"Exploring the Interplay of Trust and Vulnerabilities: A Study of humanitarians critical incidents"

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Abstract

This research focuses on gathering knowledge surrounding vulnerability types, grounding its work from existing literature as well as gaining new insights through critical incidents stemming from conducted interviews. The knowledge gap here is the lack of research on how different types of vulnerability might either lead to or follow from trust. Current studies don't explore how some vulnerabilities could promote trust or result from it, which is important in high-stakes settings like humanitarian work, where trust and vulnerability are closely connected in daily interactions. Therefore this research will present findings on which vulnerability types precede or come after trust. The main context here is the humanitarian work, it is a highly sensitive theme where there are many situations of high vulnerability present. This humanitarian context allows for a very thorough and in depth discussion to be made on vulnerability and trust.

This study uses a qualitative methodology to investigate the research question. Interviews are used to analyse critical incidents in order to determine the order of trust and vulnerability. Using ATLAS.ti to code and interpret data from 16 interviews, thematic analysis is used to find patterns, illustrating the relationship between trust and vulnerability in humanitarian contexts.

The study gives surface to many intricate findings on the specific nature of why some form of vulnerabilities precede trust or come after it, also taking into account the origin of this trust and stage at which this trust is placed. We find that contextual and volitional vulnerabilities often come before trust, while relational and imposed vulnerabilities arise after trust is established.

The research adds significant contributions to existing literature expanding the knowledge of the interplay of trust and vulnerability, expanding on their backgrounds and origins. As well as giving practical contributions.

Keywords

Vulnerability, Trust, Relationship, Humanitarian

1) Introduction

A humanitarian delegate approaches a heavily guarded checkpoint in a village plagued by conflict, identifiable by the nervous looks of armed men. The delegate wears simply their logo as a sign of their purpose; they are unarmed and do not have a protective vest. To get necessary medical supplies to a town devastated by conflict, they have to negotiate a ceasefire. It is a crucial leap of faith to accomplish this mission, believing that the armed factions will respect the truce and refrain from using violence. The delegate is extremely vulnerable since, should the ceasefire fail, they could be killed. However, the truce and subsequently the relief effort may never happen if this trust is not first demonstrated (Canton, 2021).

Vulnerability and trust are related ideas that have been the focus of much academic research. To grasp the dynamics of interpersonal and organisational connections requires an understanding of these ideas. Beyond only being dependent, trust entails a readiness to expose oneself to the potential vulnerabilities of another's behaviour (Nienaber et al., 2015). This vulnerability means that if the person you trust does not act morally or responsibly, you could endanger yourself. As a result, trust always carries a danger of unfavourable consequences in addition to the potential for favourable ones (Sako & Helper, 1998). Understanding the complex interplay between trust and vulnerability is essential for comprehending the dynamics of trust-building and cooperation in various contexts.

The temporal link between trust and vulnerability is a major question that runs across the scholars. Academics have debated whether vulnerability can exist on its own and possibly contribute to the establishment of trust, or whether trust comes before vulnerability. Also, some scholars view vulnerability as a conscious decision influenced by trustworthiness, while others see it as a part integrated in relationships (Schafheitle et al., 2023). Despite its importance, trust research often lacks depth in exploring vulnerability. This argument has significant consequences for our comprehension of how people negotiate social interactions, work settings, and society (Misztal, 2012). This debate is particularly relevant in the context of humanitarian organizations, where the interplay between trust and vulnerability is crucial.

Humanitarian organisations are specialised organisations that work to help individuals in need, especially those impacted by catastrophes, conflicts, disasters, and other crises. Reducing human suffering, defending human rights in the face of hardship are the main goals of these organisations. The size, scope, and objectives of humanitarian organisations can differ, but they are all dedicated to the same humanitarian values, which include,

independence, neutrality, and humanism (Slim, 2002). Among the humanitarian landscape, we have for example the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which is a notable and respected organisation. The ICRC was founded in 1863 and has a long history of protecting and aiding victims of violence and armed conflict worldwide. Through the famous red cross on a white backdrop that serves as its emblem, the ICRC represents its dedication to humanitarian action and acts as a ray of hope and support during times of great need (Canton, 2021).

Humanitarian work varies a fair bit, in order to negotiate access to impacted communities and promote humanitarian ideals, some interact with counterparts, access detainees, identify victims, and advocate. They follow their humanitarian organisation operating procedures, and put in great effort to lessen human suffering and protect the rights of those impacted by violence and armed conflict (Giladi & Ratner, 1949). When performing their humanitarian operations, these workers encounter various risks and vulnerabilities. Humanitarian workers, have been singled out for deadly attacks in areas of armed conflict like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Chechnya. While negotiating complicated conflict environments, humanitarian actors face difficulties in upholding their independence and impartiality. They must make an effort to be near to victims and do their work in respectable security settings despte of these obstacles (Hazan & Berger, 2004). Building relationships with different actors, enhancing security protocols, and keeping independence, impartiality, and neutrality in their actions are all important. But coming up with sensible answers to these new risks is still a difficult task that calls for constant creativity and adaptation in humanitarian work (Hazan & Berger, 2004).

Most of the present study focuses on the common phenomenon of people being susceptible after placing their trust in others. From this angle, vulnerability cannot exist without trust since, in a relationship based on trust, individuals willingly put themselves at risk of harm or betrayal (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). This implies that trust has an intrinsic consequence of vulnerability. Nevertheless, vulnerability is frequently taken for granted in current research, they do not necessarily specify the precise kinds of vulnerability at play. The lack of research on the various vulnerability kinds that could precede trust is the knowledge gap in this case. The literature now in publication does not adequately address the possibility that some vulnerabilities could, in fact, promote the development of trust. This is an important lack because different contexts, like the high-stakes setting of humanitarian work, may involve different kinds of vulnerabilities that have varied effects on trust dynamics. As this specific context of the humanitarian workers daily life is primarily based on trusting, and vulnerabilities.

Therefore I will introduce the following research question; *" What types of vulnerabilities precede trust and which ones follow?"*

Despite the challenges and vulnerabilities they endure, humanitarian workers are committed to preserving humanitarian principles, strengthening security procedures, and fostering confidence with different actors. Therefore, the purpose of my research topic is to investigate how trust connections and vulnerabilities appear in the work of these humanitarians and consequently find specifically what types of vulnerabilities come before and after trust.

