threat pressuring the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces, the need for trust becomes increasingly apparent to navigate the new reality. In the turbulent shift in Sweden, how is trust manifested within these organisations assigned to save our lives when security is at stake?

Trust has been widely acknowledged as a crucial subject within organisational research, with extensive studies in the field (Hancock, Kessler, Kaplan, Stowers, Brill, Billings, Schaefer, & Szalma, 2023). This is due to its many benefits, making it important for managers to understand the various dimensions of trust within the organisation for effectively supporting and influencing employees (Mintzberg, 2011). We are particularly interested in exploring trust within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces, given that employees regularly face high-pressure situations requiring close collaboration and trust to carry out their duties effectively (Schöbel, 2009; Colquitt, Lepine, & Zapata, 2011).

Understanding trust within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces is crucial for employee satisfaction, operational effectiveness, and public trust. Given that these institutions are tasked with ensuring public safety and security in Sweden the public heavily relies upon them. Polisen (2024) have observed that the external trust from citizens towards the police has decreased when organisational expectations are not met, highlighting the strong connection between organisational performance and external trust. Therefore, fostering strong internal trust within these organisations is highly important, as it directly affects the execution of their work, subsequently influencing citizens' trust in the organisation (Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis, Winograd, 2000; Polisen, 2024). Hence, exploring the internal dynamics of trust within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces is valuable, not only for the employees within these organisations, but also for the public.

1.1 The Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces

Since the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces is the focus of this study we will provide some brief information about them to establish a foundational understanding.

Both of these organisations are public authorities in Sweden and unique as they are authorised to use force when necessary (Polislagen, SFS 1984:387; Försvarsmakten, 2017). The police in Sweden consists of over 38,500 employees and has undergone a reorganisation since 2015. The organisation is today a single-council authority with a national police chief, Petra Lundh, appointed by the government. Within the organisation, there are various positions, both on patrol duty and as an employee in the office (Polisen, 2024).

The Swedish Armed Forces consists of 56,000 people, of which 26,000 people are employed as daily workers (Försvarsmakten, 2024). An investment is now being carried out on the, where the number is to be increased to 100,000 personnel before 2030 (Försvarsmakten, n.d). The Swedish Armed Forces is a single-council authority under the Ministry of Defence, led by supreme commander Micael Bydén. Within the organisation, there are people employed in various types of office roles as well as officers and soldiers in units in foreign service, among other things (Försvarsmakten, 2024).

1.2. Problem statement

The heightened focus and pressure on the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces, driven by escalating threat levels both within and towards the country, pose significant challenges to these organisations' capabilities (Polisen, 2024; Försvarsmakten, n.d.). As these challenges arise, employees' trust becomes more critical than ever to tackle this in the best possible way (Islam, 2023; Wang, Ngamsiriudom, & Hsieh, 2015). While public trust in these organisations is frequently measured, there is a notable research gap regarding their internal trust. Over a decade ago, Mishra and Mishra (2013) highlighted the need for more research on trust within police and armed forces, given the uncertainty and vulnerability inherent in their work contexts. Despite this, there still remains a lack of research exploring internal trust, particularly comparing high-risk and low-risk duties within these settings.

Moreover, the prevailing focus of trust research predominantly centres on individual perceptions on vertical trust, exploring the interactions between leadership and employees (Haridas, Ture & Nayanpally, 2022). Given that organisations are inherently multilevel systems, trust operates across various dimensions, including individual, team, and organisational. Existing research fails to conclusively determine whether the antecedents and consequences are exclusive to a specific target or extend across multiple dimensions (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Therefore, to address the lack of research on internal trust within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces, and their respective high-risk and low-risk contexts, there is a need for an integrated approach examining different dimensions of trust.

1.3. Research purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to examine employees' perceptions of trust within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of trust, we will investigate different dimensions, including team trust, leadership trust, and organisational trust. Given the diverse nature of job duties within these organisations, we will differentiate between personnel working in office settings and those engaged in patrolling police work or military units with the objective to understand variations in trust dimensions between these contexts.

Furthermore, as these occupations play crucial roles in ensuring the safety of Sweden, it is essential to consider the aspect of the heightened security threats when examining their trust. We aim to explore the factors influencing trust and how perceived trust impacts other variables. To achieve our research purpose, we have formulated specific research questions to guide our inquiry, outlined below.

Q1: How is trust perceived amongst personal working in the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces, considering their work context?

Q2: How does the heightened security threats in Sweden impact the employees within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Force, particularly concerning trust?

By answering these questions, we aim to contribute to the field of trust research by exploring its multiple dimensions and critical importance within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces. We seek to deepen the understanding of how drastic societal changes affect these organisations and how they can withstand and thrive under challenging conditions. The insights from this study are valuable from a managerial perspective, providing knowledge on how to effectively support and influence employees' trust to enhance workplace performance.

1.4. Research demarcations

We recognise that many other public sector organisations could be of interest in this study. Initially, we considered including more organisations, such as healthcare services. However, we decided to narrow our focus to two organisations with significant operational similarities, leading to the choice to study the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces. This decision was motivated by our focus on comparing the differences between high and low-risk contexts rather than different types of organisations. Thus, we distinguish between office-based personnel and field units, recognising the differing work contexts while remaining within the same organisations.

Additionally, our original intention was to include the interplay between trust and innovation within these groups. However, after consulting with a senior lecturer, experienced in employee-driven innovation, and after our initial interviews we recognised the challenges of

fully investigating innovation with the selected participants. Consequently, we shifted our focus to examining trust in relation to societal factors as this arose to be more interesting and topical.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that there are more relevant theories and concepts within trust research, however those we deemed redundant to achieve the research purpose were excluded. For instance, we initially included general trust in our theoretical framework and interview questions but this was later removed. While we did gather some insights on general trust during the interviews, it did not directly contribute to our purpose, leading us to subsequently exclude the theory from the study.

1.5. Outline of the thesis

The thesis begins by reviewing relevant literature in relation to our research purpose. Through this exploration, we elucidate the concept of trust and establish the definition that guides our study. Additionally, we delve into dimensions of trust, drawing on previous research to understand the factors influencing trust and those impacted by it.

Following the theoretical framework, we present our chosen methodology of the thesis. This section provides an explanation of how the empirical data is gathered and the rationale behind the chosen approach, including its strengths and weaknesses. Thereafter, we present the empirical data which includes the firsthand information we collect.

The last chapter is the analysis and discussion section, which involves connecting our empirical findings with the theoretical framework to enhance our understanding of trust dynamics within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces. The final chapter in the thesis provides a conclusion of the insights related to the research questions, ending with suggestions for future research and practical implications based on the insights gained from the study.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework offers an overview of the relevant previous research for our purpose. Through this chapter we start off with a broad perspective by defining what trust is and the standpoint of the thesis. Then, we delve into dimensions of trust in workplaces, and more specific theories related to context and workplace fun. Finally, we present a model that integrates these theories into a conceptual framework.

2.1. Defining trust

While trust has been extensively investigated and has attracted considerable attention across various fields of research, there remains a lack of consensus regarding its precise definition (Young & Haynie, 2022). Although Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998) argue that the discrepancies among the definitions primarily stem from differences in disciplines, they maintain that the fundamental principles within these definitions persist similarly, grounded in the notion of trust as something psychological. While differences exist, trust can be broadly categorised into interpersonal trust, representing the trust relationship with an identifiable "other party", and general trust, which reflects an inherent attitude in people to trust (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). According to Rotter (1967), interpersonal trust entails an expectation of being able to rely on the statements and actions of an individual or group.

Young and Haynie (2020) define trust as a cognitive attitude towards how an individual is expected to act within situations characterised by uncertain outcomes. Similarly, Mayer et al. (1995) portray interpersonal trust as the willingness to expose vulnerability to another party, anticipating mutual goodwill. Goodwill referred to a person's inclination towards sincerity and benevolence (Mayer et al., 1995). Common terms used when discussing trust include "trustor", reflecting the person who trusts, and "trustee", reflecting the person who is trusted. In essence, according to Mayer et al. (1995), interpersonal trust occurs when the trustor relies on the trustee to act with goodwill.

Recognising the importance of both perspectives, we merge them into a unified definition, blending the focus on vulnerability and goodwill from Mayer et al. (1995) with Young and

Haynie's (2020) emphasis on uncertain outcomes. This comprehensive definition serves as the foundation of the research, encapsulating trust as one's willingness to show vulnerability based on an expectation that the other party will act in goodwill within specific situations or contexts marked by uncertain outcomes.

2.2. Dimensions of trust

Trust operates within various dimensions, each playing a critical role in shaping workplace dynamics and outcomes (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). As organisations are complex entities with diverse interconnections, it is essential to explore trust across multiple dimensions to gain a comprehensive understanding. Therefore, our investigation delves into three fundamental dimensions: team trust, leadership trust, and organisational trust.

2.2.1. Team trust

It is important to distinguish between different types of interpersonal trust. This research focuses partly on interpersonal trust on a team level, which refers to the reliance on other team member's competence, capability and values (Qu, Xu, Wang, Wu & Wang, 2023). Team trust builds upon the same principles as interpersonal trust but extends to the collective within a team, involving multiple individuals. Therefore, team trust can be explained as the attitude of team members towards the actions of their peers being rooted in goodwill, as well as the willingness of team members to welcome the vulnerability of others (Alves, Dimas, Lourenço, Rebelo, Peñarroja & Gamero, 2023).

Furthermore, team trust refers to two foundations that underpin the rationale behind trust within the team, which are cognitive-based trust and affective based trust (Alves et al., 2023). The difference between these two is that cognitive based trust refers to people's knowledge about the trustee's competences and credibility. Affective based trust, on the other hand, refers to the mutual perception of emotional investment within the team and the shown concern of team members (Alves et al., 2023).

Research on team trust has faced certain critiques from researchers arguing that they fail to accurately reflect reality. This criticism stems from the tendency of such studies to generate

an average trust rating within the group, thereby overlooking the variations in trust levels among different team members and within the same team (Qu et al., 2023). As a result, our research acknowledges the individual perceptions of interpersonal trust and places emphasis on the potential variations of trust within different teams.

There are divided opinions whether in what way team trust affects the organisation as a whole. Song (2009) suggests that high levels of trust towards the team may have a negative effect on team performance due to lack of control from management since employees tend to exert less effort when they do not feel monitored. In contrast, additional research indicates that high levels of team trust has a positive impact on the organisation through various aspects, such as the employees motivation, job satisfaction and the perceived effectiveness of the organisation (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000). Moreover, knowledge-sharing has shown to be improved by high levels of interpersonal trust within teams which foster innovation, increase performance and lower transactional costs (Dindaroglu, 2023; Qu et al., 2023). Consequently, the level of interpersonal trust within teams should be seen as crucial within organisations. However, prevalent perspectives on team trust often focuses on examining trust between leaders and the team (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Instead, in our research, team trust refers to the trust among all individuals working within the same team.

2.2.2. Leadership trust

Leadership trust has shown to be essential for the team and the organisation at large. According to Alilyyani (2022) a leader with a high level of trust from employees has the power to create a sense of meaningfulness in tasks, which makes the employees feel that their work is valuable, creating a stronger motivation initiative for the employees. Hence, for the work to be effective there needs to be trust in both directions between the leadership and the employees as a leader with a low level of trust will have a hard time influencing the employees in a certain direction (Burke, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007).

Trust is viewed as an essential oversight principle, along with hierarchy and market, needed to oversee in an organisation. Bringselius (2018) suggests that the traditional view of hierarchy and authority as crucial for performance in an organisation needs to be reassessed, suggesting that organisations should focus on nurturing trust instead. Within this she argues

that trust-based leadership is crucial for success in an organisation, especially as a public authority. However, Bringselius (2018) emphasises that trust-based leadership does not imply that organisations should have a flat structure but rather that they should aim to move away from the micromanagement culture experienced in many organisations today. The leadership should still be strong, and the performance of employees should still be monitored, but with greater responsiveness and clearer communication that promotes shared values.

Bringselius (2018) points out that trust-based leadership is often undervalued in many organisations where trust is not sufficiently valued and that leadership plays a pivotal role in determining whether trust permeates the organisation. Therefore, as a leader, it is important to ensure that leadership is imbued with trust, as poor leadership has been shown to have significant negative consequences on an organisation. This perspective is also supported by Bulatova (2015), who contends that leaders play a significant role in the formation of organisational trust. Bringselius (2018) further explains that the positive consequences of good leadership are outweighed by the negative consequences of poor leadership. Given the highlighted importance of leadership trust, it is critical to investigate its dimensions in our research for a deeper understanding of trust within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces.

2.2.3. Organisational trust

Taking a broader perspective on trust in the workplace, it is crucial to understand organisational trust. When talking about organisational trust, we refer to both personal trust and impersonal trust since trust on an organisational level is influenced by both the employee's personal trust in each other and the trust towards the organisation as a system (Vanhala & Tzafrir, 2021). For example, an employee may trust their colleagues, yet this employee does not necessarily trust all decisions the organisation makes. Similarly, an employee may have strong trust in the organisation as a whole but low trust in specific colleagues (Mühl, 2014). Vanhala and Tzafrir (2021) explain that a high level of organisational trust is reached when an employee believes that the organisation's decisions are well-founded, even without full insight into the decision-making process. High organisational trust can further be connected to organisational loyalty as Al-Shalabi (2019) suggests that trust clearly impacts employees' loyalty to the organisation.

According to Mühl (2014) there are strong indications of the positive effects of a high level of organisational trust. A high level of trust has shown to increase knowledge sharing within and between different parts of the organisation, thus facilitating decision-making processes and enhancing decision outcomes by ensuring that more information is available for the considerations. This has in turn proven to positively impact the overall effectiveness of the organisation and its transactional costs (Dindaroglu, 2023; Mühl, 2014; Qu et al., 2023). Dietz (2004) agrees with the positive effects of organisational trust, presenting evidence that public organisations are profoundly influenced by the level of inherent trust within them. However, Riege (2005) emphasises that knowledge sharing can be less effective in hierarchical organisations, such as organisations within the public sector. Lastly, existing research suggests that trust clearly impacts employees' loyalty to the company and that low organisational trust leads to low organisational loyalty (Al-Shalabi, 2019).

