

Organizational Trust and Work Engagement in the Telecommunications Sector of Arequipa, Peru

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Abstract

The telecommunications sector in Peru plays a strategic role in the country's technological development and connectivity. Despite its sustained growth and advanced infrastructure, productivity challenges remain. In Arequipa Province, work engagement among telecommunications employees was predominantly moderate (54.3%) or low (41.0%), highlighting the relevance of identifying organizational factors associated with employee engagement. In this context, this study examined the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement among employees in the telecommunications sector of Arequipa Province, Peru. A quantitative approach with a non-experimental, cross-sectional, correlational design was employed. The sample consisted of 300 telecommunications employees selected through non-probability convenience sampling. Data were analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The results revealed a positive, moderate, and statistically significant relationship between organizational trust and work engagement ($\rho = 0.562, p < .001$). Organizational trust was also positively associated with vigor ($\rho = 0.511$), dedication ($\rho = 0.648$), and absorption ($\rho = 0.501$), while trust in the supervisor showed a stronger association with work engagement ($\rho = 0.644$) than trust in the organization ($\rho = 0.444$). These findings provide empirical evidence of the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement in the telecommunications sector and contribute to a better understanding of organizational dynamics in this context. They may also help telecommunications organizations develop trust-based leadership practices aimed at strengthening employee dedication and overall engagement.

Keywords

Organizational trust, Work engagement, Trust in the supervisor, Telecommunications sector

1. Introduction

The telecommunications sector plays a strategic role in Peru's economic development, driven by sustained investment and increasing demand for digital connectivity. In 2023, investments in the sector reached PEN 3.867 billion, while total revenues amounted to PEN 20.663 billion, reflecting its importance for technological development and the expansion of mobile and fixed broadband services, particularly through fiber-optic infrastructure [1]. Despite this growth, productivity remains a major challenge. According to the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, labor productivity in Peru's telecommunications sector reached only 10.4% of the level observed in the United States, a figure considerably below the overall productivity level of Peru relative to the United States (15.8%) [2]. Given that telecommunications is a technology-intensive industry, this finding suggests that organizational factors may also be associated with the sector's relatively low productivity.

Among the organizational factors associated with employee attitudes and organizational performance, work engagement has received considerable attention. Business/work units in the top quartile of employee engagement report 18% higher productivity in sales and 14% higher productivity based on production records and evaluations than those in the bottom quartile [3]. However, evidence from the Peruvian telecommunications sector suggests room for improvement. Politi found that 43.6% of

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employees in a telecommunications company exhibited low levels of work engagement [4]. Likewise, Dextre and Guevara reported that the dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption, as conceptualized by Schaufeli and Bakker, were predominantly distributed at low or moderate levels among Peruvian employees [5, 6].

Organizational trust is also particularly relevant because it can facilitate cooperation, tacit knowledge transfer, and risk-taking, thereby strengthening organizational capabilities for innovation [7]. Although sector-wide evidence on leadership in Peru's telecommunications industry remains scarce, Ramos found that only 35% of employees in a telecommunications company reported that their leader almost always promoted transformation or organizational change [8]. This suggests that change-oriented leadership may not be consistently perceived across the workforce. Moreover, the descriptive results of the present study showed that organizational trust was predominantly moderate (51.0%). Thus, 61.7% did not reach a high level of trust, indicating meaningful room for improvement and reinforcing the importance of examining organizational trust as a condition associated with cooperation, openness, and adaptation to change.

From a theoretical perspective, organizational trust and work engagement are conceptually related through the principles of social exchange and reciprocity. Schaufeli and Bakker conceptualized work engagement as a positive work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption [6]. In turn, Nyhan and Marlowe proposed that organizational trust reflects employees' confidence in both organizational practices and leadership [9]. Employees who perceive fairness, organizational support, and consistency in organizational practices may report higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption, while employees with higher work engagement may also develop more favorable perceptions of their organizational environment. Although both constructs have been extensively investigated independently, empirical evidence examining their association remains limited, particularly in Peru. To date, no national studies have analyzed the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement in the telecommunications sector, highlighting an important gap in the literature.