In the upcoming part we will delve into the deep of the literature on vulnerability, trust, and their interplay. Not only gaining insights on their definition but also on their different existing types and how they work together.

2) Conceptual background of trust and vulnerability

In this section we will start by defining trust and the core literature that surrounds it as well as basic concepts of their different types. It will be followed by discussing the foundation of vulnerability, how it is defined and what are the different core types that exist. Stemming differently from specific types of vulnerabilities, we will discuss their inherent types, which take into account broader categories. These will merge together where we will analyse in a quite short aspect, their interplay between them. The key word here is shortly, as we will also discuss the noticeable lack of depth of the existing literature where vulnerability and trust are discussed as 2 full independent concepts.

2.1) Trust

A vital component of social interactions and human contact is trust, which includes faith in the dependability, honesty, and skill of another person, organisation, or thing. Even so, there isn't a single common psychological or social component to trust other than the idea that it develops in situations where results are unpredictable (Robbins, 2016). In a social structure, trust is a communal quality that goes beyond interpersonal connections. It is based on commitment to one another and is necessary for society to function because the alternatives can bring fear and chaos(Luhmann, 1979). More important than moral obligation, trust is the cornerstone of cooperative groups . But it comes with uncertainty and risk, so we need look more closely at how it functions in society. Trust helps to simplify social relationships. By depending on probabilities that are cognitively expected, this reduction allows for controllable action in the face of uncertainty (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Interpersonal trust has been conceptualised from two basic points of view. The dispositional approach places emphasis on generic ideas about the dependability, collaboration, and helpfulness of others. The

dyadic approach, defines trust as a psychological state between a trustor and trustee who are interdependent in obtaining valued objectives. In contrast, this perspective concentrates on specific partners and relationships (Simpson, 2007). The early 1980s saw a movement in trust conceptualizations towards partner and relationship uniqueness and a more interpersonal viewpoint, which gave rise to this more recent dyadic perspective (Simpson, 2007). Three things are involved in trust: one's own qualities, the particular partner, and the objective of the circumstance at hand. It is asserted that trust is predicated on expectations and beliefs that a partner's behaviours would advance one's long-term self-interest, particularly in circumstances that call for specific advantages or worthwhile results. Trust is a multifaceted concept, making it susceptible to various interpretations across different social contexts (Kramer & Carnevale, 2008).

Since trustworthiness is thought to be the main factor influencing trust, traditional models of trust have mostly concentrated on evaluating someone's level of trustworthiness (Willis & Todorov, 2006). Recent studies, however, indicate that decisions about trust are influenced by both internal motivational processes in the trustor and rational assessments of the other party's reliability (Peters et al., 1997). A motivated perspective on trust takes into account the need to believe that someone else is reliable enough to be trusted, which motivates people to actively create and interact with their social surroundings in order to preserve or change the degree of trust in their relationships (van der Werff et al., 2019). Numerous elements, including relational and contextual traits particular to each dyadic interaction, have an impact on this incentive to trust. As a result, trust motivation is a dynamic state that develops in response to different motivators (Williams, 2001). Furthermore, because trust motivation affects how trustworthy people perceive you, it has an indirect impact on trust in addition to its direct one. When people are highly motivated to trust, they are more inclined to show vulnerability, which makes the other person seem trustworthy and strengthens the decision to trust (van der Werff et al., 2019).

Now, we will be focusing on a definition of trust that has been established by many scholars. The work suggests that trust is commonly defined as a *"psychological state involving the willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of another's intentions or behavior"*. While the definition of trust is consistent across different contexts the way trust is applied varies due to the differences in focus. In general the core elements of trust remain similar across different research disciplines (Rousseau et al., 1998).

The term **"interpersonal trust"** describes the faith that an individual has in another based on their personal encounters and relationship. It is predicated on the idea that the other person is trustworthy, sincere, and well-intentioned. The basic principle of interpersonal trust

is that trust is a product of both the individual and situations which do not alone establish trust (Geller, 1999). The term **"institutional trust"** describes people's faith in institutions, organisations, or systems, like companies, governmental bodies, or legal frameworks. Institutional trust is faith in an organization's structures, regulations, and policies as opposed to interpersonal trust, which is confidence in an individual based on personal ties. It is based on the conviction that the organisation will behave consistently, fairly, and in the public interest rather than on interpersonal ties (Sønderskov & Dinesen, 2016). A third type of trust known as **"conditional trust",** is one where one person assumes the other has an objective in mind behind or a strategic self-centred reasoning for the trust in itself. This trust is based on a risk potential basis, benefits, and past actions to decide whether cooperation is worth it. In social exchanges, it involves calculating the likelihood of betrayal or defection and adjusting accordingly. It is common for collaboration or in a professional setting where the trust is somewhat forced for the interest of the actor/s. This makes conditional trust more cognitive in general, as individuals constantly assess the reliability of the other party and the value their collaboration. Unlike other trust types, conditional trust is mainly earned and maintained through reciprocal actions (Krueger et al., 2007).

Studying trust has sparked the curiosity of many academics, particularly in a work environment. However, this topic has encountered difficulties for a number of reasons, including a lack of clarity in the definition of trust, a vague understanding of the relationship between risk and trust, ambiguity regarding the antecedents and outcomes of trust, a lack of specificity in the trust referents, and a failure to take into account both the party being trusted and the trusting party (Mayer et al., 1995).

We have now acquired solid foundations on trust that will later help us understand how vulnerability will come into play. To first proceed on to that we must now see through vulnerability, and how it is regarded as a unique concept.

2.2) Vulnerability

The idea of vulnerability can be applied to a wide range of situations and areas; it can also differ greatly between social contexts, environments, and academic fields. Vulnerabilities are shaped by social, economic, environmental, and political factors, all of which can interact in intricate ways (Hufschmidt, 2011). On a general note we can say that vulnerability is presented as a basic feature of human life, signifying an inherent susceptibility to suffer injury or unfavourable consequences (Kottow, 2005). If we want to focus and pinpoint on a clear definition of vulnerability, scholars have agreed on stating that based on multiple

existing definitions, we would have: "*Vulnerability is a state of being exposed or susceptible to potential harm, loss, or adversity, which can be experienced by or observed in individuals, groups, and organizations*" . This definition is composed in 3 parts, the initial presence of exposure, then a potential for harm, and finally vulnerability as an experiential or observed state. This definition is a good standing ground for being a broad agglomeration of multiple existing definitions (Fulmer, 2022).