However, the level of organisational trust varies between different organisations, and some research suggests that trust is less crucial in public organisations. This is explained to be because public organisations often have hierarchical structures, which reduces uncertainty in decision-making where trust plays a significant role (Mühl, 2014). Furthermore, Williamson (1993) argues that the impact of interpersonal trust on organisational trust is relatively minor, suggesting that trust among colleagues does not necessarily translate to a high level of trust in the organisation as a whole. This is contrary to Dirks and Ferrin (2001) who emphasise that interpersonal trust significantly influences an organisation's success.

This divergence in viewpoints underscores the complexity of trust dynamics within organisations and raises questions about how trust in various dimensions interrelates and influences organisational outcomes. In our paper, we refer to trust as both a lateral and vertical relationship, laterally between employees and vertically between employees and leadership, as well as between employees and the organisation itself. We continue the framework by delving into the factors influencing individuals' perceptions of trust towards others.

2.3. Integrative model of organisational trust

Until now, we have defined trust and explored its various dimensions within organisations. As we understand team, leadership and organisational trust are important in multiple ways and in this section we will focus more on what influences individuals' experiences of trust. To do so we will examine Mayer et al.'s (1995) integrative model of organisational, which encompasses three key aspects of the trustee, the individual being trusted, shown to significantly impact interpersonal trust.

The first aspect of the model is the trustee's ability. Mayer et al. (1995) define this as a combination of skills, competencies, and traits enabling one to exert influence within a specific domain. Trustors are more inclined to trust individuals who are perceived to possess high ability. It is worth noting that while someone may excel in one area, they may lack proficiency in others, highlighting the contextual nature of trust (Mayer et al., 1995). Secondly is benevolence, referring to the extent to which a trustee is believed to genuinely wish good upon the trustor, irrespective of selfish motives (Mayer et al., 1995). This is evident in scenarios where individuals offer assistance without expecting extrinsic rewards or recognition. Lastly, is integrity, indicating the trustor's perception of the trustee's adherence to a set of principles deemed acceptable by the trustor (Mayer et al., 1995). It is important to note that these principles do not need to be universally identified but demand that the trustor and trustee share the same principles.

The factors described above lay the groundwork for understanding the development of trust, recognising that trustworthiness exists along a continuum rather than as a binary concept, with the different factors varying along this spectrum. Other research highlights similar qualities as crucial when trusting others, but with some differences in categorisation (Alves et al., 2023; Colquitt et al., 2011). Both Colquitt et al. (2011) and Alves et al. (2023) distinguish between cognitive and affective aspects of trust characteristics. They emphasise ability and integrity in the trustee as a cognitive dimension of trust perception. This perspective resonates with McAllister, Lewicki and Chaturvedi (2006), who discuss knowledge-based trust including the ability to rely on another, fulfil promises, and meet expectations. The affective dimension encompasses benevolence, representing the trustor's feelings toward the trustee, a concept also pointed out by McAllister et al. (2006), who emphasises goodwill-based trust.

This illustrates that ability, integrity, and benevolence are universally recognised as pivotal factors in fostering trust, but they may be categorised differently across studies, and additional related factors may also influence trust dynamics.

2.4. Context impacting trust

To further understand the perception of trust it is important to look into contextual factors. These factors are shared by the trustors and trustees, including the physical environment and specific situational characteristics (Hancock et al., 2023). Mäkelä and Brewster (2009) assert that various interactional contexts play a role in trust building as shared experiences, like collaborative teamwork on practical projects fosters trust. The reason for this is that interactional contexts expose individuals to each other's tacit knowledge and language system (Mäkelä & Brewster, 2009). This notion is further supported by a meta-analysis conducted last year, which identified over 2000 relevant trust studies, concluding how and why humans trust (Hancock et al., 2023). The findings revealed that a more cohesive team, characterised by good team communication and shared mental models, generates more trustworthiness among teammates.

Fell (2021) builds upon these ideas, highlighting that a lack of shared context negatively affects trust among colleagues. Furthermore, Torro, Pirkkalainen and Li (2022) contend that individuals' experiences of trust are more prominent in face-to-face interactions compared to other communication channels. Given the hands-on nature and physical presence required when working as a military in unit and patrolling police, shared contextual similarities are evident. Therefore, delving into the contextual factors of the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces is relevant to understand trust within these work settings, which will be done in the next two sections.

2.4.1. Trust in high-reliability settings

To provide a more precise context for our selected research groups within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces, it is vital to recognise the diverse range of responsibilities these organisations undertake. While much of their time may be spent on routine tasks in

predictable environments, these jobs are periodically punctuated by more dangerous tasks occurring in inherently complex and unpredictable contexts (Colquitt et al., 2011). Consequently, these can be classified as high-reliability tasks, denoting work conducted in environments characterised by situational unpredictability and danger, with the potential for serious consequences in case of errors (Colquitt et al., 2011; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999).

Trust has been shown to play a crucial role in teams working in high-reliability settings (Colquitt et al., 2011; Wageman, 1995; Wildman, Shuffler, Lazzara, Fiore, Burke, Salas, 2012). Particularly in high uncertainty and risk, trust significantly impacts risk-taking behaviour and task execution (Wang et al., 2015). The considerable interdependence among team members underscores the necessity of trusting that each member will fulfil their responsibilities, as their actions directly impact others' ability to perform tasks effectively (Wageman, 1995). Establishing trust fosters the collaboration needed to facilitate task completion, as failures by individuals to fulfil expectations can have catastrophic consequences due to the high stakes involved, exposing individuals to heightened risks (Colquitt et al., 2011).

Focusing on what creates trust among teams in high-reliability settings, Colquitt et al. (2011) conducted a study among firefighters. Their research revealed that trust was primarily influenced by the integrity of team members, exemplifying it with the importance of firefighters knowing that their coworkers are “*Sticking to one’s word, being consistent in one’s actions, and adhering to principled codes[...].*” (Colquitt et al., 2011, p.1011). In contrast, contexts characterised by lower reliability trust in teams were more influenced by both the benevolence of team members and the trustor's identification with the team. This shows that the cognitive factors in Mayers et al. (1995) integrative model of trust are more salient in high-reliability settings, while the affective side is more prominent in low-reliability settings. This finding resonates with Lapidot, Kark, and Shamir (2007), suggesting that increased vulnerability strengthens both team integrity and individual trust.

This insight presents an interesting opportunity for further exploration in other high-reliability contexts, such as the police and armed forces. Investigating team trust among personnel working as patrolling police or in military units, where tasks often involve

unpredictability and potential danger, holds particular value. Contrasting this with personnel in office settings, where direct outer unpredictability and danger may be absent, allows for a nuanced examination. By doing so, it is possible to explore whether trust differs among teams despite the organisation being the same.

2.4.2 Organisational challenges and trust

The Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces operate under considerable pressure due to evolving societal and global dynamics. Increased demands, organisational restructuring, influx of new recruits, and resource prioritisation pose challenges which require organisational adaptation (Försvarsmakten n.d.; Polisen, 2024). In such demanding situations, trust becomes even more crucial as it lays the foundation for effective crisis management (Islam, 2023).

While trust is universally important in navigating organisational challenges, trust in leadership holds particular significance during critical periods of change and uncertainty (Islam, 2023; Lane & Bachman, 1998). According to Lines, Selart, Espedal and Johansen (2005), trust in leadership is a semi-stable psychological state, but during organisational changes, trust issues become prominent, leading employees to reevaluate their trust in it. Transition phases often includes uncertainties and unrefined work methodologies, causing friction within the organisation. Organisational change serves as a critical event that can either strengthen or weaken trust in management, especially during challenging circumstances (Morgan & Zeffane, 2003).

Organisational challenges often necessitate trust but can also lead to disagreements, resulting in both trust and distrust among employees. This emphasises that trust and distrust can coexist within an organisation simultaneously (Kujala, Lehtimäki, and Pučėtaitė, 2016). Kujala et al. (2016) found that hierarchical structures may lead to segregation among employees, fostering in-group unity while creating out-group perceptions. This fragmentation can pose challenges during critical situations due to lacking engagement towards the organisational change (Kujala et al., 2016). This can have negative effects since addressing organisational challenges requires a unified organisational culture, which promotes trust-based relationships and mitigates uncertainty (Kramer, 2010). In conclusion, trust is put

to the test during organisational challenges, and the risk of distrust increases. This makes it valuable to explore since trust is more important than ever in tackling challenges (Wang et al, 2015).

While significant attention has been given to trust in managerial figures during organisational change, there remains a limited understanding of how individuals' trust is influenced by these organisational shifts, and how this affects trust on a team level. By delving deeper into these nuances, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how trust within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces is affected by the current change and challenging work environments.

2.5. Workplace fun influencing trust

Trust is essential for creating a well-functioning workplace where employees thrive. This has shown particularly importance in professions characterised by high-reliability, which inherently entails uncertainty and risk. Now it is worthwhile to explore concrete methods for fostering trust.

According to Cohen (1992) positive interactions between employees and management cultivate trust. As positive interactions are a very broad and self-explanatory part in fostering trust, we will go into more recent research which has delved into the role of workplace fun. This is of interest since workplace fun has shown to have a lasting effect by fostering strong relationships characterised by trust (Georganta & Montgomery, 2019; Plester & Hutchison, 2016). Workplace fun is a research area, which refers to work situations that encourage, support, and are surrounded by a variety of enjoyable activities for employees (Ford, McLaughlin & Newstrom, 2003).

Within workplaces the integration of workplace fun has been proposed to have a motivational effect, increasing work engagement and reducing the need for recovery, as the sense of levity serves as a buffer against work demands (Georganta & Montgomery, 2016; 2022). However, it is crucial to note that the effectiveness of workplace fun hinges on its implementation. While activities such as social gatherings, parties, team competitions, and recognition awards

promote a fun atmosphere, they can also lead to negative outcomes if the initiatives are perceived as disingenuous or patronising (Karl & Peluchette, 2006; Plester et al., 2016).

Georganta and Montgomery (2022) have identified that the success of workplace fun initiatives is inherently tied to the level of trust within the organisation. When trust levels are high, the positive effects of fun are magnified, whereas in environments lacking trust, it may have adverse consequences. This underscores the cyclical relationship between workplace fun and trust, emphasising that the ability to enjoy oneself in the workplace is contingent upon feeling free, safe, and supported in expressing one's authentic self (Georganta & Montgomery, 2019).

The seriousness of the duties of the Swedish Police and Armed Forces is not something one typically associates with workplace fun. Because of this, it will be intriguing to observe how these organisations manage to balance the serious nature of their mission to ensure Sweden's security contrasting the importance of enjoyable social gatherings and having fun with colleagues. Is there even room for such activities when the job is deadly serious?

2.6. Conceptual framework

Having established a clear understanding of trust and its dimensions, through the previous research, we recognise that the context of the workplace plays a significant role in shaping these dimensions. The interdependence of these elements highlights the complexity of trust within organisations. To illustrate how these components of our theoretical framework are interconnected, we have developed a conceptual framework. This framework visualises our approach to examining trust within the Swedish Police and Armed Forces, showing how each dimension influences and interacts with the others within the organisational context.

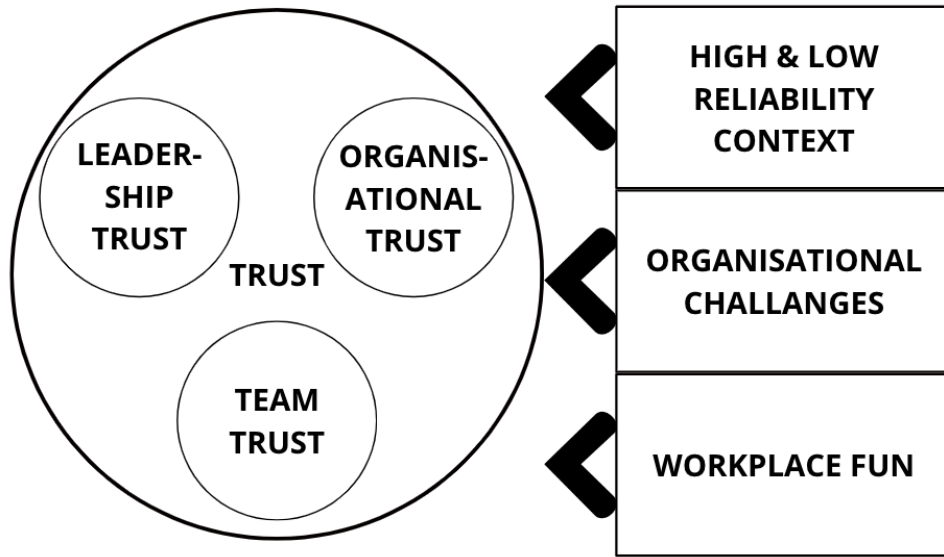


Figure 2:1 Conceptual framework of the thesis.

3. Methodology

The methodology section begins with explaining our choice of qualitative method. We then outline our approach of logical reasoning, research design, and data collection. This is followed by the motivation of our selection of thematic data analysis. The chapter concludes with a critical reflection on our chosen methods, including their limitations and ethical considerations.

3.1. Research approach

To fulfil our research purpose and address our research questions, we have adopted a qualitative approach guided by abductive logical reasoning. The rationale behind this choice and its implications will be further elucidated in the subsequent sections.

3.1.1. Qualitative approach

To examine employees' perceptions of trust within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces, we opted for a qualitative approach. This method enabled us to gain a deep and nuanced understanding of individuals' trust perceptions, which quantitative methods would not have captured (Alvehus, 2019; Stake, 2010). Our focus on exploration and comprehension guided our preference for qualitative research over quantification, as outlined by Stake (2010). Given our lack of prior experience in these professions, we were also eager to understand the nature of the work by gaining a clear understanding of their perspectives on the job through a qualitative approach. Moreover the restricted access to these organisations due to the confidential nature of their work limited our ability to gather data from a larger number of employees, making quantitative research unfeasible within the short timeframe.

Moreover, we aimed to ascertain the underlying causes of the participants' perceptions and investigate how these behaviours and attitudes were shaped within a societal context. In this regard, qualitative research was deemed most conducive, as emphasised by Bryman (2018). He highlighted that a qualitative approach is suitable when delving into the deeper causes of phenomena and seeking to understand human perspectives and experiences, given its focus on words rather than numbers.