Based on the identified research gap, this article aimed to examine the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement among employees in the telecommunications sector of Arequipa Province, Peru. The specific objectives were: to examine the relationship between organizational trust and vigor; to examine the relationship between organizational trust and dedication; to examine the relationship between organizational trust and absorption; to examine the relationship between trust in the supervisor and work engagement; and to examine the relationship between trust in the organization and work engagement. Accordingly, the study tested the hypothesis (H_g) that a positive relationship exists between organizational trust and work engagement among employees in the telecommunications sector.

This study addresses an important gap in the literature by examining the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement within Peru's telecommunications sector, where empirical evidence remains scarce despite the strategic importance of the industry. Although work engagement has been widely associated with positive organizational outcomes [3], and organizational trust has been recognized as a fundamental element for fostering cooperation, organizational effectiveness, and sustainable workplace relationships [9], research examining the association between these constructs has been conducted primarily in international contexts. Consequently, the findings of this article contribute empirical evidence from the Peruvian telecommunications sector, providing a basis for future research and supporting a better understanding of organizational dynamics in technology-intensive industries.

1.1. Related Literature

Previous research has consistently reported positive associations between organizational trust and work engagement across different organizational contexts. Adnan et al. found a strong positive correlation between organizational trust and work engagement among teachers in Pakistan ($r = 0.664$) [10]. Similarly, Batmomolin et al. reported a positive correlation ($r = 0.638$) among employees of a private bank in Indonesia [11], while Khawaja and Soomro identified positive relationships between work engagement

and different dimensions of organizational trust, including trust in supervisors ($r = 0.580$) and trust in management ($r = 0.625$), in the Swedish retail sector [12]. Likewise, Mubashar et al. observed a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.460$) across employees from multiple industries [13], and Alshaabani et al. reported a positive association ($r = 0.400$) among service-sector employees in Hungary [14]. In contrast, although Indoyo and Ranihusna found a positive relationship between organizational trust and work engagement in an Indonesian healthcare organization, this association was not statistically significant [15]. Overall, the available empirical evidence suggests that organizational trust is generally positively associated with work engagement; however, findings remain limited to international settings, highlighting the need for empirical evidence from the Peruvian telecommunications sector.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Work engagement has been widely examined as a positive work-related psychological state that reflects employees' energetic, emotional, and cognitive connection with their work. Although early approaches, such as Kahn's need-satisfaction theory, emphasized the conditions that allow employees to express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in their work roles [16], later perspectives broadened the construct by linking it to motivation, organizational resources, and reciprocal workplace relationships. In this regard, the Job Demands-Resources model proposed by Bakker and Demerouti explains work engagement as a state that emerges when job resources, such as support, feedback, autonomy, and development opportunities, help employees manage job demands and remain motivated [17]. Similarly, social exchange theory suggests that employees may respond with higher engagement when they perceive fair treatment, support, and beneficial organizational conditions. Within this theoretical line, Schaufeli and Bakker conceptualized work engagement through three dimensions: vigor, understood as high levels of energy, effort, and persistence at work; dedication, referring to enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and a sense of significance; and absorption, defined as deep concentration and involvement in work activities [6].

Organizational trust, in turn, refers to employees' confidence in the intentions, actions, and reliability of organizational actors and systems. From the perspective of Mayer et al. [18], trust is linked to perceptions of ability, benevolence, and integrity. McAllister further distinguished between cognition-based trust, grounded in rational evaluations of competence and reliability, and affect-based trust, grounded in emotional bonds and interpersonal care [19]. However, for the purposes of this study, the model of Nyhan and Marlowe is especially relevant because it differentiates organizational trust into two dimensions: trust in the supervisor and trust in the organization [9]. Trust in the supervisor is based on employees' perceptions of their immediate supervisor's competence, fairness, integrity, and support, whereas trust in the organization refers to confidence in the broader organizational system, including its justice, efficiency, consistency, and ability to provide fair outcomes.

Overall, both constructs are conceptually related through social exchange and reciprocity mechanisms. Work engagement reflects employees' positive connection with their work through vigor, dedication, and absorption, while organizational trust reflects employees' confidence in leaders and organizational systems. Therefore, examining the relationship between these variables allows for a better understanding of how positive employee attitudes and perceptions are associated within the telecommunications sector.