Although when taking trust more into account in the equation of the definition, we have the concept of focal vulnerability. **Focal vulnerability** is the specific risk a person feels when deciding to trust someone in a particular situation. It refers to the trustor's awareness of the potential for harm in that moment and how it relates to their relationship with the other person. This vulnerability is personal, based on the trustor's view, and tied to the situation. It's the part of the risk they accept when they choose to trust (Hamm et al., 2024).

In order to successfully meet the needs of those experiencing vulnerability, it is imperative that one distinguishes between perceived and actual vulnerability. Actual vulnerability describes concrete experiences and circumstances in which people are actually in danger or are dealing with difficulties. The only ways to understand this kind of vulnerability are by close observation, attentive listening, and sympathetic comprehension of people's experiences. It means recognising that people actually face difficulties, misfortunes, and adversity in their life (Baker et al., 2005). Conversely, perceived vulnerability refers to how other people see and assume that someone is vulnerable. It happens when people or groups assume that someone is vulnerable, even if the vulnerable person may not be aware of or admit their own vulnerability (Smith & Cooper-Martin, 1997). Many times, preconceived ideas, biases, or preconceptions about particular groups or people in society are the root cause of perceived vulnerability. It may result in misconceptions and incorrect assessments of people's true circumstances and requirements (Baker et al., 2005).

There are multiple types of vulnerability, which are often categorised as social, psychological, physical, or economic in research. This classification usually concentrates on identifying vulnerable populations, like those who are impoverished or marginalised in society. Though these are more categorical in nature, it's more interesting to look at various types of vulnerability when considering vulnerability as a concept or dimension, as opposed to merely classifying groups (Racine & Bracken-Roche, 2019).

Contextual vulnerability is one of this type, it pertains to an individual's or group's particular sensitivity to injury or disadvantage in the context of their socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental surroundings. It acknowledges that the dangers encountered are shaped by intricate interplay between systemic, social, and local processes. Per example being in a

leadership position inherently involves social vulnerabilities. Leaders often face social isolation due to their role, where they must balance maintaining professional boundaries with their employees and dealing with the pressures of leadership, whereas the employee does not have the problems around having to lead and having a higher responsibility. This isolation can lead to emotional and psychological stress. (Monno & Serreli, 2020). It highlights how an individual or group's vulnerability is shaped by outside processes or occurrences in a particular setting. Contextual vulnerability is a distinct concept of vulnerability to injury or disadvantage, different from in personal characteristics or general classifications. On the other hand, inherent vulnerability may indicate that a woman is more susceptible to specific health concerns associated with reproductive health due to biological reasons. Yet, the level of vulnerability she encounters differs greatly according on the social, legal, and economic environment in which she resides and is imposed upon. She is more vulnerable since she has fewer options and could face legal repercussions in El Salvador, where abortion is illegal in all cases, even if she is a woman, and that depends of the context (Luna, 2019).

Susceptibility to injury or disadvantage resulting from intrinsic or innate traits, attributes, or circumstances that are inherent to a person or a group is known as **inherent vulnerability,** as discussed in the previous sentences. In contrast to contextual vulnerability, which is impacted by outside events and circumstances, inherent vulnerability is usually thought to be a characteristic of the individual or group independent of the setting (Lindsey, 2016). Inherent vulnerabilities include, for example, genetic susceptibilities to specific diseases, such as cancer or brain tumours. These disorders can affect a person's health and well-being for the whole of their lives and are innate to their genetic makeup. Furthermore, innate weaknesses may encompass factors like age. Inherent weaknesses brought about by ageing include heightened vulnerability to age-related diseases, cognitive decline, and physical weakness. These risks are common to all ageing people and are part of the natural ageing process (Lindsey, 2016).

Situations where people are purposefully put in situations that make them more vulnerable in new ways or exacerbate preexisting vulnerabilities, often by third parties, are referred to as **imposed vulnerabilities** (Lotz, 2016). This idea is essential to comprehending how power relationships and outside factors might influence the vulnerabilities that differ across various groups. Those in positions of power may purposefully adopt activities that result in imposed vulnerability. Even when acts are performed with good intentions, they can nevertheless leave a person vulnerable. For example, in an attempt to cut costs, a company may decide to move its manufacturing facilities abroad, thereby leading to job losses and financial difficulties in the original location (Matthews & Tobin, 2016). It must be noted that contextual

vulnerability results from the complicated interactions of social, economic, and environmental elements that naturally exist within an area in particular, whereas imposed vulnerability is caused by deliberate acts by third parties that produce or increase vulnerability. Although they have similarities, such as external forces being involved in both, the first type entails intentional imposition, while the latter is more related to situational or systemic elements that influence an individual's susceptibility.

Conversely, **volitional vulnerability**, which is often referred to as assumed vulnerability, occurs when people intentionally and partially willingly expose themselves to situations in which they will feel more vulnerable. The word "willingly" does not always mean happy, but it does signify that people choose to put themselves in more vulnerable situations in order to accomplish particular objectives, whether for self-interest or altruism (Lotz, 2016). For example, an entrepreneur chooses to launch a new company with all of their savings. The choice to commit all of their own savings to starting a new company is made consciously by the entrepreneur. Their enthusiasm for the business concept and the possibility of future success are what motivated them to make this choice (Matthews & Tobin, 2016).

Relational vulnerability is the term used to describe how easily one might be harmed or disadvantaged in the context of interpersonal interactions as a result of one's innate dependency on and confidence in other people. The emotional, psychological, and occasionally physical hazards associated with putting your faith in another person or thing define this type of vulnerability (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008). When comparing it with volitional vulnerability we know that volitional occurs when an individual knowingly exposes oneself to risk in order to accomplish a purpose. The main difference is that even though volitional vulnerability is about choice, relational vulnerability is about dependence. In interpersonal interactions of any kind, whether friendly, professional, or intimate, relational vulnerability is the sensitivity to emotional distress. It can include the dangers and anxieties connected to disclosing private, sensitive information as well as the possible emotional consequence from doing so (Edwards, 2014). Since focal vulnerability refers to the specific, momentary danger encountered in a certain event (Hamm et al., 2024), relational vulnerability basically includes focal vulnerability since it covers the wider risks related to interpersonal interactions. In addition to these specific cases of focal vulnerability, relational vulnerability also refers to the continuous psychological, emotional, and dependence dangers that are inherent in a relationship.