Although qualitative research was considered the most appropriate for our research purpose, it is important to acknowledge the criticism directed towards it. The primary critique of this approach is its subjectivity, which can lead to incorrect interpretations and misunderstandings (Stake, 2010). However, the benefits of choosing a qualitative approach in our thesis outweigh these concerns. Thus, we deemed it the most suitable approach for our purpose and by recognizing critiques and potential pitfalls, we implemented measures to minimise the risk, as explained in the critical approach section.

3.1.2. Abduction

Flick (2014) highlights abduction as a means of facilitating the exploration of unfamiliar perspectives unrestricted by preconceived notions while also enabling integration and connection with existing knowledge. This selection was informed by the intention to generate new insights from the conducted interviews without initially subjecting a predefined hypothesis to empirical testing.

Our approach aimed to facilitate the emergence of theories organically from empirical findings, aligning with inductive reasoning as outlined by Flick (2014). However, we recognized the challenge of strictly adhering to induction while excluding any influence from prior knowledge. Our comprehensive review of existing literature and immersion in the subject matter provided valuable insights that somewhat shaped our procedures, resembling the deductive method (Flick, 2014).

Although we did not rigidly adhere to a specific theory or hypothesis during the interview process, abduction emerged as the logical reasoning approach most closely aligned with our research objectives. This reasoning led us to generate interesting new ideas by iteratively connecting observations from interviews to the broader body of existing knowledge.

3.3. Data collection

In implementing our research approach, we carefully selected appropriate data collection methods. Opting for a qualitative method, aligned with our clear research objectives, directed us towards the most effective means of gathering data. Furthermore, our abductive approach shaped how we obtained and developed the groundwork for our empirical data.

3.3.1. Interviews

In our pursuit of understanding trust perceptions among employees within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces from a qualitative standpoint, we considered various research instruments. We evaluated methods such as interviews, case studies, observations, and focus groups, and concluded that interviews offer the most effective approach given the purpose. The reasoning for it was that qualitative interviews provide a means of accessing individuals' opinions, experiences, and viewpoints through rich and detailed answers (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Additionally, it enables information gathering that may not be directly observable, such as individuals' thoughts and perspectives (Bell et al, 2019). Seidman (2012) emphasises that it is never possible to understand another person perfectly, but interviews offer a good way to come close by allowing access to the context of people's behaviour, thereby aiding researchers in understanding the meaning behind that behaviour. Moreover, Bell et al. (2019) underscores that interviews are probably the most widely used qualitative, which further motivates our adoption of interviews as the primary data collection method.

In interview methodologies, various approaches exist for designing them, each tailored to different research objectives. For our study, phenomenological interviews emerged as the most suitable option. This approach prioritises the experiences of participants and the meanings they derive from those experiences (Seidman, 2012). Phenomenological interviews typically employ open-ended questions, with interviewers focusing on building upon and exploring participants' responses to uncover deeper insights (Seidman, 2012). Our crafted questions aimed to probe participants' perceptions, emotions, and understandings within the theme of trust and work context.

Interview methods span on a spectrum from tightly structured to very open-ended. Given the

depth of phenomenological interviews, we chose a semi-structured format. Bell et al (2019) emphasise that semi-structured interviews give more leeway to the interviewee's reply and the researchers' questions. This approach allows for flexibility, with follow-up questions formulated to participants' responses (Flick, 2018). This enabled us to delve deeper into participants' experiences and understandings. Through this methodological approach, we sought to deepen our comprehension of the research purpose and shed light on the complexities of trust perception in police and military settings.

3.3.2. Interview questions

Employing an abductive approach, we initially examined previous research on trust and its relation to societal context. Drawing from this foundation, we constructed interview questions aimed at further exploration. The main questions, along with their respective sources are included in Appendix B. Initially, our approach was deductive, directly linking questions to theories. For example we had questions on how important the interviewee viewed ability, integrity and benevolence to be when trusting others, which were questions directly based from Mayers et al. (1995). However, we recognised that this approach constrained both the interviewee's responses and our ability to uncover unforeseen connections. Consequently, we shifted toward a more open approach and the questions previously related to ability, integrity and benevolence were replaced by a question on what characteristics the interviewee finds most important in a person for having trust in them. By doing this change we got a more realistic picture about the relevant characteristics in a trustee according to what the interviewee instantly thought of and explained to be important, without restraints to a certain theory. As a result, our questions are inspired by previous research but are not directly lifted from it.

We designed open-ended questions to allow each interviewee the flexibility to express their responses and interpretations freely. Additionally, we included multiple questions on the same concept, presented in both direct and indirect formats, to ensure a thorough understanding. For example, we asked interviewees to name the qualities a trustee should have, describe a person they trust, and describe a person they do not trust. This approach was chosen to validate the responses, as all questions target the concept of a trustee's characteristics but are framed differently to provide a comprehensive and validated

understanding. To further deepen our insight into the research aim, we integrated scenario questions and contrasting inquiries. These prompts encouraged interviewees to compare the current situation with other contexts, enabling us to explore the universality or contextuality of trust.

The semi-structured approach proved effective as it allowed for tailored follow-up questions in each interview, delving deeper into the individual observations, thoughts, feelings, and interpretations of each interviewee. However, while this adaptability was a positive aspect of the data collection method, it also invited criticism. Bryman (2018) suggests that this flexibility may lead to inconsistency in the responses, affecting the reliability of the data. To mitigate this weakness, we ensured that all main questions related to our purpose (listed in Appendix B) were covered, providing a baseline for comparison. Despite these challenges, this methodology enabled us to gather comprehensive data while accommodating the specific needs and perspectives of each participant, thereby enhancing our overall understanding.

3.3.3. Sampling

The study focuses on personnel within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces. These organisations were chosen due to their societal responsibility and inherent risks. The sampling frame encompasses (1) personnel working in offices within the Swedish Police, (2) patrolling police, (3) personnel working in offices within the Swedish Armed Forces, and (4) soldiers working in military units. To approach this population, a purposive sampling approach was employed, targeting individuals based on the criteria of work context (Bell et al., 2019). Given the difficulty of accessing the police and military personnel for the study, snowball sampling was utilised. The choice is supported by Noy (2008), who writes that snowball sampling is frequently used when probability sampling is not feasible. This means we leveraged existing contacts within the organisations to initiate the sampling process and recruiting new participants through referrals (Bell et al., 2019). Acknowledging the limitations of this sampling method not being representative of the entire population, we made efforts to include a diverse range of participants in terms of gender, roles, and teams within the organisations. However, we observed a large age difference among the groups, with considerably older participants in office personnel roles, apart from one 29 year old in the police office group.

In total, 16 people participated, with four in each participant group. These were equally divided between men and women. The conducted interviews varied in time, ranging from 30 minutes to an hour, and were done by video call under a period of three weeks. Below is a table of the participants including what organisation they work in, what interview group they belong to, their gender, the age span within the group and years within the organisation.

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Group PO: Personnel in police office | Group PP: Patrolling Police | Grupp MO: Personnel in military office | Group MU: Military in unit |
| Organisation: Swedish Police | Organisation: Swedish Police | Organisation: Swedish Armed Forces | Organisation: Swedish Armed Forces |
| Participants: 4 | Participants: 4 | Participants: 4 | Participants: 4 |
| Gender: 2 female, 2 male | Gender: 2 female, 2 male | Gender: 2 female, 2 male | Gender: 2 female, 2 male |
| Age: 29-64 | Age: 25-28 | Age: 56-63 | Age: 25-29 |
| Years in the organisation: 9-35 years | Years in the organisation: 2-9 years | Years in the organisation: 20- 40 years | Years in the organisation: 2-9 years |

Table 3:1 Demographics of the participants of the study.

3.4. Data analysis

For our research, a thematic analysis was chosen as the analysis method. This approach is commonly used in qualitative research and is well suited when conducting interviews (Bryman, 2019). Moreover, thematic analysis is adept at uncovering recurring themes in data by identifying repetitive topics and discerning similarities and differences among the

collected data (Bryman, 2019). Whitehead (2016) outlines that thematic analysis is preferred when the research adopts a phenomenological approach, hence a thematic analysis aligned well with our objective of exploring themes of interpretations of trust and its underlying determinants within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces.

After conducting, recording and transcribing the interviews, we went over the material repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the material before proceeding with coding. The coding process proceeded in clear steps following the completion of interviews. Initially, categories discerned during the interviews were identified, followed by a thorough review of the codes. Once reviewed, codes were evaluated and refined. Subsequently, connections discovered through the coding process informed the discovered themes as the codes built up to an emerging of broader themes.

Because of our abductive approach, we identified repetitions related to trust based on existing literature before conducting the interviews. Some of these repetitions were that work context affects trust, and the importance of ability and showing vulnerability for trust experiences. These repetitions were later on evaluated and reformulated after the interviews, depending on the insights gleaned. The step of identifying pre-existing repetitions was crucial in facilitating our understanding of the material, particularly as we commenced the coding process of themes after the interviews. The idea of considering pre-existing repetitions were grounded in Bryman's (2019) explanation of thematic analysis as an interpretation of the data in relation to the research questions based on interview findings and in connection with existing theory and literature. The coding included linking segments of text from the conducted interviews with relevant keywords to identify patterns and codes, building up to larger themes associated with different statements from the interviews. Furthermore, our analysis necessitated a significant focus on data reduction. This was done in order to attain a clearer comprehension of the content as Bryman (2019) underscores the critical value of data reduction in making sense of the collected data as it creates an organised structure.

Even though the coding into categories can be seen as an isolation of the different codes, the data was aimed to be understood as a comprehensive whole rather than broken down into separate parts. Furthermore the process of the data analysis was not linear as the data was revisited back and forth. Therefore, the process was iterative, aligning with the thematic

analysis's conduction (Whitehead, 2016). This process aided our comprehension of the data from the 16 interviews. However, we recognise that our selection of themes may differ from how someone else would have done it, thus the presentation of the empirical data reflects our choices of what we found to be interesting and relevant. In the text the identified themes are embedded within the main areas that structured the empirical data and the chapter with the analysis and discussion.

3.5. Critical approach

Acknowledging the importance of self-reflection and maintaining a critical stance towards potential research pitfalls, we provide a reflection below on the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of our study, along with an outline of the limitations.

3.5.1. Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability

Assessing validity and reliability can pose challenges in qualitative research, leading many researchers to question their suitability as tools in this context. Instead, emphasis is placed on other factors, collectively termed trustworthiness, to gauge the robustness of findings (Enworo, 2023). Since our study focuses on trust, the term trustworthiness in our critical approach can cause confusion. Due to this, we want to give a disclaimer regarding the term's usage, indicating that trustworthiness in this context relates to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the thesis (Enworo, 2023).

Credibility refers to the integrity of the research process and the importance of being able to trust the results. Transferability includes demonstrating that results from the study can be transferred to other situations. Dependency aims to establish that the research outcome would be equivalent if it were repeated and that there is rich information on the research context. Ensuring confirmability aims to ensure that the results are generated from data and can be validated (Guba and Lincoln, 1982).

It is important to note that the flexible nature of thematic analysis presents a challenge in developing themes from the material, as there is a risk of inconsistency (Holloway & Todres,

2003). Cope (2014) outlines the potential influence of various factors on the outcomes of qualitative research. Recognising this we used relevant procedures to establish trustworthiness of the research. These procedures were recurring throughout the entire research process from start to finish to ensure that all steps in the process were imbued with this, as presented below.

Firstly, we acknowledged the possible effect that our personal values and experiences can have on the result. To prevent this occurrence, a reflexive journal was maintained throughout the entire process to reflect upon and acknowledge any potential inherent biases. A reflexive journal is considered a good way to acknowledge inherent subjective biases which is of main importance to ensure the trustworthiness of the research (Cope, 2014). For example, in the early stages of our reflexive journal, we noticed a preconceived notion of expecting trust to be as high amongst the patrolling police and military in units. Being aware of this, we reevaluated and reflected on how we could remain as neutral as possible. This led us to take preventive actions by formulating neutral interview questions and being attentive to our biases when we interpreted the responses. Reflexivity is not a one-time checklist item, but an ongoing, deliberate process that guides our understanding, which we have reflected on throughout this thesis.

Moreover, we maintained an audit trail on all interview transcripts and raw data to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. When conducting qualitative research, Cope (2014) suggests an audit trail as a preferable strategy to ensure the research's credibility. This involved gathering all raw materials from various stages of the process and to ensure transparency in decisions. By doing this we could revisit the material in its unprocessed form, to control if we had made reasonable assumptions.

Additionally, the data sample was selected to encompass individuals from different teams, thus reducing the risk of narrow selection (Cope, 2014). By including personnel from diverse units, we sought to enhance the dependability, indicating that the results would have been similar even if the researchers had interviewed others. However, due to our limited access to the organisations, we could not fully ensure that all participants were from different teams. Despite this, we strived for as broad a selection as possible given the circumstances.

Finally, we employed member checking to guard against incorrect interpretations. This involved seeking feedback from the interviewees on our interpretations of the data. This approach minimises the risk of faulty interpretations, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the results (Cope, 2014). During the interviews, we asked follow-up questions to ensure that we understood the matter correctly. When processing the empirical data, we sent our reduced material from each interview to the interviewee, giving them the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings. Most participants agreed with our interpretations, with some exceptions where interviewees wanted to clarify minor points.

3.5.2. Limitations

When conducting research, it is vital to recognise and critically assess the study's limitations, as they can significantly impact the outcomes (Bell et al., 2019). Inherent in qualitative research methods is the risk of personal biases (Anderson, 2010). Since this research relies on our interpretations of interview responses, our biases can inadvertently shape the presentation of findings. As mentioned in the section above, we took measures to mitigate this and provide a more objective overview of the material. However, complete objectivity is impossible, as our individual experiences and mental schemas will always influence our interpretations. Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge that the conclusions drawn in this thesis are limited to our interpretations and connections.

In the thesis we gathered empirical data from 16 interviews. We acknowledge that more interviews could have enhanced the comprehensiveness of our findings, however it was not feasible within our timeframe. As Bell et al. (2019) underscores, that restricted number of participants limits the transferability of results. From this we understand that our results are not strongly transferable, but they do provide practical implications and indications. We recognise that a multimethod approach would have benefited our study by controlling results for statistical significance, thereby making the findings more generalisable. However, this was not feasible due to time constraints and limited access to the organisations.