2. Methodology

This study followed a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional, and correlational design. The quantitative approach was appropriate because the variables were measured through numerical data and analyzed using statistical procedures. The design was non-experimental because organizational trust and work engagement were observed in their natural context without manipulation. Likewise, the study was cross-sectional, as data were collected at a single point in time, and correlational because the objective was to examine the association between organizational trust and work engagement among employees in the telecommunications sector.

The population consisted of workers from the telecommunications sector in Arequipa Province, Peru. Based on ENAHO data from INEI [20], this sector represents approximately 0.3% of the province's economically active population, equivalent to an estimated 1,359 workers. Participants were recruited through non-probability convenience sampling because obtaining a complete sampling frame and accessing workers across telecommunications companies presented practical and organizational constraints. As Mulisa [21] notes, full randomization is not always feasible in social research because of ethical, accessibility, resource, and operational limitations. Furthermore, Qian [22] distinguishes between determining the required sample size and specifying the procedure used to select participants, treating them as complementary but separate components of sampling design. Accordingly, the finite-population formula was used solely to establish a target sample size and prevent the number of participants from depending exclusively on their availability during data collection. Although conventional parameters of a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and maximum variability were used in this calculation, participant selection remained non-random and was based on accessibility, voluntary participation, and fulfillment of the eligibility criteria. Therefore, the calculation served only as a planning criterion and did not confer probability-based selection, statistical representativeness, or guaranteed confidence and error levels on the sample. The target of 300 participants was reached, comprising 171 women (57.0%) and 129 men (43.0%), with a mean age of 34.42 years ($SD = 6.70$; $range = 24\sim 55$) and an average organizational tenure of 6.18 years ($SD = 3.28$; $range = 1\sim 12$).

Data were collected using two standardized instruments. Organizational trust was measured using the Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI), developed by Nyhan and Marlowe [9]. This instrument assesses two dimensions of organizational trust: trust in the supervisor and trust in the organization, allowing the evaluation of both interpersonal and system-based trust. The OTI uses a seven-point response scale ranging from 1 ("almost zero") to 7 ("close to 100%"). The original authors reported high internal consistency coefficients, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.9212 to 0.9646 [9]. In the Peruvian context, Gómez used this instrument and reported a global Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 [23]. In addition, the instrument was evaluated by a panel of doctoral-level experts, who assessed its relevance, importance, congruence, and clarity. Therefore, this version was considered suitable for the present study.

Work engagement was measured using the UWES-15, based on the model of Schaufeli and Bakker [6] and the version reported by Salanova et al. [24]. This instrument evaluates the three dimensions of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. The UWES-15 uses a Likert-type frequency scale ranging from 0 ("never") to 6 ("always"). In Peru, Merino-Soto et al. examined the psychometric properties of the UWES-15 in Peruvian workers and reported adequate internal consistency, with coefficients above .70 and a global omega coefficient of .883 for the 15-item scale [25]. Their study also provided evidence of structural validity and measurement invariance at the configural, metric, and scalar levels, supporting the stability of the instrument in the Peruvian context [25]. Total scores for each construct were calculated by summing all items of the corresponding scale, while dimension scores were obtained by summing the items belonging to each respective dimension.

The instruments were administered in person to workers from the telecommunications sector after working hours, which facilitated voluntary participation. Before completing the questionnaire, participants provided informed consent. In addition to the main instruments, sociodemographic data were collected, including age, sex, and length of employment.

In the present study, both instruments showed adequate reliability. The Organizational Trust scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.966 and a McDonald's omega of 0.964, indicating excellent internal consistency. The Work Engagement scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.855 and a McDonald's omega of 0.856, indicating adequate reliability. These results support the internal consistency of both scales in the analyzed sample.

Data were analyzed using Jamovi. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the characteristics of the sample and the study variables. The normality of the data was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Internal consistency was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega coefficients. Based on the normality results, the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement was examined using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. Statistical

significance was established at $p < .05$.