2.3) The interplay of trust and vulnerability

Gaining an understanding of the way trust and vulnerability interact is crucial to comprehending the complexity of social relationships. Although trust has long been understood to be essential to social relationships, its connections to vulnerability are frequently disregarded (Misztal, 2012). But because people have to deal with the risks and uncertainties that come with interacting with other people, human vulnerability is fundamental to trust (Goffman, 1959). Understanding that trust is essentially based on vulnerability illuminates the dynamic nature of social interactions and how they impact our lives (Rousseau et al., 1998). As researchers continue to explore the complexities of vulnerability and trust, it becomes clear that these ideas are interconnected throughout society, influencing everything from interpersonal connections to other variables (Misztal, 2012).

In the next section, we will further expand upon the available resources and knowledge surrounding trust and vulnerability as two intertwining concepts.

3) Literature on the interplay of trust and vulnerability

Scholars have long studied the complex processes that characterise the link between trust and vulnerability in regard to one another. Trust involves more than just dependence. It also involves allowing oneself to be vulnerable to the actions of another (Rousseau et al., 1998). When people trust someone, they voluntarily expose themselves to danger and give that person a degree of control over them. But, people who do this act of confidence also put themselves at risk in the event that the other party does not uphold the moral obligations that come with their position of authority (Baghramian et al., 2020). Trust entails a special vulnerability to possible injury or unspoken animosity. This vulnerability occurs from the potential for harm to occur that is not yet apparent or from mischievous acts passed off as helpfulness. Acknowledging this unique kind of vulnerability is necessary to comprehend the moral dangers that are entailed in trust. But this optional component, which also poses a risk, is necessary to make trust work in its beneficial ways. In essence, trust is the dual possibility of having positive results and negative ones. When one looks attentively at numerous ordinary situations of trust, one can see this unique vulnerability (Baier, 1986).

In order to establish trust, one party must be willing to accept vulnerability to the acts of another in the hopes that the other will carry out a specific way of acting that is essential to the trustor. This concept highlights the trustor's dependence on the other party in spite of their lack of control. Mutual faith that one side to a transaction won't take advantage of the other's weakness is known as trust. In this context, trust is defined as a shared agreement

between the parties that they will behave honourably and not prey on one another's weaknesses (van der Werff et al., 2019). Vulnerability and trust decisions are intimately related, according to trust motivation theory. People may participate in motivated responses of trust cues to reduce anxiety and uncertainty in high vulnerability settings, such as in new relationships or relationships with high levels of dependency (Weber et al., 2004). Even in situations where there is insufficient information to assess someone's trustworthiness, people may nonetheless decide to put their faith in someone based on their motivated opinions about them (van der Werff et al., 2019). Although we now understand some of the motivational mechanisms behind trust, the scope of our understanding has been somewhat limited. The main focus is on the motivations of trustors to believe that the other party is sufficiently trustworthy, with a particular emphasis on affective aspects and contextual factors (Weber et al., 2004). To fully understand the function of motivation and volition beyond the preliminary processing of trustworthiness or trust attributions, a broader range of motivational variables that influence trust motivation must be investigated (van der Werff et al., 2019).

The essential question of whether trust comes before vulnerability, or the other way around, is one that the academic community has to grapple with and has yet to address. The prevailing view in scholarly discourse regarding the temporal order of trust and vulnerability has been varied (Schafheitle et al., 2023).

Various bodies of existing research go into great detail about how people frequently become susceptible after putting their faith in other people (Baier, 1986). According to this viewpoint, trust is a prerequisite for vulnerability because, once trust is formed in a relationship, people voluntarily expose themselves to possible injury or betrayal. The current body of literature predominantly focuses on the dynamics of trust, treating vulnerability as an inherent consequence that follows (Bigley & Pearce, 1998). The assumption is that once trust is granted, vulnerability naturally ensues as individuals open themselves up to possible negative outcomes. However, this research often lacks specificity regarding the different types of vulnerability involved. Despite the extensive focus on trust, the existing research does not adequately explore the various types of vulnerability that may be present. Vulnerability is treated as a one way concept without a detailed examination of its different forms (Longo & Lorubbio, 2023). This represents a significant gap in the literature: the failure to distinguish between types of vulnerabilities that might precede trust and those that emerge as a consequence of trust.

Vulnerability's dynamic character may cause it to come before trust in some situations. For instance, the idea of assumed or volitional vulnerability implies that people could decide to

expose themselves before building relationships of trust, although the current literature describing this type of vulnerability for example, does not take into account trust, it on its own tries to untangle what vulnerability can be defined as. (Lotz, 2016).

There are many different ways that vulnerability might appear, including risk to one's physical health, mental stability, and career (Slipetz, 2016). My research will offer a more sophisticated view of how vulnerability functions in trust relationships by differentiating between these forms. I suggest that some vulnerabilities can in fact come before trust, while others follow trust. Some authors have discussed vulnerabilities in terms of risk in the body of current literature; that is, as likelihoods that particular damages will come to individuals (Lapidot et al., 2007). Compared to other forms of vulnerability, which may be more qualitative, such as emotional exposure or professional risk, this sort of vulnerability is frequently quantitative and linked to the chance of unfavourable outcomes. These distinctions are frequently not said, when the idea of vulnerability is brought up in relation to trust. Vulnerability is often treated in the trust and vulnerability literature, but the subtleties and variances in how vulnerability can emerge are often overlooked.

We have previously discussed the different types of vulnerabilities, conceptualizing them into various categories such as inherent, contextual, imposed, relational, inherent, and volitional vulnerabilities. As well as briefly giving a look at a broad type trust categories. In this research, we will delve deeper into these conceptualizations to explore and discover which types of vulnerabilities typically precede the establishment of trust and which ones follow it. The upcoming section will introduce the research design aspect of this research, in a step by step form we will be introduced to the motivation behind it, as well as the way the data was collected and analysed.