Furthermore, interview methods inherently face limitations due to their reliance on verbal communication, as noted by Seidman (2012). Different individuals may ascribe different meanings to the same terms. As mentioned in the section above, we took active measures to

mitigate this. Additionally, since the interviews were conducted in Swedish and later translated into English, lexical substitutions could potentially alter the nuances of certain statements. We minimised this influence by conducting the thematic analysis in Swedish and translating the data into English only after all empirical data was processed. This approach helped manage the risk of translational losses as effectively as possible given our conditions.

Lastly, when conducting direct measures in research, there is always an inherent risk of response bias as participants may not fully disclose the truth, either out of fear of repercussions or due to social desirability (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). This was a major risk in our research given the generally positive association with high trust, which might lead respondents to avoid speaking negatively about it. To mitigate this, we ensured that participation was completely anonymous, and we approached the interviews with genuine curiosity to learn more and understand the interviewees' perspectives. By creating a safe space, we aspired to encourage participants to be truthful in their answers.

3.5.3. Ethics

In research, one must always consider potential ethical considerations. When conducting interviews, special attention must be given to safeguarding participants from any potential harm resulting from the research (Bryman, 2019). For example, it is critical to ensure participants' comprehension of the research's objectives and their voluntary participation. Equally critical is the meticulous preservation of confidential data and the conscientious consideration of interviewees' privacy (Bryman, 2019). To ensure this, we took the following actions.

All correspondence leading up to the interview clearly outlined the subject and purpose of the study. When conducting the interviews, we initiated each session by providing a brief background about ourselves and repeating the purpose and objectives of what the interviews were going to be used for. Additionally, we started each interview by first asking for consent to record the interview and take notes during it. We clarified the purpose of the recording, as well as the transcription process afterward, ensuring that it will only be reviewed by ourselves and deleted once the completion of the thesis. Furthermore, prior to initiating the interview questions, we obtained consent of their participation in the interview, which was

granted by all participants. We informed the participants that they could discontinue the interview at any time if they wished, and that they could choose not to answer questions if they preferred not to. Furthermore, we informed all participants that they could contact us after the interview if any thoughts or questions arose later on, providing them with the contact information to both of us.

We ensured the anonymity of participants by switching their names to numbers when presenting the data, and excluding any data that could directly identify the interviewed individuals in the thesis. For instance, although we asked about the participants' specific work units to verify the distribution across different teams, this information was not included in the textual content. By implementing these considerations, we uphold ethical standards and ensured the integrity and confidentiality of the research participants. Detailed information on how we communicated during the interviews to ensure these ethical considerations can be found in Appendix A.

4. Empirical data

This chapter presents the empirical data collected in our study. We present the empirical data by summarising the data in written format, utilising tables, and including selected quotes. Starting more generally to gain an understanding of the work context and its associations with trust, then narrowing it down to how it is perceived and its importance in each person's respective work. We conclude the chapter by presenting the suggestions provided by the interviewees for fostering trust.

We have structured the empirical data into five headings, which are *context*, *importance of trust*, *basis for trust*, *perceived trust* and *fostering trust*. These form the bases for the interest areas in the analysis and discussion chapter. Upon reviewing all the data after completing the interviews, we observed many similarities within work duties rather than within the respective organisations. Consequently, we grouped the interviews from the personnel in police and military offices into one category, while patrolling police and military personnel in units form the other category. We still examine differences within these groups, but for the presentation purposes, we opted for this approach. Below we present a table of the groups and interviewees, with their names switched to numbers for anonymity purposes.

| Personnel in Police Office (PO) | Patrolling Police (PP) | Personnel in Military Office (MO) | Military in unit (MU) |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| PO1 | PP1 | MO1 | MU1 |
| PO2 | PP2 | MO2 | MU2 |
| PO3 | PP3 | MO3 | MU3 |
| PO4 | PP4 | MO4 | MU4 |

Table 4:1 Table of the interviewees and their respective group.

4.1. Context

To comprehend the variations in contexts among the different groups, several background questions were asked. This facilitated an understanding of the daily work routines of each group and provided relevant background information for questions about trust within the team.

4.1.1. Office

When asked about the extent of collaboration inherent in their work, both group PO and MO emphasised its importance for task efficiency. However, they also acknowledged the presence of tasks that necessitated individual effort. The degree of collaboration varied depending on task complexity and the individual's role, ranging from moderate to very high levels. It was mentioned that work tasks vary greatly from day to day, but often include a lot of meetings.

Furthermore, we asked about the perceived risk in their daily work. Group PO expressed no direct widespread physical risk, rather a more psychological and emotional risk due to the demanding nature of dealing with serious activities, where mistakes could have negative consequences. Group MO indicated that there was some level of risk as mistakes could lead to significant negative consequences, although not in a way that they felt physically affected.

In both groups PO and MO, there was a pattern among employees who had worked in their respective organisations for so long that they could not compare the level of collaboration and risk in their current workplaces with other workplaces. Three interviewees from each group who had previously worked as patrolling police or as military in the unit. They described higher risks and greater demands for collaboration in field service compared to their current work. PO1 and MO4 also noted that in their previous duties collaboration was unavoidable but in the current office settings it was not as prominent.

Moreover, we asked how the increasing threats to the security in Sweden impact their daily work. Group PO noted an obvious enhancement in public anxiety, a topic that now recurrently surfaces in their workplace discussions. Additionally, they observed a shift in resource allocation, with short-term urgent matters taking precedence over long-term

objectives. Despite these changes, the majority of the group perceived a unifying effect stemming from the increased security threats, fostering a collective commitment to maximising performance.

Furthermore, PO2, PO3, and PO4 elaborated on an emergence of feeling “*us versus them*”. With “*us*” being regarded as the Swedish Police, while any potential threats towards the security of Sweden represent “*them*”. However, half of the group experiences that these increased threats had a distancing effect regarding leadership. PO3 said it was due to the rapid pace of changes and lacking grounding in the workplace. Furthermore, PO1 explained that there has been a shift with multiple new managers in a short amount of time, combined with re-prioritisations and heightened pressure on tasks. This has created a sense that the leaders act somewhat in panic, without clearly defining the best course of action. According to PO1, this has resulted in employees leaving, loss of resources, and inefficient work due to a lack of clear structure, leading to feelings of confusion and dissatisfaction. The essence of this feeling was captured by the quote:

"Everything happens all at once without reflection." (PO1).

In group MO, they noted rising discussions and a heightened sense of pressure and drive within the organisation because of the changed global context. While daily tasks remained mainly unchanged for persons MO1, MO2 and MO3 there was a perceived shift in the value attached to their work since they felt a higher purpose for it. However, person MO4 highlighted significant changes in their work, attributing them to the altered conditions and starting points arising from the global situation. Overall, individuals in group MO also noted a unifying effect throughout the organisation resulting from these shifts. Changes were explained to be more prominently observed in team dynamics and engagement within office environments, rather than in the tasks themselves.

4.1.2. Patrolling and units

In groups PP and MU, there was a consensus on the critical importance of collaboration for effectively carrying out their work. Within group PP, work was structured in pairs when out

on patrol. In group MU, all exercises required collaboration except those involving self-care of equipment.

Group PP underscored the high level of risk in their work, as each day was highly unpredictable and could involve incidents ranging from minor thefts to apprehending armed individuals openly hostile to law enforcement. Group MU acknowledged a relatively high risk, due to handling weapons and large vehicles. Interviewees from MU also said risks were more hypothetical than actual, as they are preparing in case war. Moreover, MU highlighted that their training involves handling unpredictable situations, as exemplified by MU2:

“During a practice session, our boat engine caught on fire, which could have been catastrophic.”

Interviews with both groups PP and MU revealed a significant difference in collaboration compared to previous occupations. All said it to be increased collaboration in their current works due to the structure of the work and its associated risks.

Regarding how the increased security threats impact the work, group PP noted a substantial shift with heightened public anxiety and increased workload leading to a sense of people overworking themselves. They emphasised the need for greater tactical strategies to handle new types of crimes and increased risk of terror attack, resulting in closer team bonding but also frustration due to cancelled training sessions and inadequate preparation. For group MU, the change was marked by a heightened sense of realism in their exercises, with the evolving global landscape necessitating more significant efforts. This led to a sense of unity within the group but also increased scrutiny of leadership's suitability for handling these challenges.

4.2. Importance of trust

In our examination of trust perception, we explored individuals' associations with trust and why it is relevant in their respective work contexts. Below is a figure illustrating the associations from all members, the size of the word represents the frequency of mention. In the text, report each group's associations to trust.

MUTUALITY HEARD TRUTHFULNESS
RESPONSABILITY PREDICTABILITY
SUPPORT SAFETY EXPECTATIONS
HELPFULNESS EARNED ALIGNMENT OPENNESS
UNCONTROLLED SECURITY LOYALTY

Figure 4:1 Interviewees' associations to the concept of trust.

4.2.1. Office

In group PO and MU trust was strongly connected to a sense of safety and openness of expression. It was a predominant association to trust its impact for feeling heard. For instance, PO2 articulated:

"Trust is when I feel safe to express myself and what I express is listened to and taken care of in one way or another."

Furthermore, trust was strongly linked to confidence in one another, wherein individuals know what to expect from others, thus reducing the need for control. The interviewees in groups MO and PO are coherent in perceiving trust as something earned, which takes time to build and is based upon actions. Moreover, groups PO and MO said that trust plays an important part in their daily work. This includes performing their work in the best possible way and going above and beyond what is required in the role. Both groups recognised how trust cultivates an environment of openness, where diverse perspectives are valued and collaboration and creativity can thrive, exemplified by the quotes:

"Trust in the workplace creates an atmosphere where individuals feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas, which opens up for more creativity." (PO1)

"Without trust, there is a fear of voicing opinions." (MO1)

Furthermore, the interviewees in group PO and MO showed that trust instils confidence that colleagues will fulfil their duties, thereby enhancing overall workplace efficiency and fostering a culture where individuals feel empowered to take initiative, provide feedback, and grow professionally. It was also identified to have a stress-reducing effect, contributing to higher levels of engagement among team members. As MO1 articulates:

"With trust the need for control decreases and instead one can be inclusive, which is essential for work satisfaction and personal development."

PO2 explained this in a similar way, describing the importance of trust in supporting employees:

"The importance of high trust becomes most evident when employees or managers are not doing well, as we must help and support them in the right way."

4.2.2. Patrolling and units

Groups PP and MU associated trust with having the best of the collective in mind and providing mutual support. They emphasised the importance of everyone taking responsibility and contributing to the team effort. For example, both PP2 and MU4 expressed a shared sentiment about *"having someone's back"* and *"mutual support"* as crucial aspects of trust. This entailed having expectations of others, taking responsibility, and showing loyalty to the collective interest. Additionally, MO1 articulated a common perspective on trust, echoed by other interviewees from both groups, stating:

"Trust is when I have a good gut feeling that I can rely on a person to carry out tasks in the best possible way"

Groups PP and MU underscored the pivotal role of trust, recognising that it is essential for conducting their work. Given the high risks inherent in their job contexts, trust is emphasised to be crucial for safety, thereby reducing the need for controlling one another. Multiple interviewees emphasised that trust fosters efficiency by enabling colleagues to rely on each

other to fulfil their responsibilities and promotes a balanced distribution of workload. However, there were some differences in perspectives between the respective groups, as exemplified by two quotes:

“I might find myself in a situation where my life depends on my colleague making the right decision, so I need to feel confident that my colleague will have my back.” (PP2)

“If trust is not present, we cannot practise certain aspects needed to perform our job well.” (MU2)

4.3. Basis for trust

To better understand what influences trust perceptions within the different groups, we asked several questions regarding the basis for trusting someone and the various factors that affect trust from different dimensions.

4.3.1. Office

We asked about the qualities in colleagues that the interviewees have high trust towards. In group PO and MO humility, responsiveness, and attentiveness were frequently mentioned by all individuals. PO1, PO3, and PO4 stressed the importance of transparency and being honest when not understanding or knowing something. PO1, PO2, and PO4, MU1 also placed great importance on experience and competence, considering it a crucial aspect of their trust in colleagues, while PO3 explained that competence itself was not deemed the most important factor, as one can learn, but rather a strong commitment and willingness to develop. PO2 and PO3 also emphasised the importance of colleagues working towards the same goals and how trust is hindered when a colleague works towards undisclosed goals and has their own agenda instead of collaborating with the team. MU1 emphasised this in a similar way:

“A colleague who is nonchalant about others' feedback and does not develop their work based on feedback is someone I have low trust in.”

When further asked about traits associated with low trust, disengagement and a lack of self-awareness emerged as the most frequently mentioned characteristics in both groups PO and MO. PO1 elaborated that a trust-inhibiting factor is when a person is inflexible in their work, something PO2 also said. One person in group MO described a situation where trust has been negatively affected in the workplace due to the team recently being forced into a reorganisation, causing a lot of stress in the group where it is currently a challenge for the organisation and managers to help the team understand the purpose of the change. MO4 described this in the same way:

“The heightened external threats have not negatively affected trust among colleagues but have placed higher demands on the leadership's skills and ability to reduce stress and communicate the change effectively.”

Furthermore another person from group MO who had experiences of a more senior leader position in the organisation illustrated an example of feeling great trust in the top leadership in the organisation. The person mentioned that in the organisation's internal survey, known as FN-Vind, showed that the organisation felt strong trust in Supreme Commander Micael Bydén. The individual further elaborated on their own strong trust in Micael Bydén, attributing it to his genuine ability to understand and connect with people on a personal level. The high level of trust in the top leadership was due to their ability of showing through words and actions that they dedicate great effort to make change in the organisation and lead the change from the front.

4.3.2. Patrolling and units

In groups PP and MU the perceived basis for trust was very related to the context of their professions. The associated risks emerged as clear contributing factors according to group PP. Several interviewees explained this by stating:

“Experiencing things together and being involved in challenging, risky missions brings colleagues closer together.” (PP2)

“The role forces one to rely more on each other.” (PP1)

“The context significantly contributes to trust within the team.” (PP3)

“As a police officer, you quickly learn that you need to ask for help and have automatic trust. Civilian employees do not have the same attitude toward trust.”
(PP4)

This argument was similar in group MU where all individuals described how the profession itself demands a very high level of trust. MU1 described how the context itself influences the need for trust by stating:

“The task is so much greater and more important than other contexts; hence, higher trust is required.”