3. Results

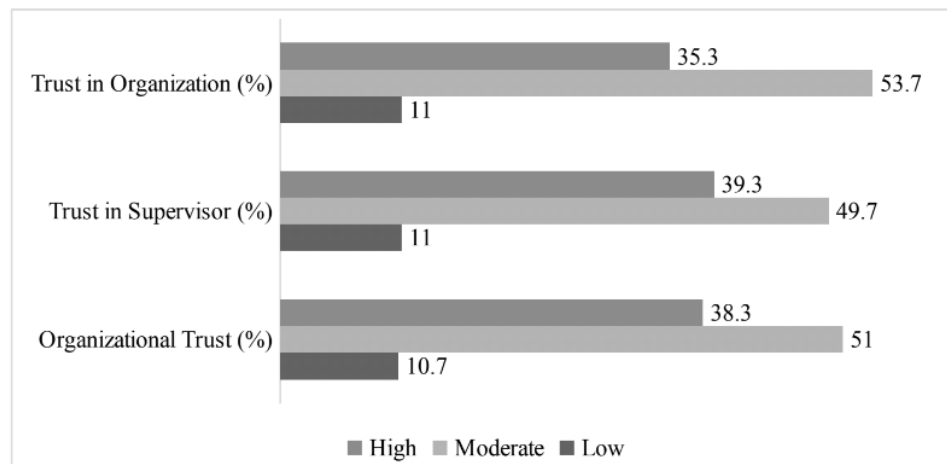


Figure 1: Levels of organizational trust and dimensions.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of organizational trust and its dimensions. Overall, organizational trust was predominantly reported at a moderate level (51.0%), followed by a high level (38.3%), whereas only 10.7% of participants reported low organizational trust. A similar pattern was observed for its dimensions. Regarding trust in the supervisor, 49.7% of respondents reported a moderate level, 39.3% a high level, and 11.0% a low level. Likewise, trust in the organization was primarily concentrated at the moderate level (53.7%), followed by the high (35.3%) and low (11.0%) levels. Overall, these findings indicate that nearly 90% of participants perceived at least a moderate level of organizational trust across both dimensions.

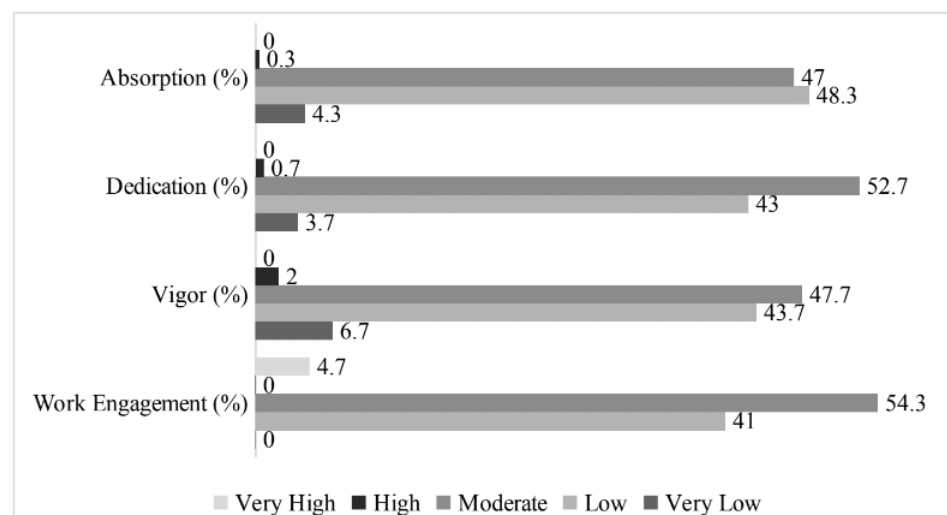


Figure 2: Levels of work engagement and dimensions.

Figure 2 summarizes the distribution of work engagement and its dimensions. Overall, work engagement was predominantly classified as moderate (54.3%), while 41.0% of participants reported low levels and only 4.7% reported very high work engagement. A similar pattern was observed across the three dimensions. For vigor, most participants reported moderate (47.7%) or low (43.7%) levels, whereas only

2.0% reached a high level. Dedication also showed a predominance of moderate (52.7%) and low (43.0%) levels, with only 0.7% of participants classified in the high category. Finally, absorption was almost evenly distributed between the low (48.3%) and moderate (47.0%) levels, while only 0.3% of participants exhibited a high level. Overall, these results suggest that work engagement among telecommunications employees was concentrated primarily at moderate and low levels, with very limited representation in the highest categories across its dimensions.