4) Research design

We will delve into the intricacy of the research procedures and the reasoning behind them. Naturally starting with the research design, then the introduction of the interviews, and then the way they will be analysed.

4.1) Motivation of research design

The methodology focuses on critical incidents in order to answer the research question, "What types of vulnerabilities precede trust and which ones follow?" We want to identify the order in which various vulnerabilities interact with the formation and development of trust through the analysis of critical incidents.

The two main research procedures that are employed in the subject are qualitative and quantitative research, each of which offers unique methodology and analytical tools. In research, both qualitative and quantitative methods are essential, each providing special benefits and insights. The selection between them is dependent upon the nature of the phenomenon being studied, the goals of the research, and the research questions. It is crucial for researchers to comprehend the differences between different approaches in order to choose the best methodology for the research and to properly analyse and interpret their results (Gray et al., 2007). In order to maximise each method's advantages and minimise its drawbacks, mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative techniques in a single investigation. The difficulty, though, is in bringing these two methods' underlying presuppositions into harmony. Whereas quantitative research usually follows a positivist approach, giving priority to objectivity and generalizability, qualitative research frequently takes a constructivist or interpretivist attitude, emphasising subjective meanings and context. In mixed methods research, tensions arising from philosophical differences that can give rise to methodological conflicts, data integration issues, and interpretive complexity (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

A qualitative research design will be employed in this study to investigate the research question. Because it emphasises transparency, richness, and depth of data, qualitative research is especially appropriate in this situation. My goal is to document the complex experiences, viewpoints, and relationships that humanitarians have while carrying out humanitarian work through the use of qualitative approaches. Additionally, an iterative process of data collecting and analysis is made possible by qualitative research, which encourages flexibility and adaptability to emerging themes and insights (Flick, 2004). I have chosen to use a series of already conducted interviews as my qualitative research method. Interviews are a useful methodological option because they offer detailed information about participants' experiences and perspectives on a certain subject. I have access to extensive and detailed data that provide insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of delegates in their humanitarian work. These interviews touch on a wide range of topics including developing trust, the vulnerabilities found in crisis areas, how people react emotionally, and the general dynamics of working in humanitarian settings (Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022).

Since its creation, the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) has gained popularity as a qualitative research approach and is acknowledged as a useful instrument for investigation and exploration. CIT entails gathering and examining noteworthy occurrences that provide important insights into the phenomenon being studied. We can compile comprehensive, in-depth narratives that emphasise significant events and variables impacting their experiences

using the interview data (Flanagan, 1954). The five essential elements of the CIT are as follows by the original and sequential steps: Initially, one must comprehend the overall goals of the studied activity. Secondly, organising and establishing clear standards. Third, gathering pertinent information. Fourth, examining the information gathered. The fifth step involves analysing the data and summarising the outcomes (Butterfield et al., 2005).

In order to gather data for this study, interviews with a sample of sixteen humanitarians who have experience working in challenging and diverse situations were analysed. In order to guarantee representation from a range of backgrounds and experiences, the sample was chosen to include workers who visited detainees, helped injured victims, organised teams for humanitarian missions, and performed other essential responsibilities for their day-to-day operations. Each interview was conducted in a semi-structured fashion and lasted roughly one hour. Semi-structured interviews were selected in order to maintain uniformity in the subjects covered throughout the interviews while allowing for flexibility in examining participants' experiences, viewpoints, and ideas. The semi-structured method allowed for the gathering of rich and detailed material and promoted in-depth discussions (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

4.2) Introducing the interviews and critical incidents

We will be examining interviews with humanitarians to explore which engagement techniques with interviewees are most effective in eliciting narratives that illuminate the dynamics of vulnerability leading to trust and trust leading to vulnerability. For a substantial period, humanitarians identity and operational methods have been rooted in the principle of trust. Trust has increasingly become a critical metric in recent years. Trust profoundly influences the daily operations of humanitarians, enabling them to navigate complex and ambiguous situations effectively. It is perceived as a psychological anchor that facilitates action even amid uncertainty. In the challenging and often perilous environments where humanitarians operate, trust plays a pivotal role in their interactions with stakeholders. Three separate sections, each concentrating on a certain topic of interest, make up the interview guidebook. In this setting, critical incidents work well because they elicit participants memories of particular events or situations in which feelings of trust and vulnerability were prevalent. The emotional card sorting game is one specific section of the interview that will encourage participants to take the lead in telling tales and discussing intimately connected personal experiences with these emotions. With regard to how vulnerability and trust materialise in the lived experiences of the participants, this approach permits a thorough investigation of their viewpoints and insights.

The particular procedure is employing printed plastic cards that are arranged on a table to symbolise various emotions. The participants are asked to recollect certain events or experiences in which they have felt these kinds of feelings. There were three rounds to this method: one with positive and optimistic feelings, one with mildly negative emotions, and one with intense negative emotions, and. Each session, participants reflected or had conversations about their own experiences related to each category of emotion. This methodical approach facilitates a deeper exploration of the intersections between emotions, vulnerability, and trust in individuals' lives, while also encouraging participants to recollect and relate specific tales.

Humanitarians, for instance, face the constant risk of abduction, jeopardizing both their personal safety and their ability to carry out their missions. Tragically, many are confronted with the grim reality that they may lose their lives while fulfilling their duties. Moreover, the dynamic conditions in conflict zones expose them to unforeseen dangers such as stray bullets or explosive devices. The ongoing threat of mortar attacks and the psychological strain of interacting with armed actors further heighten their vulnerability. On the other hand, trust plays a pivotal role in the daily operations of humanitarian workers. It serves as the cornerstone for building relationships with various stakeholders, including local communities, armed groups, government officials, and other partners. Establishing trust is crucial for effective collaboration and the successful execution of humanitarian initiatives in challenging environments. Humanitarians who are trusted can navigate complex situations adeptly, fostering understanding and cooperation even amidst adversity.

By focusing on specific stories and experiences, critical incidents allow researchers to delve deeply into the nuanced interactions between vulnerability and trust. Each incident recounted by humanitarian workers represents a piece of life of their daily challenges and triumphs, offering insights into how vulnerability shapes their perceptions and actions. These stories are not only illustrative but also provide concrete examples of the emotional and practical dimensions of trust and vulnerability in humanitarian contexts. They serve as perfect examples for critical incident analysis because they capture the complexities and intricacies of human experience in extreme circumstances, shedding light on both the challenges faced and the strategies employed to overcome them.