Likewise, MU2 explained:

“Trust is extremely high within the armed forces; you can not get anywhere without it. The seriousness of the profession demands trust.”

Furthermore, both groups PP and MU explained that the qualities they associate with colleagues they deeply trust are strongly linked to self-awareness and self-reflection, as well as competence. Furthermore Group PP emphasised the importance of flexibility and openness to changing approaches in order to foster trust among colleagues. PP2 elaborated that it is often in situations where things go slightly wrong and require adaptation that one learns the most, emphasising the importance of reflection and growth as a police officer. Being comfortable discussing matters openly were also qualities mentioned by all individuals.

Furthermore, group MU explained having a strong work ethic, being responsible and being a teamplayer as of main importance in order to have a high level of trust in colleagues. Being careless was described by group MU as the least desirable trait that undermines trust within the team, MU1 explained that this can manifest in several ways:

“Being careless can expose colleagues to great danger, but it also indicates a lack of willingness to contribute.”

Group PP further mentioned inability to handle stress as a trait that generates low trust as well as lack of experience. One person described a lack of trust in leaders within their team, attributing this to their lack of experience, which leads to a misunderstanding of how the team should be managed. The person explained that this occurs when leaders lack experience of being in the field themselves. MU3 stated:

“Trust is low when a leader tries to manage work they have no real understanding of.”

Additionally, two individuals described that they feel low trust in leaders and colleagues who are defensive and angry because these types of people often micromanage or are overly controlling, leading to a breakdown of mutual trust.

4.4. Perceived trust

Moving on to how trust is perceived in the workplace we explored the interviewees perception of trust towards team, leadership and organisation. This part also includes context-specific trust in their respective daily work through the interviewees comparison with previous works. The perceptions within the three dimensions of trust are presented in graphs.

4.4.1. Office

First, we visualise the perceived trust within the dimensions of team, leadership, and organisation are presented below in two diagrams. One diagram manifests the participants working in police offices and the other one shows the participants working in military offices. Thereafter they are presented together with examples of these perceptions in text.

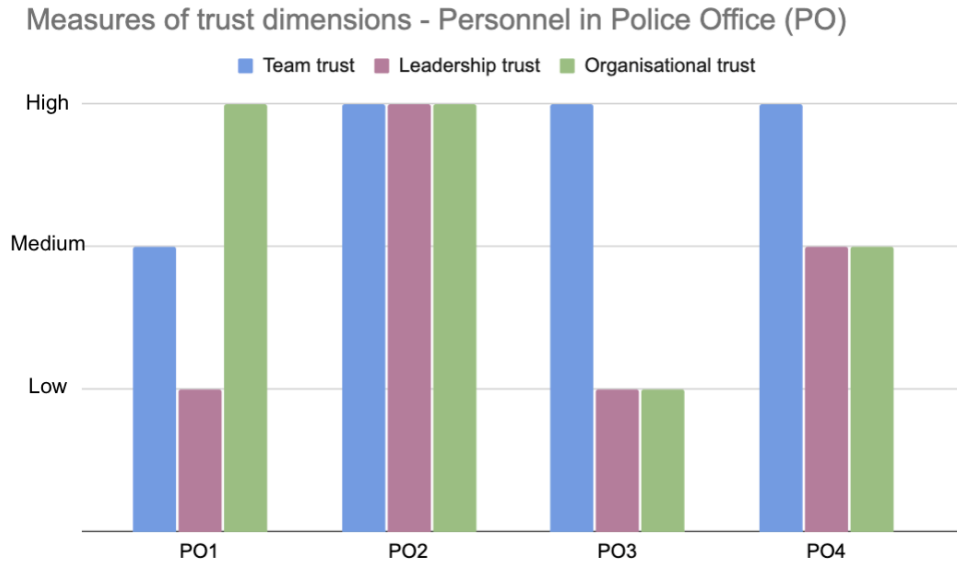


Figure 4:2 Measures of team trust, leadership trust and organisational trust from personal working in police office.

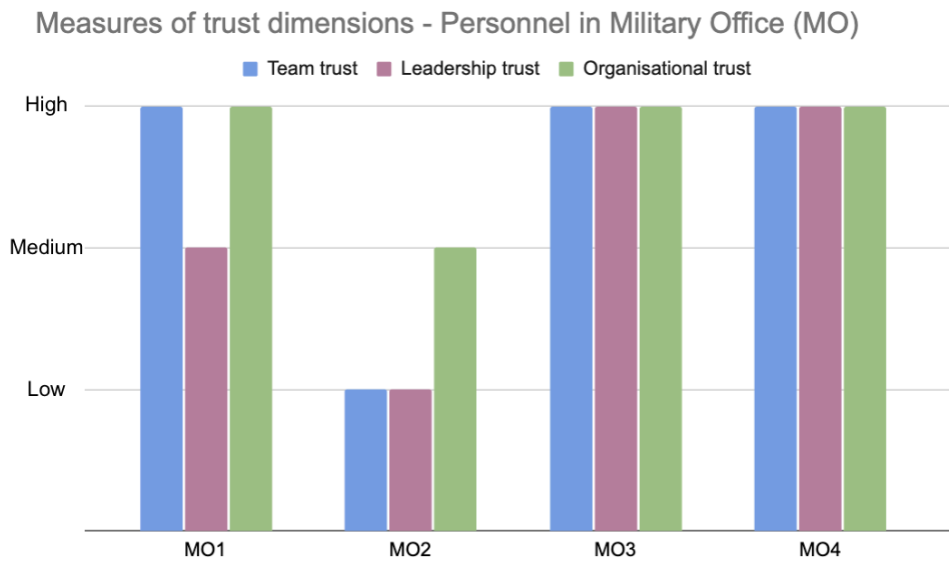


Figure 4:3 Measures of team trust, leadership trust and organisational trust from personal working in military office.

Regarding team trust in office settings it is overall perceived high in group PO, with one exception of a person experiencing a medium trust level. In group MO there are more variations in their trust levels, spanning from low to high. Below are three quotes from persons in the group explaining the perception of high trust, medium trust and low trust.

Low: *“There are a lot of closed doors and people are not communicating openly”*
(MO2)

Medium: *“It is easier to build trust with those you work with on a daily basis as trust needs to be built, which is why it is variable.”* (PO1)

High: *“There is a strong sense of unity and trust in the team”* (MO3)

Regarding leadership trust in group PO and MO there are individual variations within both groups as interviewees perception including all three levels.

Low: *“I feel a sense of ‘we and they’ between parts of the organisation.”* (PO3)

Medium: *“Trust in management and leadership has been slightly damaged due to repeated mistakes and failures to meet goals and visions.”* (PO4)

High: *“I feel that my managers are committed to developing the organisation, which has led to me having high trust in the leadership.”* (MO4)

In group PO the organisational trust varied a lot, with interviewees perception spanning from low to high. In group MO it was more coherent in group with three interviewees having high trust and one having medium.

Medium: *“Due to poor leadership, trust in the organisation has decreased and permeates the operations, but my loyalty remains high.”* (PO3)

“There has been an ongoing organisational change, which means that trust is not fully established.” (PO4)

High: *“I have had the privilege of working with many different parts of the organisation and know that they are doing their best. Therefore, trust is consistently high in all dimensions.”* (MO3)

In the group PO and MO a lot of interviews said the new external circumstances of security threats affected the trust in their daily work. Generally, a unifying effect was expressed, most noticeable in group MO which experiences greater recognition of their work. In group PO, there is also a negative perception of the managers.

“Most unifying, receiving a form of recognition. No longer a special interest, now we are a primary interest.” (MO3)

“We understand the importance of being united around the seriousness of what we, as a public authority, are expected to live up to and our responsibility.” (PO3)

“Many new managers who are not present and the preparation process is more bureaucratic, which means it takes longer to make decisions.” (PO1)

Lastly, in comparison to other occupations, the majority of the interviewed individuals in groups PO and MO have worked within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces for a long time. This means that comparisons are primarily made to other contexts within the organisation, such as when they worked as military in units or patrolling police.

“This is a normal workplace with normal trust relative to the tasks, whilst when i worked in military units, it was sharp situations which automatically placed higher demands on trust and also better conditions for building trust.” (MO3)

“In external service, trust is crucial when you have colleagues whose lives depend on you in dangerous situations. You needed to know that you were backed up by each other, because otherwise the chain would break, and in the worst-case scenario, it could lead to fatalities. Trust is also important in the office, but not in the same 'life and death' way.” (PO1)

4.4.2. Patrolling and units

One again we start by visualising the perceived trust within the dimensions of team, leadership, and organisation in two diagrams. The first diagram includes the participants working as patrolling police and the other includes the participants working as military in units. Thereafter they are presented together with examples of these perceptions in text.

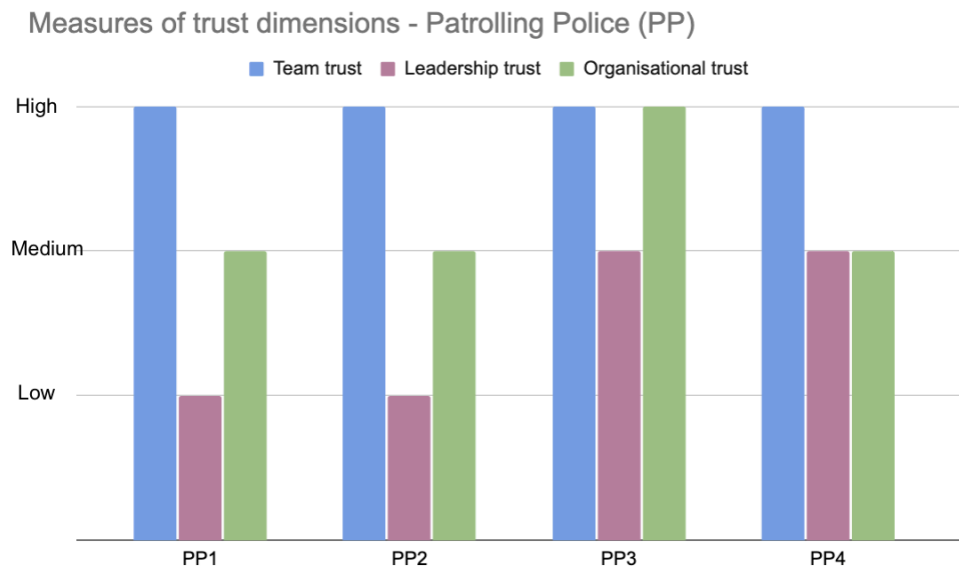


Figure 4:4 Measures of team trust, leadership trust and organisational trust from personal working as patrolling police.

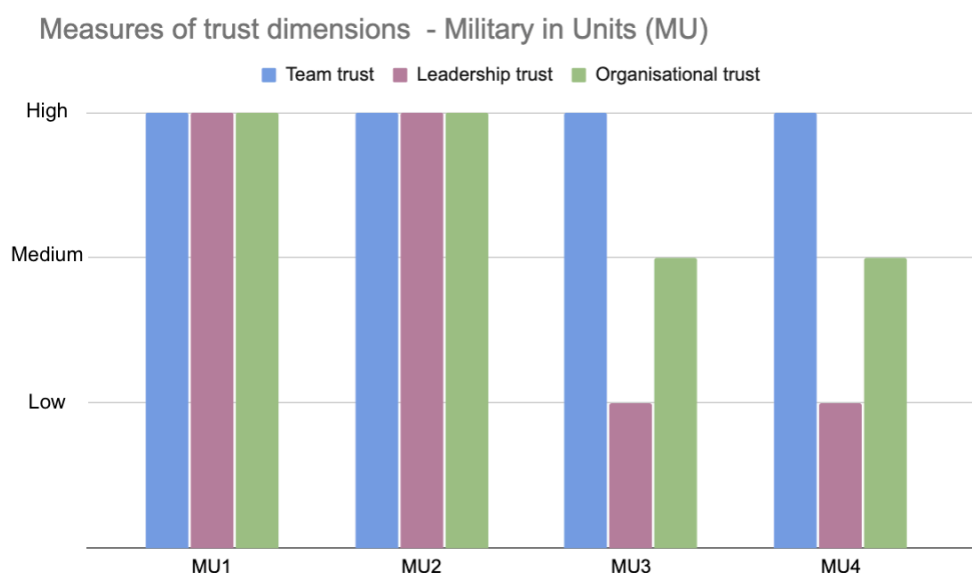


Figure 4:5 Measures of team trust, leadership trust and organisational trust from personal working in military units.

The perception of team trust in group PP and MU was unanimously described as high. This was explained to be due to the close collaboration that naturally comes with their work tasks, which necessitates a high level of trust to effectively accomplish their duties. This was expressed by several persons in both groups as exemplified in the quotes below:

“Trust is crucial, you do not choose your colleagues, but we work so closely together that the team becomes like a second family.” (MU3)

“At the end of the day, we are going to fight together, so you have to trust your team.” (MU1)

“Trust is very high, we often say we have a regular family and a ‘blue light family’.” (PP4)

“We are a tightly-knit group with high trust, which comes from working closely together and relying on each other.” (PP1)

Regarding leadership trust, half of the interviewees in both groups perceived it to be low. There were similar perceptions that the higher up in leadership, the lower the trust was. Though trust levels it was also perceived as medium and high. The perceptions are demonstrated in some of the quotes below:

Low: *“I feel a certain disloyalty from the leadership, as they treat us more like numbers that they toss around.”* (PP1)

Low: *“The trust in leadership is low because we receive many tasks but lack the proper conditions to solve them. We are just a uniform, not individuals.”* (MU3)

Medium: *“We have a new boss who contributes to a more positive feeling towards the leadership and organisation because he represents the team's voice and provides answers.”* (PP3)

High: *“My trust in leadership is good; I have no bad experiences.”* (MU1)

Furthermore the organisational trust in PP and MU varied from medium to high in both groups. This was explained to be due to several different factors, for instance the sense of the organisation serving a higher purpose instilled a deep trust in the organisation.