In Table 1, the KMO value of 0.956 and the significant Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(351) = 4658.213$, $p < .001$, confirmed the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Four components with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, jointly explaining 59.137% of the variance. The first component accounted for 39.403%, below the commonly used 50% threshold. Thus, no single factor explained most of the variance, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to be a serious concern in this study.

Table 1
Harman's Single-Factor Test for Common Method Bias.

Indicator	Result
KMO measure	0.956
Bartlett's test	$\chi^2(351) = 4658.213$, $p < .001$
Components with eigenvalues > 1	4
First component eigenvalue	10.639
Variance explained by the first component	39.40%
Cumulative variance explained by the four components	59.14%

Note. KMO = Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin. Harman's single-factor test was performed using unrotated principal component analysis on the 27 items from the two scales. Components with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained.

3.1. Correlation Analysis

Before conducting the correlation analysis, the distribution of the study variables was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The results indicated that none of the variables followed a normal distribution ($p < .001$); therefore, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to examine the associations between organizational trust, work engagement, and their respective dimensions.

Table 2
Correlation Matrix.

Organizational Trust	Work Engagement	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
Organizational Trust	0.562***	0.511***	0.648***	0.501***
Trust in the Supervisor	0.644***	0.492***	0.622***	0.476***
Trust in the Organization	0.444***	0.482***	0.683***	0.488***

Note. Values are Spearman's rank correlation coefficients (ρ). *** indicates $p < .001$.

Table 2 presents the Spearman correlation matrix. Organizational trust was positively and significantly associated with work engagement ($\rho = 0.562$, $p < .001$), supporting the proposed hypothesis. Regarding the specific objectives, organizational trust showed a moderate positive association with vigor ($\rho = 0.511$, $p < .001$), dedication ($\rho = 0.648$, $p < .001$), and absorption ($\rho = 0.501$, $p < .001$), with the strongest association observed for dedication. Likewise, trust in the supervisor was positively associated with work engagement ($\rho = 0.644$, $p < .001$), whereas trust in the organization also exhibited a significant positive association with work engagement, although of lower magnitude

($\rho = 0.444$, $p < .001$). Overall, all correlations were positive and statistically significant, providing evidence of consistent associations between organizational trust and work engagement and between their respective dimensions.

4. Discussion

The findings revealed a moderate positive relationship between organizational trust and work engagement ($\rho = 0.562$, $p < .001$), indicating that employees who reported higher levels of organizational trust also tended to report higher levels of work engagement. This result is consistent with previous studies conducted in different organizational settings, including those by Adnan et al. [10], Batmomolin et al. [11], Mubashar et al. [13], and Alshaabani et al. [14], which also reported positive associations between organizational trust and work engagement. From a theoretical perspective, this finding is aligned with McAllister's view of trust as a factor associated with cooperation and stable workplace relationships [19]. Likewise, from the perspective of social exchange theory, perceptions of fairness, support, and reciprocity may be related to higher levels of work engagement [24].

However, the magnitude of the relationship observed in this study differs from some previous findings. Stronger associations were reported by Adnan et al. [10] in an educational context and by Batmomolin et al. [11] in the banking sector, whereas Indoyo and Ranihusna [15] found a positive but non-significant relationship in a healthcare organization. These differences may be associated with the characteristics of each organizational context. As Schilke et al. argue, organizational trust may vary depending on interpersonal dynamics, organizational structures, and working conditions, which could help explain differences in the strength of the relationships reported across sectors [26].

Regarding the specific objectives, organizational trust was positively and significantly associated with the three dimensions of work engagement: vigor ($\rho = 0.511$, $p < .001$), dedication ($\rho = 0.648$, $p < .001$), and absorption ($\rho = 0.501$, $p < .001$). The strongest association was observed with dedication, which is consistent with the model proposed by Schaufeli and Bakker [6], in which dedication reflects enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and a sense of significance at work. This suggests that employees' perceptions of trust may be more closely related to the emotional and meaningful component of work engagement than to its energetic or cognitive components.