Ultimately, this approach will help us answer our research question and contribute valuable knowledge to understanding the dynamics of trust and vulnerability types.

4.3) Data analysis

On the choosing of critical incidents, the data will be segmented accordingly. But we first need to define what I believe consists of critical incidents relevant to our research and which don't. To do that, we refer to the concept of bounding to segmentation of data (Yin, 2012). In this case, the initial stages of the interview provide a context for the interviewee and interviewer on what the scope of the study is, which is here vulnerability and trust. Initially they are discussed individually, this allows for later on in the interview for broad questions to arise that scheme for peculiar experiences and stories where both trust and vulnerability are integrated.

The specific time period relevant to the incident is limited to the scope of a specific humanitarian mission, intervention, or recounted story and told in one lengthy story, with a provided context, situation and set of actors. It can arise from either an individual or a group of people feeling these specific concepts. The teller of the critical incident does not need to be the first person of the story, but he can recount from a friend or from a third person view. For the critical incident to be valid for analysis it must contain a strong element of at least trust or vulnerability, and a less visible element of trust or vulnerability, or both having a strong presence. The wording of trust and vulnerability must not be exact while the critical incident is being recounted, as long as these are moments where individuals are in positions of risk, dependence, or uncertainty, whether physical, emotional, or social. For trust this can be instances where we involve reliance, expectation, or cooperation, even without explicit use of the word. Furthermore, interviews may contain many critical incidents, but we will focus on only the most relevant ones according to the previously set rules.

While polishing and analysing 16 interviews, we have garnered a set of 20 critical incidents. Each interview containing 1 to 2 critical incidents each. The reasoning behind this is simply that throughout interviews there was a high likelihood of the person interviewed recounting one specific or a set of specific situation/s he encountered. In one particular interview, for example, the person answered targeted questions by describing specific parts of an experience he had during a mission. The relevant critical incident emerged from the story that adhered to the predefined guidelines for critical incidents. This section stood out because it delved into a broader, detailed narrative, including the intricacies of the entire situation.

I then segmented the relevant critical incidents into two categories, I categorized them based on the sequence in which vulnerability and trust appeared in the narratives. To do that they first needed to be thoroughly analysed, by carefully highlighting the presence of trust recounted in the incident, and the presence of vulnerability. The exact types or stages of the

trust or vulnerability were researched more in detail later on, the primary concern was foremostly to divide them in either the vulnerabilities preceding trust or those proceeding trust. I identified situations where vulnerability was the initial driver, followed by the emergence or establishment of trust, this helped me in stablishing the temporal sequence. For example in some incidents, the interviewee described moments where they or someone else experienced vulnerability first, and trust developed as a response to that vulnerability. More specifically it might look like, an aid worker who might have expressed uncertainty in a high-risk situation, and the development of trust followed. On the other side it could have looked like such as when individual/s felt secure enough to reveal sensitive information or take risks because trust was built, but felt vulnerability afterwards because of the openness of it.

14 critical incidents were part of the vulnerabilities preceding trust and consequently 6 of them were part of the vulnerabilities proceeding trust.

On a general note, a versatile technique that may be used to analyse datasets of different sizes and compositions is thematic analysis. Because thematic analysis works well with both homogeneous and heterogeneous samples, it can be applied in a variety of study settings. It can also analyse a broad variety of data formats, including newer approaches like qualitative surveys and story completion, as well as more established qualitative procedures like focus groups and interviews (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Thematic analysis will be utilized to examine the data gathered from the interview sample of sixteen participants. Three crucial steps are involved in thematic analysis: data reduction, data display, and data conclusion-drawing/verification. Thematic analysis is the process of finding patterns and themes within the data (Terry et al., 2017). The data will first be cleaned up, sorted, and made ready for examination. To help with a thorough comprehension of the data, these topics will then be graphically depicted using tables, figures, or theme maps (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There will be several initial codes as the analysis goes on because different features of the data will be captured by codes that are developed. To generate coherent groupings, these codes will next be reduced and arranged into smaller, related clusters or themes. Thematic areas will be found through repeated processes of comparison and condensation, which will enable a comprehensive analysis of the interview data (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012). The data analysis will be conducted using the ATLAS.ti programme, which will provide support during the coding and interpretation stages. Before anything else, the interviews will be thoroughly examined, polished, and any mistakes fixed to guarantee correctness and consistency. The text documents will then be imported for theme analysis into ATLAS.ti.

Relevant data segments are coded. These codes are aggregated to build second-order themes that reflect vulnerability types through refinement. The names of each theme are chosen with care to capture its essence and bring together ideas from the interview data.

After the second-order themes have been identified, the analysis moves on to discover aggregate dimensions that represent temporal perspectives of vulnerability on trust.

Very quickly in the subsequent part we will navigate a preliminary set of findings that gave a firsthand notion of what expected findings we might come across. This served as a firsthand experience, showing us which certain critical incidents might come as valuable, to test if the previously discussed design works.

4.4) Ad hoc hypothesis

I performed a preliminary screening of the interviews in order to expand on our comprehension of the intricate relationship between trust and vulnerability. The objective of this initial examination was to pinpoint significant themes and observations incorporated into their stories. These humanitarians remarks and experiences offer a wealth of knowledge, revealing the subtleties of their relationships and the mechanisms underpinning the development of trust in dangerous circumstances.

We come across a number of critical incidents during the interviews that clarify and gives us specific information about trust and vulnerabilities. These first-hand reports present fresh viewpoints and ideas. We can have a better understanding of the particular vulnerabilities that precede trust and the circumstances in which trust is built by looking at these narratives.