Medium: *“It depends, I have high trust to the education we go through but some aspects of the organisation I do not trust as much”* (MU3)

High: *“At times, one may get frustrated with the organisation, but I have high trust that things are done correctly.”* (PP3)

In both group PP and MU, external circumstances have proven to have a unifying effect on the team and loyalty to the organisation. Several interviews revealed that this unifying effect stemmed from a heightened sense of relevance to the work and a stronger sense of community. However, the leadership has also become more scrutinised due to higher workload and decreased safety as important practice sessions are being removed.

“There is a clearer purpose now with the increased relevance of war, which makes the unit more united.” (MU1)

“We unite within the team, as there is a high workload and shortcomings in leadership, which leads to a sense of 'us versus them' towards the leadership.” (MU3)

“Due to the higher workload, important training sessions are being removed, which creates more risks.” (PP4)

“There is an identity in being a police officer and a strong sense of community in being part of a group that sees things others do not, which unites us.” (PP2)

In comparison to other professions, participants in groups PP and MU underscore the distinctiveness of trust in their current work. Among the patrolling police officers, there is a

resemblance to participants who previously served in the Swedish Armed Forces, suggesting that the contexts are very similar and place high demands on trust.

“It is impossible to carry out the work if there is no trust, which has not been the case in my previous workplaces.” (PP1)

“It is extremely crucial within the armed forces, you do not get anywhere without it. The seriousness of the profession requires trust.” (MU4)

4.5. Fostering trust

The collected data shows that trust is perceived as important and that there is a need to strengthen it within certain parts of both organisations. In this part we will go over what the interviewees considered necessary actions to strengthen trust and the best ways to achieve this.

4.5.1. Office

We asked how much the interviewees socialise with colleagues unrelated to work tasks, both during and outside working hours. Interviewees PO2, PO3, and PO4 described that they spend quite a lot of time with colleagues outside of direct work tasks, such as having lunch together, having coffee breaks, and participating in team-building days. All three of them also mentioned that they socialise privately outside of working hours, although there was more engagement in this aspect when they were younger, and it has decreased as they have gotten older, but it still happens occasionally. In contrast, PO1 described having very few people they connect with at the workplace, rarely participating in communal activities like coffee breaks. PO1 also noted that they used to socialise much more with colleagues when they were younger.

Interviewees PO2, PO3, and PO4 also expressed their belief that the social aspect significantly influences trust and is an essential part of their work. PO3 explained the

importance of the social aspect in feeling comfortable asking for help in the workplace, stating:

“If you hang out in the break room, it becomes much easier to ask for help because you have shared a laugh together, which leads to more automatic trust.”

Furthermore, PO2 described socialising at work as important for getting to know each other, which is necessary for being able to openly discuss how one is affected psychologically. PO1, who rarely socialises with colleagues beyond work-related tasks, mentioned that trust had been positively affected by fostering stronger cohesion within the team. Furthermore, PO1 believed that stronger cohesion would lead to more transparent conversations, creating an environment where issues could be discussed openly, ultimately leading to better solutions together.

Group MO had a slightly more diverse spread on answers regarding how much they socialise at work. MO2 mentioned that they socialise very little with colleagues either during or outside working hours. MO1 and MO3 explained that they socialise a lot with colleagues, primarily at the workplace but also occasionally outside of work. Both MO1 and MO3 emphasised the importance of socialising for themselves and for the workplace in general, prioritising interactions during coffee breaks and lunches, for example MO1 stated:

“Yes, it becomes strange with those who do not share anything about their private lives, it is ingrained in the culture and profession that people are very relationship-oriented.”

MO3 also described the social aspect as something that positively influences trust in the following way:

“It creates a better overall picture of each other because you talk more privately and get to know each other, which increases trust.”

Furthermore, MO1 who experienced low trust, described how this affects the knowledge sharing between colleagues in the following statement:

“Why should I share my knowledge and ideas when I do not trust a colleague and feel their support?”

Both MO2 and MO4, did not socialise much with their colleagues, and believed that getting to know each other better within the team would likely strengthen trust. MO4 explained this by stating that social situations, such as networking, create situational awareness and information.

Moreover, when asking group PO and MO about what they believe can be done to strengthen team trust, both groups mentioned the central role of leadership. Group PO emphasised that present and communicative leaders are crucial for building relationships and trust. Furthermore, the group explained that leaders should set a good example and create a vision for the future. Group PO stressed the importance of receptive leaders who foster open environments where criticism can be expressed and that leaders listen to them. PO3, MO1, and MO3 believed more shared activities where employees are given the opportunity to socialise with each other can increase trust. This can be done in both organised ways and informal occasions outside the workplace, and affects trust since they can connect on a personal level.

PO4 further suggested that better communication channels between different units would promote collaboration and mutual understanding, which in turn would positively affect the trust. Similarly, group MO emphasised the need for attentive leadership in which employees feel seen and heard. MO2 underscored this by stating that when leadership fails to address issues raised by employees it weakens trust. Hence, trust was explained as something that must be continually worked on and improved, which includes reflection, active discussion, training, and support for issues that may arise.

4.5.2. Patrolling and units

In groups PP and MU, the focus on social activities was high. All interviewees in groups PP and MU expressed that they socialise a lot with colleagues both during and outside of

working hours, and both groups also believed that this has a significant impact on trust within the team as quoted below:

“On coffee breaks, a large part of the trust is built up.” (MU4)

This kind of social interaction is described in various ways, but all interviewees expressed that it is something they prioritise. PP4 explained that their team tries to have breakfast and lunch together as often as possible, and there is also a strong initiative from the group for other team-building activities. The interviewee also mentioned that there has been some dissatisfaction expressed towards the leadership for lack of support for these initiatives, but their engagement is sufficient for them to take these initiatives on their own.

Both PP2 and PP3 mentioned that they often go for after work gatherings with their team, which they find relaxing as they can unwind with each other and talk about things other than work. PP2 further elaborated that on days when there is no time to meet in person, their team stays in touch via phone calls and checks in on each other privately. According to PP2 this strongly influences trust, as it is comforting to be able to open up about personal matters, which is important for team cohesion. Additionally, all interviewees from PP explained that they feel the trust within the team is strengthened by spending so much time together and, therefore, having a close relationship with everyone in their team. PP3 emphasised the importance of knowing each other on a personal level, as it can affect work in difficult situations. PP1 further explained that being more open with each other positively impacts trust to a great extent and contributes to an understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses, which in turn affects the professional performance.

Similarly, to group PP interviewee MU3 described how socialising with each other strengthens mutual trust as it creates a familial feeling within the group. MU1 also elaborated this aspect saying:

“It always has a big impact to socialise a lot, as creating stronger friendships makes you more willing to do things for someone you have a good relationship with compared to someone you do not know.”

Likewise, MU2 argued that there is a purpose in having a good overall understanding of the person to be able to trust them, which they believe social interaction contributes a lot to. Furthermore, MU4 explained that the line between civilian life and work eventually blurs due to spending so much time together, ranging from shooting exercises to parties.

When we further asked about what can be done to strengthen trust in a team, group PP primarily focused on the individual's role in fostering trust but also on the overall work environment. Group PP believed that openness is the key to creating such an environment where individuals share themselves and provide feedback to each other. Furthermore, group PP explained that team-building and other activities are important for getting to know each other better and increasing trust as they go beyond the professional surface and get to know the person for real. PP2 also emphasised the value of mixing employees and creating a culture where trust can be built by stepping out of the comfort zone, for example, by sitting with different people during lunch.

MU3 and MU4 described that other organisations can learn a lot from the strong trust within their team, but that the Swedish Armed Forces need to work a lot to strengthen trust in the organisation as a whole and towards leadership. To strengthen this, they mention that the organisation and leadership work more on building soldiers' confidence in their rights and breaking the culture of silence that exists. Several people from PP and MU also described cherishing collaboration and team-building as something that other organisations should be inspired by, and it contributes a lot to trust. Lastly, MU4 and MU2 described that an open climate where neither leadership nor colleagues have too much prestige is something to strive for to achieve strong trust, as expressed in the statement:

“You need to be humble enough to make mistakes and speak up when you are unsure about something. Hiding things leads to a lack of trust.” (MU4)

5. Analysis and discussion

This chapter presents our analysis of the empirical data collected from the interviews connecting it with the theoretical framework. The examination focuses on general patterns and differences observed within workplace contexts and among individuals.

We have reviewed our collected data, in line with the five main areas in our empirical data. During this we did some initial groupings with similarities and differences among the interview responses. In this chapter we provide meaning to the empirical data by identifying interconnections and placing it within a larger context. To achieve this, we combine analysis and discussion, as they naturally complement each other. This approach places the information gathered from the interviews into our conceptual framework.

5.1. Value and perception of trust in the respective workplace contexts

5.1.1. Value of trust in the different contexts

The interviews conducted with the patrolling police and military in units reveal that both groups face high-risks, as both groups emphasise the potentially lethal consequences of their work in handling weapons and vehicles. For patrolling police, the unpredictability is more widespread due to their public-facing roles, but this is also pointed out in military in units. This unpredictability and danger, where errors can lead to serious consequences shows that both groups are characterised as high-reliability work (Colquitt et al., 2011; Wang et al, 2015). This contrasts sharply with the experiences of police office and military office, where there is no direct physical risk. Instead, they face psychological and emotional risks due to the consequences of wrong decisions. However their work and its consequences is not perceived as unpredictable or particularly dangerous, hence they are classified as low reliability work (Colquitt et al., 2011). This highlights that the similarities in daily work tasks among the research groups make them more alike across organisations than within their respective internal structures.

Based on our empirical data conducted from the 16 interviews, it is evident that trust plays a pivotal role in organisational dynamics of the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces. This is not a surprising discovery as the importance of trust goes in line with previous research, but this is worth mentioning as this underscores the value of the research area (Alilyyani, 2022; Dindaroglu, 2023; Müh, 2014; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2000; Qu et al., 2023). Despite a general consensus among interviewees regarding trust, there are noticeable differences across the contexts which are discussed below.

Despite both groups emphasising the importance of trust, there is a discrepancy in its perceived significance. For patrolling police and military in units, operating in high-reliability contexts, trust is deemed a basic prerequisite for performing their duties. They believe that if trust is lacking, work cannot be executed, quoted in PP1 *“It is impossible to carry out the work if there is no trust, which has not been the case in my previous workplaces.”* On the other hand, participants from low-reliability contexts, namely personnel in police and military offices, view trust as important but not determinative. This aligns with previous research, highlighting the critical role of trust in high-reliability settings, particularly in influencing risk-taking behaviour and task execution (Colquitt et al., 2011; Wageman, 1995; Wang, Ngamsiriudom, & Hsieh, 2015; Wildman, Shuffler, Lazzara, Fiore, Burke, Salas, 2012).

Moreover, in the office settings within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces, trust was, amongst other things, associated with its impact on creativity, engagement, and professional growth. Conversely, amongst the patrolling police and military in units, trust was predominantly perceived as essential for ensuring workplace safety and operational efficiency. These variations highlight how employees in the different contexts prioritise distinct aspects of trust, while low-reliability work focus on softer values related to self-fulfilment, high-reliability work prioritise its role in minimising work risks and creating a safe working environment. This demonstrates that trust is important in both workplaces, but the reasons for its importance are not uniform across all contexts, rather they vary depending on the specific circumstances.

5.1.2. Team, leadership and organisational trust

Understanding how trust is perceived by employees working within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces proved to differ depending on various organisational dimensions. Therefore, we will discuss the dimensions of team trust, leadership trust, and organisational trust to gain a better understanding of why these differ.

All participants in the patrolling police and military units experienced high team trust and said that this almost aroused automatically due to their work, emphasised by PP4 *“As a police officer, you quickly learn that you need to ask for help and have automatic trust. Civilian employees do not have the same attitude toward trust.”* This adds to the idea from Wageman (1995) and Lines et al. (2005), that the considerable interdependence and high pressure circumstances among team members in high-reliability work necessitates trust as their actions directly impact others' ability to perform tasks effectively.

Moreover, two interviewees from the patrolling police and military in units compared their team to a *“second family”* (MU3) or *“blue light family,”* (PP4) showcasing their high closeness. They emphasised that they spend a lot of time together and experience extreme situations, many of which they are not allowed to talk about outside of work, creating a strong bond within the team. Relating this observation to the theoretical framework, it is no surprise they have such high trust. According to the meta-analysis by Hancock et al. (2023), cohesiveness of teams, characterised by good communication and shared mental models, generates a higher level of trustworthiness among teammates. This understanding is further built upon in the study from Mäkelä and Brewster (2009), who emphasise that cohesion is fostered by a collaborative environment where individuals share tacit knowledge and language systems, thereby facilitating trust.

In contrast, team trust varied greatly among the interviewees who worked in police offices or military offices, with experiences varying from high to low trust. Relating back to Mäkelä and Brewster (2009), one could think trust would be generally higher in these contexts, as they all emphasise the collaborative aspects of their work. But as this is not the case, the interviewee response adds nuance to the idea from Mäkelä and Brewster, showing that the level of collaboration must be very high to truly elevate trust. This is further supported by six

interviewees who had previously worked in patrolling police or military units, but now worked in the office settings. They noted a significant difference in how trust is perceived in the different contexts. As patrolling police and military in units, team trust was said to arise organically from the interdependency and collaboration that the situations require. In office settings collaboration is of importance but the interdependence is not as widespread. This adds to the theoretical framework indicating that while collaboration is a crucial component of trust, the addition of interdependency enhances trust levels.

Our findings reveal that the positive impact of high leadership trust is crucial for team and organisational trust. This can be explained by Bringselius (2018) who emphasises that high leadership trust entails a good workplace environment and bridges gaps within the organisations, leading to an overall enhancement of trust. However, none of the interviewees reported higher levels of leadership trust than their perception of team trust or organisational trust. Thereby it appears to be possible to have high organisational and team trust simultaneously with low leadership trust, but not vice versa. This observation is interesting as it is somewhat contradictory to the research from Bringselius (2018), who states that the positive consequences of good leadership are outweighed by the negative consequences of poor leadership. In our conducted interviews, we found that the positive consequences of good leadership are more impactful than the negative consequences of poor leadership. A possible explanation could be found in the research from Kujala et al. (2016), stating that team trust can be strengthened by a shared sense of low trust in leadership, as it can have a unifying effect. This idea is highlighted from the interviewee MU3 stating that *“We unite within the team, as there is a high workload and shortcomings in leadership, which leads to a sense of 'us versus them' towards the leadership.”* This shows that dissatisfaction can create a sense of unity and increase trust among coworkers and result in distrust towards the leadership.