The results also showed that trust in the supervisor had a stronger relationship with work engagement ($\rho = 0.644$, $p < .001$) than trust in the organization ($\rho = 0.444$, $p < .001$). This finding is consistent with the model of Nyhan and Marlowe [9], which distinguishes between interpersonal trust and system-based trust. Trust in the supervisor is based on direct and frequent interactions with immediate supervisors, whereas trust in the organization is linked to broader perceptions of institutional fairness, efficiency, and consistency. Therefore, in this study, work engagement appeared to be more closely associated with the interpersonal dimension of trust.

The descriptive findings provide additional context for these results. Organizational trust was mostly concentrated at moderate and high levels, with 51.0% of participants reporting moderate organizational trust and 38.3% reporting high organizational trust. A similar pattern was observed in its dimensions, since most participants reported moderate or high levels of trust in the supervisor and trust in the organization. In contrast, work engagement was concentrated mainly at moderate and low levels: 54.3% of participants reported moderate work engagement, 41.0% reported low work engagement, and only 4.7% reported very high work engagement. This pattern is consistent with previous evidence from the Peruvian telecommunications sector reported by Politi [4] and Dextre and Guevara [5], which also identified predominantly low to moderate levels of work engagement.

Overall, these findings contribute empirical evidence on the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement in Peru's telecommunications sector, where previous research remains limited. The results also support the relevance of examining both dimensions of organizational trust and the three dimensions of work engagement, as the strength of the associations varied across the analyzed components.

From a managerial perspective, the stronger association between trust in the supervisor and work

engagement suggests that immediate supervisors represent an important intervention point for telecommunications organizations. Managers could strengthen trust by communicating the reasons behind decisions, applying rules and rewards consistently, providing timely feedback and recognition, and involving employees in operational and technological changes. Because dedication showed the strongest association with organizational trust, these practices may help reinforce employees' enthusiasm, pride, and sense of significance at work [6, 9].

Managerial actions should also address trust at the organizational level. Since organizational trust was predominantly moderate and 61.7% of employees did not report a high level, telecommunications organizations have meaningful room to improve the transparency and consistency of their institutional practices. Clear performance and promotion criteria, equitable reward systems, confidential channels for expressing concerns, and periodic assessments of employee trust could help identify areas requiring attention. In a technology-intensive sector, promoting safe knowledge sharing and employee participation may also support cooperation and adaptation to change [7]. However, given the correlational design, these initiatives should be evaluated rather than assumed to produce direct improvements in engagement, innovation, or productivity.

Finally, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional and correlational design allows the identification of associations but does not permit causal inferences. Second, the use of self-report questionnaires may involve perception-based or social desirability bias. Third, the use of non-probability convenience sampling may have introduced selection bias; therefore, the sample cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of the total population of 1,359 workers, and the generalization of the findings to this population should be made with caution.

5. Conclusion

This study found a moderate positive relationship between organizational trust and work engagement among employees in the telecommunications sector ($\rho = 0.562$, $p < .001$). Organizational trust was also positively associated with vigor ($\rho = 0.511$), dedication ($\rho = 0.648$), and absorption ($\rho = 0.501$), with the strongest association observed for dedication. Furthermore, trust in the supervisor exhibited a stronger relationship with work engagement ($\rho = 0.644$) than trust in the organization ($\rho = 0.444$), suggesting that the interpersonal dimension of trust is more closely associated with employees' engagement than system-level organizational trust. These findings provide empirical evidence from the Peruvian telecommunications sector and contribute to the limited literature examining this relationship in technology-intensive settings.

From a practical perspective, telecommunications organizations should prioritize trust-building practices at both supervisory and institutional levels. Given the stronger association observed for trust in the supervisor, organizations could train supervisors in transparent communication, consistent decision-making, fair treatment, timely feedback, and employee involvement in operational and technological changes. At the organizational level, clear promotion and reward criteria, confidential channels for employee concerns, and periodic assessments of trust and engagement could help identify areas requiring improvement. Because the study does not establish causality, these recommendations should be implemented as monitored initiatives whose effects on engagement and organizational outcomes are systematically evaluated.

Declaration on Generative AI

During the preparation of this paper, the author used GPT-5.6 Sol solely for language enhancement and support in data analysis. Generative AI was not used to search for, retrieve, or generate information or references. The authors reviewed all AI-assisted content and take full responsibility for the final manuscript.

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