The quotes such as **"If they go more for the weapons situation, of course you're fearful. You're fearing something will happen and will harm people around you and yourself."** and **"They stopped the car outside the compound in Kuwaita. Okay. They let the driver go, but they took the health delegate. And so, of course, you know, I was tense and anxious for my colleague."** highlight the profound emotional experiences of the participants. These quotations highlight the perceived vulnerabilities that delegates expect and prepare for, including the overall danger of injury in conflict areas, but they also highlight a more fundamental weakness. These perceived vulnerabilities of personal danger are few in these interviews. The delegates' concern for other people is more present. The quote, **"I sometimes felt sad and stillness, in situations where I didn't manage to help someone, or when I had to bring bad news and the person started to cry, I didn't know how to handle it. I felt vulnerable there, because of not knowing what to do, powerless to help,"** sheds light on a different, yet deeply significant aspect of vulnerability experienced

by them. This actual vulnerability of the humanitarians is not about the fear of physical harm or bullets, but rather the emotional and professional challenge of being unable to fulfil their mission effectively. The quotes, **"Sometimes I feel sad and quiet when I cannot do my job because of external factors or persons that interrupt the flow of my activities. Such as police interrogation and checkpoints,"** and **"Sometimes I get upset when one time during assistance distribution, there is just a bit of chaos and people screaming, and so armed people there might start to shoot in the air to calm people to stop rushing but it just makes everything worse,"** . These quotes highlight how the actual vulnerabilities faced by delegates are often related to their inability to perform their duties effectively due to external interruptions and chaotic situations. These situations evoke strong emotional responses such as sadness, quiet frustration, and upset, indicating a deep sense of powerlessness and emotional strain.

The **quotes "And you have to show that you are more stupid than them. And this is why to take your words, you have to put yourself in a vulnerable position,"** and **"Counterparts are stating you're crazy, that you're going without arms just with trust, with your scarf or whatever, working in a setting where females are not even accepted. They tell you you're crazy and this sometimes gives respect towards you,"** illustrate the concept of volitional vulnerabilities employed by them to build trust relationships with their counterparts. These examples highlight a strategic use of vulnerability. By intentionally presenting themselves as less intelligent or less threatening, delegates create a dynamic where their counterparts feel superior. This tactic involves a conscious choice to appear vulnerable to gain trust and ensure their words are taken seriously. It's a deliberate effort to dismantle power dynamics and foster a sense of trustworthiness and relatability. In the second quote, the person's decision to enter a hostile environment unarmed and without traditional symbols of power or protection is perceived as reckless by their counterparts. However, this perceived recklessness is paradoxically met with respect and recognition. By defying expectations and norms—such as the expectation of being armed or the norm of men occupying such roles—the delegate showcases a form of volitional vulnerability. This act of exposing themselves to potential harm without conventional safeguards demonstrates their commitment and bravery, thereby earning respect and trust. These quotes reveal the paradoxical nature of volitional vulnerability, where what appears to be recklessness can actually serve as a powerful tool in building trust. By challenging conventional norms and expectations, such as the notion that delegates should be smart and arrogant or that the organization should send strong and fierce men, humanitarians assert their dedication to building trust and forging meaningful relationships. This strategic use of vulnerability enhances their effectiveness in advancing humanitarian objectives. The willingness to

employ volitional vulnerability demonstrates a profound understanding of human psychology and social dynamics. By making themselves vulnerable in a controlled and intentional manner, delegates can break down barriers and establish a rapport with their counterparts. This approach not only builds trust but also fosters a sense of mutual respect and understanding, which is crucial for the success of humanitarian missions.

As of now, we have observed that the humanitarians can encounter several kinds of vulnerabilities. We can better understand their reality if we can distinguish between the vulnerabilities we think they encounter most like physical danger and the ones they actually recognise and experience most, like emotional and professional problems. There are other factors involved as well, such the feelings they experience and the ways in which these feelings are expressed and utilised to impact particular actions.

5) Findings

I used the Gioia coding scheme to thoroughly analyse the interview transcripts and the critical incidents for my master's thesis' results section. I created a thorough coding table that methodically collects and arranges the data during this procedure. First-order concepts are listed first in the table and are taken directly from the quotes provided by the participants. These first ideas are a representation of the detailed and nuanced ideas that were discussed in the interviews.

These first-order ideas are then combined to create more general second-order themes. These themes offer a clearer grasp of the underlying dynamics at work by encapsulating more abstract concepts and patterns that surfaced from the data.

After that, the second-order themes help to formulate the aggregate dimensions, which are divided into two groups. The first dimension deals with vulnerabilities that come before trust, emphasising how different types of vulnerability provide the conditions for trust to grow. The vulnerabilities that surface after trust has been established are the subject of the second dimension.

5.1) Vulnerabilities preceding trust

The first figure you can see here below is Figure 1, it represents the first category of the data, vulnerabilities preceding trust. Here 3 main aggregated dimensions will be discussed and presented in sequential times. Quotes representing the valuable critical incidents will be discussed and explained in detail.

| First order concepts	Second order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Trust within a medical team is crucial, especially when advocating for resources or raising concerns with administrators. Nurses often rely on the support of surgeons and other team members to strengthen their position, as their requests may carry more weight when backed by higher-ranking colleagues.	Hierarchical dynamics heighten vulnerability, necessitating trust among colleagues for effective advocacy and support	Contextual vulnerability preceding interpersonal trust
A medical evacuation was complicated by soldiers blocking the transfer of a prisoner. The health delegate proceeded based on authorization from colleagues, overcoming initial resistance and concerns about potential risks.		
In a dangerous and isolated situation, a small team of three relied on mutual trust to maintain morale and cope with the stress. Despite ongoing risks, their established trust helped them stay calm, feel more in control, and ultimately overcome the challenges they faced.	Navigating vulnerability in a hostile territory, relying on team trust for collective coping and support	
After a period of crisis marked by downsizing and a strategy overhaul, a low-expectation task was assigned. With no pressure to succeed thanks to the trusting boss, the freedom to experiment led to the exploration of new approaches, even with the risk of failure.		
Sometimes, appearing naive can make others feel more in control, especially with those who are suspicious or distrustful, which can lead to more comfortable and productive interactions.	Strategically acting naive to build trust with counterparts, fostering a trust that enables work	Volitional vulnerability preceding trust
To achieve goals, one must appear somewhat vulnerable, even if actual risk is minimized by protective measures. This perceived vulnerability helps others feel in control and can facilitate smoother interactions and negotiations.		
In conflict situations, the lack of weapons and reliance on symbols alone can foster trust and act as a form of protection.	Embrace vulnerability of being unarmed to foster respect and build trust with counterparts	
Being unarmed and coming from safe backgrounds to work in hostile environments demonstrates a willingness to face discomfort, which garners respect and reinforces perceptions of genuine humanity.		
Some young, attractive women may adopt a persona of sweetness and dependency to gain trust and assistance, but this approach is often short-lived and unsustainable	Using societal perceptions of female vulnerability on purpose to expedite tasks by leveraging stereotypes	
Playing on gender stereotypes, to gain advantages in practical situations, such as getting ahead in a long line to have your car fixed by using the perception of being a woman or appearing vulnerable to expedite the process.		
Building trust with armed groups and beneficiaries is crucial for safety and acceptance. Maintaining transparency and delivering on promises helps mitigate risks and fosters a trustworthy reputation, especially in contrast to others who often fail to fulfill their commitments.	Threat of physical harm from armed groups forcing trust-building with stakeholders to ensure safety	Socio-economic vulnerability preceding conditional trust
Navigating trust in hostile environments requires maintaining a delicate balance between building relationships and staying vigilant, as acceptance can never be fully guaranteed, especially when the threat of violence is constant.		
In conflict zones, established trust with local counterparts can be crucial for survival. When advised to arrive at a specific time for a meeting, this trust was validated as it protected them from a deadly explosion that occurred shortly after. Without this trust, the situation could have been much more dangerous.	Caught in crossfire, negotiating safety through communication and trust to secure a ceasefire.	
While trapped during an attack on a police station, individuals decided to trust both opposing sides to temporarily stop shooting, despite their vulnerability. This trust was crucial for their escape, as it reduced their immediate risk and allowed them to safely reach their destination.		