Moreover, the lacking impact of low leadership trust on overall organisational trust is surprising. According to Bulatova (2015), confidence in leaders is crucial for organisational trust, suggesting these dimensions should align. Our results may differ because the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces are unique organisations as personnel are willing to put themselves at life threatening risk for their work, which might make the organisational trust

more stable than leadership trust. In the interviews a strong loyalty was emphasised, which was also evident from the long tenures of the interviewees within these organisations.

However, this does not fully explain the pattern as we observed a lack of correlation between loyalty and organisational trust, as interviewee PO1 stated, *“Despite decreasing trust in the organisation due to poor leadership, my loyalty remains high.”* This finding is intriguing given that previous research indicates that loyalty and trust are intertwined (Al-Shalabi, 2019). It might be that some interviewees viewed organisational trust and loyalty as separate spheres, while others combined loyalty into their perception of organisational trust. The high loyalty to the organisation could also be an explanation to our findings somewhat contradicting Bringselius (2018) as she observed a broader scope of the public sector, whereas we only examined two public organisations with a very strong loyalty. This difference might explain the differing results and suggests that organisational loyalty influences attitudes toward trust.

5.1.3. Trust perceptions due to organisational challenges

The trust within the different dimensions are also affected by the challenges the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces are currently facing. According to the interviewees the heightened threats towards Sweden and increased gang-violence, straightening team and organisational trust. For the Swedish Armed Forces they said they have become more unified as their work is now more important than ever, as MO3 said *“Most unifying, receiving a form of recognition. No longer a special interest, now we are a primary interest.”* This underscores that team trust is particularly important in challenging circumstances and that it unites the team and organisation by creating a clearer *us versus them* dynamic. As previously mentioned, organisational changes due to challenging circumstances can either strengthen or weaken trust in management (Morgan and Zeffane, 2003). It is clear from the interviews that these organisations have succeeded in creating a unifying effect, which has positively influenced organisational trust, although there remains some weakened trust in leadership.

However, there are also some divisions shown in the interviewees disappointment with the leadership due to the increased workload and the higher demands placed on leadership abilities during this pressured period of change. This can be explained by the tendency to

reassess trust in management during organisational change, as trust becomes particularly prominent (Lines et al., 2005). Additionally this can further be explained by the fact that these organisational challenges that have resulted in increased workloads have also led to deprioritisations of certain practices, such as team building activities, and workplace fun. The decreased focus on workplace fun can possibly lead to less trust which makes it harder to tackle the organisational challenges. Hence we emphasise that workplace fun is extra important in organisational challenges as this fosters trust and motivation for work which is necessary for tackling the challenges. This is not only due to its positive impact on trust but also because it increases work engagement and reduces the need for recovery (Georganta & Montgomery, 2016; 2022). This is further strengthened by the interviews from high-reliability contexts expressing a greater need for fun and relaxed activities when work becomes more serious and intense.

5.2. Basis for trust and perceived trust in the workplace

From the section above we understand that the perception of trust varies depending on the three dimensions. It is also evident trust differs depending on the workplace context, especially the importance of team trust within high-reliability settings. In this part, we delve deeper into the basis and factors that positively and negatively influence different types of trust, as well as how trust itself impacts various aspects.

5.2.1. Cognitive based trust and affective based trust

In understanding what affects the experiences of trust, we identified many factors. Interviewees collectively highlighted experience, taking responsibility, and doing the best for the collective as important traits of the trustee. Viewing this through Mayer et al.'s (1995) integrative model of trust, we can categorise many of these traits under the overarching themes of ability, benevolence, and integrity. However, we also found that some factors mentioned by the interviewees, such as self-reflection and openness, do not fit within the model. Additionally, the groups differ in what they found most relevant for experiencing trust due to their work context which is discussed below.

Personnel in police and military offices strongly emphasised personality factors as crucial for trust in trustees, with honesty, self-reflection, and openness playing central roles. Social competence and a shared worldview are also integral, potentially linked with integrity. However, in these contexts, ability is secondary to trust, with a willingness to learn often cited as essential in those cases. Contradictory, in patrolling police and military units, trust primarily hinges on ability, ensuring that colleagues can perform tasks in the best possible way. While deep personal connections may form, trust often fosters automatically due to shared experiences in basic training and rigorous tests in becoming patrolling police or military in units. Additionally, maintaining openness and making social efforts to connect were highlighted as crucial for trust.

Relating our findings to the theoretical framework, we find alignment with the categorisations proposed by Colquitt et al. (2011) and Alves et al. (2023) in our studied contexts. Similar to Colquitt et al. (2011), we observed that cognitive factors, such as ability and integrity, are more pronounced within the patrolling police and military in office as these are high-reliability contexts. Conversely, affective-based factors, like personality aspects, hold greater significance in the personnel working in police and military offices as these are lower reliability settings. This discrepancy can be attributed to the heightened stakes and need for certainty in high-risk situations where colleagues' abilities are paramount. In low-reliability settings, on the other hand, the ability is not as prominent since mistakes may not have the same consequences. However, it is important to acknowledge that both cognitive and affective elements contribute to trust formation. Merely being competent in one's job does not automatically foster high trust. There must also be a willingness to help others for that competence to be valuable. Likewise, kindness and helpfulness alone are insufficient without accompanying competence in the work environment. In essence, trust factors are interconnected, but certain patterns emerge regarding the most vital aspects within high or low-reliability contexts.

5.2.2. Interpersonal and individual impact on trust

An interesting insight that emerged from the interviews was how interpersonal trust greatly impacts trust dynamics in various dimensions. We found that individual members can have a widespread impact on the overall trust within the group. For example, both PP4 and MO4

explained how specific individuals influenced the teams trust levels. PP4 mentioned that their new chief, who made the group feel heard and effectively communicated with higher management, instilled stronger trust in the entire leadership and organisation simply by fostering trust in themselves as an individual. Similarly, MO4 described how trust within the group can be greatly affected if the group lacks trust in a particular colleague, as it undermines the stability of the team. From this, we understand that trust is an interpersonal aspect, needing to be upheld for each person within a group for the team trust to be perceived as high, as one person in a group can jeopardise it. The consequences of trust are most significant when directed towards leadership, as positive leadership trust has a more widespread effect. This is further bolstered by Bringselius (2018), suggesting that the primary determinant of whether trust permeates the organisation is dependent on the leadership.

Another intriguing aspect related to this was the clear contrast in how much personal responsibility employees felt they had regarding the trust levels. Those individuals who felt the lowest team and leadership trust, i.e. PP1 and MO2 in police and military offices, did not focus on their own role in building trust within the team. Furthermore, they did not believe they had the power to improve trust by themselves. Instead, they believed it was primarily the responsibility of leadership or other colleagues. In contrast, those who felt the highest trust in their team greatly focused on their own role and influence on trust. Similarly, these individuals placed great importance on self-reflection and self-awareness for trust. This led us to an interesting connection that self-reflection and self-awareness are important for trust, as individuals who place importance on a trustee's capabilities to do so also spend a lot of time on personal self-reflection themselves, thus taking more responsibility for mutual trust, which in turn increases the team's trust.

Except for this, PP1 and MO2 were also the ones having the least reported collaboration in their daily work compared to the other interviewees. From the interviews, we understood this as a negative paradox as the cause and impact of this go both ways. These individuals chose to collaborate less with colleagues due to low trust in them, but also felt low trust in their colleagues because they did not collaborate and help each other. We realised from this that having close collaboration with each other has a dual effect, it positively affects trust but also requires high trust to choose to collaborate extensively.

The lack of collaboration, which led to low interpersonal trust towards colleagues, also had a notable impact on knowledge sharing within the teams. PP4 explained that there was a lack of communication between some colleagues, where information was withheld and individuals worked against each other instead of sharing ideas and supporting each other towards common goals. Furthermore, the person explained that this made them less open to asking for help and sharing knowledge due to the low trust, as they were concerned that certain colleagues would undermine them. This aligns clearly with (Dindaroglu, 2023; Qu et al., 2023), which emphasises the connection between knowledge sharing and interpersonal trust and how it affects the overall team performance. This was further reinforced by PP1, who stated, *“Why should I share my knowledge and ideas when I do not trust a colleague and feel their support?”* It became evident that the willingness to share knowledge decreased when interpersonal trust was low.

In the following subsections, we delve deeper into how we understand that trust and collaboration within the team can be influenced and strengthened by encouraging more social interactions.

5.3. Fostering trust

From the interviews, it was evident that there is a noteworthy value in focusing on social activities both within and outside of work, and actively engaging in team-building activities. This emphasis proved beneficial for the organisations collectively and individual employees on a personal level. Furthermore, we observed an interesting connection, the teams with the highest trust levels, specifically in patrolling police and military units, were also the most invested in socialising outside of work and engaging in team-building activities to foster personal connections. These groups expressed that experiencing things together, whether challenging or enjoyable situations, as something that strengthens the team trust and brings them closer together. Conversely, the groups with lower trust within the team, namely groups of police office and military office, invested less effort in social activities and team-building. This led us to understand the importance of getting to know each other on a personal level and investing significant energy in social activities can impact the fostering of trust.

Apart from deepening personal connections, we also noticed significant benefits in enhancing workplace fun within organisations. This fosters stronger interpersonal bonds and enhances overall job satisfaction, further strengthened by research from Georganta and Montgomery (2022), who emphasise the connection between workplace fun, trust and job satisfaction. It was evident from the interviews that there was a strong level of trust within the groups that had the most workplace fun. These groups also saw the most purpose and value in social gatherings, as they felt it was important to talk about things other than work and relax from the seriousness of work. According to PP2, the continuous focus on workplace fun may be a reason why this person's group also had such high trust in each other. With this insight, we recognised the significant potential for the Swedish Police and Armed Forces to allocate resources and effort towards fostering a socialising culture within their respective organisations.

5.3.1. Support for trust-building activities

Although all groups acknowledged the importance of social and team-building activities, it was predominantly amongst the patrolling police and military in units, where these initiatives were effectively put into practice. The interviews revealed that within patrolling police, there was a perception of inadequate support for workplace fun and team-building activities. However, the employees took strong initiative, ensuring that these activities persist. Similarly, military in units noted that many social activities were driven by personal initiatives rather than being organised by the organisation. However, when the organisation actually arranges team-building days they are highly appreciated.

Although it is important to note that organising these social activities requires consideration of the needs of different group dynamics, as an organised activity does not necessarily have a positive effect. Such activities must stem from genuine interest and be perceived as authentic initiatives to contribute positively (Karl & Peluchette, 2006; Plester et al., 2016). This was further reinforced by the interviews, which emphasised that leadership must understand team dynamics and the team's needs and conditions. Different types of social events are required depending on the team. Some teams deal with more mentally demanding tasks and expressed a need for sessions focused on discussing difficult issues to lighten their hearts. On the other hand, some teams believe they need more workplace fun in terms of relaxed activities. For

example, they wished for casual after-work gatherings where work is not discussed at all to unwind from the constant heavy topics. This insight highlights that workplace fun does not have a universally effective recipe, rather it must be tailored to the demands and the needs of the employees.

Lastly, when there was absence of organisational initiatives the interviewees who experienced high team trust said that there were their own initiatives from the employees to arrange social activities. Conversely, the interviewees who had low team trust exhibit a lack of initiative. Thereby one can conclude that strong trust and personal connections initiates a positive cycle of individuals taking more initiatives, subsequently deepening mutual understanding and trust. This positive cycle is absent in teams with low trust, highlighting the need for leadership and organisational support to cultivate this constructive trust building spiral. Our finding of the importance of the leadership to take more accountability in fostering trust once again gives strength to Bringselius (2018) emphasis on leaders as the ones with greatest impact on whether trust permeates the organisation or not. Furthermore the lack of leadership and organisations' prioritisation of trust building activities strengthens Bringselius' (2018) statement that organisations often underutilised the importance of trust.

5.3.2. Connections across the organisation

Individuals from all groups explained that their trust in other departments of the organisation and the organisation as a whole can be enhanced by an increased understanding of each other's work by getting to know each other across the organisation. The interviewees suggested that there is a lack of understanding between different departments of the organisations, leading to a failure to consider the whole picture in decision-making and a lack of understanding of various decisions, resulting in even lower trust in both towards the organisation and the leadership. In the empirical data lack of understanding from leadership showed to be a problem, especially amongst the patrolling police and military in units as interviewees expressed that they felt unseen, with feelings of being seen as just "*uniform*" (MU3) or "*number*" (PP1) rather than an individual.

To enhance the trust several individuals suggested that this could be done by fostering more cross-sectional interactions. They emphasised that by communication and getting to know

colleagues from different departments, would yield better understanding of various organisational aspects, thus bolstering the sense of mutual support and consequently strengthening trust. This aligns with Cohen (1992) which underscores that trust is enhanced by positive interactions between employees and management. Furthermore, this became evident as face-to-face interactions were explained as crucial for building trust and understanding. This sentiment was echoed by an individual, stating: *“I have had the opportunity to collaborate with numerous departments within the organisation, and I have seen their dedication. That is why my trust remains consistent across all parts of the organisation.”* This is further strengthened by Fell (2021), who highlights that a shared context among colleagues, has a clear effect on the trust levels between the employees.

The value of fostering interpersonal connections and breaking down organisational barriers can also be viewed as having a positive cyclical impact. As the Swedish Police and Armed Forces are very large and hierarchical organisations, it can be challenging for everyone to possess information regarding decisions and a lack of knowledge sharing (Riege, 2005). However, as Vanhala and Tzafrir (2021) emphasise mutual understanding of roles reinforces trust, leading to greater acceptance of decisions without fully understanding the decision-making process. This, in turn, reduces resistance to changes and enhances overall work efficiency. This highlights how trust permeates various aspects and the positive opportunities available for the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces to enhance trust in both the organisation and leadership.

6. Conclusion and future research

In this chapter, the main findings derived from our analysis are condensed in a conclusion by addressing the research questions and summarising the contributions. This is followed by acknowledging the limitations of the thesis. Subsequently, we suggest ideas for further research and delve into the practical implications of our findings.

The purpose of this study was to examine employees' perceptions of trust within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces, and to determine how these perceptions are affected by the current security challenges facing the country. Using a qualitative approach, we conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with participants from four groups within these organisations: patrolling police, military personnel in units, office-based employees in the Swedish Police, and office-based employees in the Swedish Armed Forces. Our interviews focused on three dimensions of trust: team trust, leadership trust, and organisational trust. Below, we will conclude how we achieved the purpose of our study by addressing our research questions.

6.1. Answering the research questions

Research question 1:

How is trust perceived amongst personal working in the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Forces, considering their work context?

Our research revealed that to understand how trust is perceived in the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed forces one must look at different dimensions of trust. The empirical data showed differences in team trust, leadership trust, and organisational trust. From the interviews it is evident that these three dimensions differentiate vastly, and that team trust always measured the highest while leadership trust was the lowest in total. However, the loyalty towards the organisation was perceived as very high even when the leadership trust and organisational trust was low.

From our data it is evident that trust is highly individualised and interpersonal, but certain patterns emerge based on work context. In high-reliability work, encompassing the interviewees from patrolling police and military units, the high risks and uncertainty involved resulted in team trust being vital in the daily work thus increasing the need for it. This context fosters team trust almost automatically, given the situations workers face. As one patrolling police officer mentioned in the interview, *“Experiencing things together and being involved in challenging, risky missions brings colleagues closer together.”* This differs from personnel in office settings within the same two organisations, grouped as low-reliability settings, where team trust is more varying and not generally as high. Trust in this setting is important for performing the work well as it creates better circumstances, but it cannot be compared to the trust needed in situations when one's life is dependent on it. This highlights the differences in team trust due to work contexts.

The level of personal responsibility for trust varied between the groups. In patrolling police and military in units, individuals emphasised their own role in building trust. On the other hand, in office settings, trust was seen as more reliant on leadership. This insight is interesting considering the different trust levels perceived across contexts. Groups that emphasise personal responsibility for trust tended to have higher levels of trust within their teams.

Research question 2:

How does the heightened security threats in Sweden impact the employees within the Swedish Police and Swedish Armed Force, particularly concerning trust?

The impact of the organisational challenges posed by heightened security threats in Sweden is perceived differently among individuals, with some consistency depending on high or low-reliability contexts. In the high-reliability context, team trust is even more emphasised amongst the interviewees, while trust in leadership has weakened. The increased team trust can be attributed to the increased workloads for patrolling police and military units, which heighten interdependency among team members and elevate the risks they face. Simultaneously, the diminishing trust in leadership stems from the high workload and the removal of essential training sessions which creates higher risks in their daily work. Additionally, activities promoting workplace fun are deprioritised by leadership, contributing

to dissatisfaction. Paradoxically, this dissatisfaction with leadership has strengthened trust within teams as they unite in response to these challenges.

In office environments, the effects of heightened threats differ significantly based on the interviewee's role within the organisation. Those working directly with affected areas report more noticeable changes, whereas others perceive little to no change in their work. Among those noticing a change in trust it primarily manifests as decreased trust in leadership, attributed to leadership actions taken without adequate employee inclusion thus leading to dissatisfaction.

Lastly, all groups reported that the changing external situation has created a unifying effect within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces. This is attributed to a heightened sense of purpose, fostering a “us versus them” mentality towards the security threats. Consequently, employees have developed increased loyalty to the organisation, feeling that their profession has a higher purpose due to the escalating threats. The perception that their work provides significant societal benefits has further reinforced this loyalty, as individuals view their responsibilities as increasingly vital.

6.2. Contributions

Our research contributes to the field of trust by unveiling the nuanced nature of trust levels within the workplace, highlighting their variability among individuals and dimensions. Unlike previous studies that often narrow their focus to a single dimension of trust or offer broad overviews of trust within organisations, our approach provides a deeper understanding of trust dynamics. Notably, we found that while team trust or organisational trust may not have extensive effects across all dimensions, high levels of trust in leadership positively influence trust levels within teams and organisations as a whole. Therefore, our study emphasises the pivotal role of fostering trust in leadership, as it results in positive effects across other dimensions.

Moreover, our research reinforces previous research on trust being highly interpersonal and individual but also contributes to the importance of trust as context-dependent. The context

dependency showed to be particularly evident in team trust as the perception of it varies drastically within the same organisation in our research. High-reliability settings of the military in units and patrolling police resemble each other more than they do their colleagues in office settings. Hence, we contribute to the research by examining trust by looking at similar contexts rather than the same organisation in providing a more comprehending way to gain a broader perspective.

Additionally, our study provided an intriguing finding regarding organisational trust and its relationship with organisational loyalty. Contrary to previous research suggesting a clear connection between loyalty and trust in the organisation, our findings suggest otherwise. We identified individuals across all groups who displayed high loyalty to the organisations despite having low levels of trust in it. This insight sheds light on the complex interplay between loyalty and trust within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces.

Lastly, our contribution underscores the importance of fostering trust as it elucidates positive ripple effects. While trust fosters numerous positive outcomes, it also poses challenges in contexts where trust is lacking, creating a cyclic dilemma, for example trust requires openness, but openness requires trust. Our study highlights the necessity for management to actively cultivate an organisational culture that fosters trust. To achieve this, we found that cross-departmental interactions play a crucial role in bolstering trust across various dimensions of the organisation. Despite the strong employee support for this principle, it is often overlooked and underutilised in organisations. For the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces, prioritising such interactions in practice can foster greater mutual understanding and respect, enhancing organisational and leadership trust.

6.3. Limitations

There are some crucial things to consider which limits the findings of our research. First of all, participants in the office settings were generally a lot older than those working as patrolling police or as military in units, possibly introducing an age effect. However, six out of eight participants in the office settings had previous experience in military units or

patrolling police, thus they could internally compare the two contexts and their perceptions supported our findings.

Additionally, the strong loyalty to the organisation observed in several participants might hinder the honesty of their responses, as they may not have wanted to convey a negative image. Given that the interviews also revealed many negative examples of low trust, we do not consider this to have had a big impact but we still acknowledge that there might have been some effects of this depending on the interviewees ability to separate trust from loyalty.

Even though we reached out to all interviewees when finalising the empirical data to ensure that our interpretation aligned with their perspectives, this process may have inadvertently given them time to reconsider their answers. This could have allowed them to modify their responses, potentially compromising the credibility of their answers. Additionally, there may have been variations in the level of engagement from our interviewees in ensuring the accuracy of the data, as some might have been more willing to invest time and energy in reviewing our interpretations, while others may have simply agreed with our interpretations without thoroughly reviewing them due to lack of interest or time constraints. However, since we recorded and transcribed the interviews we process the material several times, thus reducing the risk of misunderstandings. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that our research is inevitably rooted in our personal perceptions, even though the goal has been to remain as objective as possible.

Furthermore, the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed forces are unique organisations as they operate within the public sector and hold licences to use violence when necessary. As a result, our findings may not be widely transferable to other settings. Additionally, the constrained time frame of the study and restricted access to these organisations allowed us to conduct only 16 interviews. A larger sample size would have provided a broader insight into the organisations from multiple perspectives. Despite these limitations, our qualitative interviews provided a lot of material about these organisations and we believe other organisations can still derive inspiration from this research, as trust is a relevant aspect for all organisations.

6.4. Future research

Our research is an important step towards bridging the gap in understanding trust within military and police organisations. However, this is merely a step, and further research is essential. Our study focused solely on Sweden, but to grasp the broader implications, it is valuable to conduct similar research in other countries. Our findings reveal that perceived levels of trust vary depending on whether the target is the team, leadership, or the organisation. This variation is particularly interesting to explore further, especially with the division of high-reliability and low-reliability contexts.

Since trust is an extensive and widespread concept, examined from many angles, numerous additional theories could be included in future studies. We focused on context and qualities in the trustee as factors influencing trust, but to truly understand why some people experience more trust than others, it is also interesting to explore factors within the trustor. For example, the concept of generalised trust, inherent in individuals, is interesting to take into consideration as this might also influence how individuals trust others within an organisation. As mentioned in our demarcation, we initially considered this aspect but did not include it, due to other findings being more pertinent to our purpose and time constraints. However, we believe it would be valuable for future research to delve into this and other theories.

Moreover, it is highly valuable to expand upon our research in the future with a quantitative study. By including more participants and defining clear factors statistical analyses can be conducted, thus perhaps strengthening our findings with significant correlations. In doing this it is important to include participants widespread across different teams to uphold a generalisability.

To further test the accuracy of our research, we suggest future studies gather empirical data from more organisations to uncover additional insights. More specifically this should include organisations operating in other high-reliability settings, such as firefighting, healthcare operations, and chemical manufacturing, as this would help determine if our results are transferable to a broader high-reliability context. This is particularly interesting regarding team trust, as our research showed it to be both highly valued and highly experienced in the high-reliability group of the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces. Additionally, it

would be valuable to investigate our findings on organisational trust and organisational loyalty, since we found that the two do not necessarily impact each other. It would be interesting to delve in further and also see if this is specific to police and military personnel or if it is a common pattern among employees within the public sector or even extends to other professions.

Finally, we find our findings to be both interesting and valuable and hope they will inspire further examination of this topic. With more research, the understanding of the crucial subject of trust can be enhanced, particularly within high-reliability operations and the public sector. We look forward to future studies building on our work and deepening the knowledge in this field.

6.5. Practical implications

While acknowledging the limitations of our study, we can still draw speculative implications from our findings. Firstly, our research revealed that team trust was unanimously high among patrolling police and military units. Apart from the high uncertainty and risks inherent in their work, this high level of trust was also attributed to close collaboration, openness towards each other, and prioritising getting to know each other outside of their professional roles. A practical implication drawn from this is that workplaces across contexts can learn from this approach to foster team trust. For example, organisations can implement regular check-ins and encourage more social interactions outside of work to strengthen bonds among team members. We believe that more organisations, beyond just these two, could benefit from this approach. Regardless of whether an organisation is private or public, it is clear that trust within an organisation is bolstered by personal interactions thus fostering mutual understanding of each other and across different departments.

Our exploration of trust within these organisations is highly relevant, particularly in light of their responsibility for national security, especially during times of increased threats. Understanding the levels of trust across different dimensions within military and police organisations, regardless of the country they operate in, highlights areas where trust needs strengthening. This is essential for effectively addressing their daily tasks and managing

increased threats efficiently, both in terms of human and economical resources. By fostering strong internal trust, these critical institutions can enhance public confidence and ensure more effective operations, ultimately contributing to a greater sense of security within our society.

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Appendix A: Interview manuscript

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Presentation | <p>Hello! We are Hedda and Ebba. We are writing our master's thesis in management at Lund University. In our thesis, we are exploring trust within the Swedish Police and the Swedish Armed Forces. To do this we interview employees from four different interview groups, and you belong to one of these groups.</p> |
| Consent | <p>If it is okay with you we would like to record the interview. The recording will not be shared and is solely for our own analysis of the material, and will be deleted afterwards. Do you approve of us recording the interview?</p> <p>Your participation is anonymous, and we will not include any information that can be traced back to you personally.</p> <p>You have the right to refrain from answering any questions and to terminate the interview at any time if you wish.</p> <p>Do you consent to participate in this interview?</p> |
| Ending | <p>Thank you for your participation. We will come back to you when we have handled the data from the interview.</p> |

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | You have our contact information, please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or uncertainties. |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Appendix B: Interview guide

| Source for inspiration | Area | Question |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Background | How old are you? |
| | Background | In what organisation and unit do you work? |
| | Background | How long have you worked in the organisation? |
| (Colquitt et al., 2011) | Context | How can a typical workday look like for you? What are your daily tasks? |
| (Mäkelä & Brewster, 2009) | Context | How much of your work requires collaboration with others? |
| (Lapidot et al., 2007) | Context | How riskful do you perceive your job to be? |
| (Mayer et al., 1995) | Personal definition of trust | How do you define trust? |
| (Colquitt et al., 2011) (Dindaroglu, 2023) (Qu et al., 2023) | Effects of trust | In your opinion, what importance does trust within the team have in your daily work? |
| (Colquitt et al., 2011) | Background on trust | How high do you perceive the level of trust to be within your team? |
| (Ford et al., 2003). | Context and trust | How much do you socialise with your colleagues outside of working hours? Do you |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | believe it affects your trust in your colleagues? |
| (Georganta & Montgomery, 2016) (Georganta & Montgomery, 2022) | Effects of trust | What do you think trust is important for? Why? What does it influence in turn? |
| (Säkerhetspolisen, 2024) (Regeringen, 2023) | Societal factors | How does the increased security threat in Sweden affect your job? |
| (Lines et al., 2005) (Morgan & Zeffane, 2003). | Societal factors | Do you feel the increased security threat brings you closer together within the organisation or creates more distance? |
| (Wang et al., 2015). | Societal factors | How much autonomy do you feel you have in your role? Can you act without following orders? How has this changed with the increased security threat in Sweden? |
| (Dindaroglu, 2023) | Trust and new initiatives | Do you have room to test and develop new work methods? Why? |
| (Dindaroglu, 2023) | Co-working driven innovation | Describe a situation where you or someone in your team has been involved in implementing a new idea / new work method. What did the process look like? |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Affecting trust | Describe a situation when the trust in your team has been high. What is the reason? |
| | Affecting trust | Describe a situation when the trust in your team has been low. What is the reason? |
| (Wildman et al., 2012) (Hancock et al., 2023) | Context affecting trust | Do you notice any difference regarding trust in your current job compared to other jobs? |
| (Mayer et al., 1995) (Alves et al., 2023) | Attributes in trustee | Can you describe the attributes of a coworker you feel high trust towards? (can also be a hypothetical person). |
| (Mayer et al., 1995) (Alves et al., 2023) | Attributes in trustee | Can you describe the attributes of a coworker you feel low trust towards? (can also be a hypothetical person). |
| (Hancock et al., 2023). (Dasgupta, 1988) (Rotter, 1967) | General trust | What is your general attitude towards trusting others, for example a stranger? |
| (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). | Dimensions of trust in the organisation | How is the trust between the organisation as a whole, the leadership, and within the team? How do they |

| | | |
|--|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | influence each other? Where do you feel the greatest trust? |
| | Increasing trust | What can other workplaces learn from you to increase trust? Or what can you learn from others? |