Figure 1 First category of data
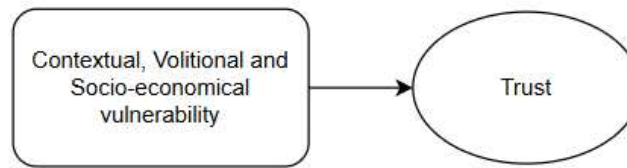
Figure 2 Vulnerabilities preceding trust

Figure 2 has a visual representation of what this first part of the findings section will cover throughout the next following pages; The vulnerabilities that precede trust.

5.1.1) Contextual vulnerability preceding interpersonal trust

5.1.1.1) Hierarchical dynamics heighten vulnerability, necessitating trust among colleagues for effective advocacy and support

The following quote recounts an incident where the narrator, a nurse, needs the help of his team to bring an important subject to higher ups. Vulnerability is felt from the narrator from these higher ups, so he relies on the trust of his team. Showing how the vulnerability pushes him to lean on the trust he has.

" Just between colleagues you have situations that you need to trust, like we work as a team in the theater with the surgeon, anesthesiologist and then one expert nurse which we are usually the ones where if you have an idea or you don't agree about something and you want to bring this issue up in a meeting, you need to trust that your team will back you up. Like I mean when our team is in front of the administrators and we need to usually it's getting something that we don't have in the theater. Well usually they don't like when you're asking for something because it costs them money. That's why you need the team to come and back you up and you know as a small nurse when you ask for something it's not as powerful if the surgeon tells you that. So you need to use these guys a little bit to back you up. So I am also at risk that that the administration doesn't like what I am saying."

The remark describes a situation in which negotiating hierarchical dynamics and therefore contextual vulnerabilities requires a strong sense of trust and camaraderie among coworkers. The speaker talks about an experienced nurse, an anaesthesiologist, and a surgeon who work as a close-knit team in the operating room. With everything on the line, the team needs to have full trust in one another. This trust is especially important when team

members have to speak up in meetings with administrators to voice concerns or argue for needed resources. We can also deduct here the depth of the trust which can be compared to the trust we have with a close friend or a relatively deep relationship.

The speaker draws attention to the vulnerability that is also felt in these circumstances, especially when asking administrators for resources, who are frequently reluctant owing to financial concerns. His vulnerability is expressed his worry and fear of having to confront a superior and the potential consequences. A nurse's voice might not be as powerful as a surgeon's since it is smaller. As a result, the nurse depends on the team's support to give their requests legitimacy and weight. This interplay demonstrates how organisational hierarchies can amplify personal vulnerabilities, underscoring the necessity of colleague trust and unity for successful advocacy and support.

In this instance, it is evident that the emergence of interpersonal trust is preceded and shaped by contextual vulnerabilities, such as the hierarchical dynamics inside the organisation. In order to navigate these vulnerabilities, close-knit trust amongst team members is essential. This is especially true when asking for resources in the face of administrative resistance,

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In this following quote the narrator is transporting a patient who is also a prisoner, in a hospital surrounded by armed men who are doubting him and his intentions. He feels vulnerability from them, but this vulnerability pushes him to lean on the trust he has with his colleagues, who supposedly warned the armed men of his arrival.

"A medical evacuation for a patient surrounded by soldiers who didn't want to let him go to the hospital. At first, I thought, maybe they will arrest me. I was concerned about who I was to go to the hospital, take the patient again, and then bring him to the hospital, especially since he was a prisoner. My colleagues handled the contacts. I went there, and I had my contacts too, just in case. That was enough. I went, took the patient, and he was surrounded by soldiers. At the beginning, they were asking, 'Who are you?' I explained, 'I am a health delegate. My colleague talked with your coroner. We are allowed to bring this patient to the hospital.' I took the patient, and it was done. There was some trust involved because they didn't know me. I also worried that halfway to the hospital, someone might take the patient, or accuse me of something. So it was really stressful."

The quote describes a challenging medical evacuation involving a patient who was a prisoner and surrounded by soldiers who initially obstructed the transfer as they are the main

decisionmakers here. The speaker expresses concern about potential arrest and the complexities of retrieving the patient from a sensitive situation.

A heightened sense of vulnerability is reflected in the speaker's first anxieties of being arrested and the possibility of being accused or challenged by a higher force. The fact that the patient was a prisoner and that there was security present shows the risk of the procedure. The vulnerability in this situation is highlighted by the stress of managing such a high-stakes scenario when each person's part and actions are closely examined.

The speaker demonstrated the value of trust in managing such delicate procedures by relying on previous arrangements and assistance from colleagues. The speaker's personal connections were also trusted, as they contributed to the operation's validity and validation, in addition to the colleagues who had established the original ties. The evacuation went well because of the soldiers initial acceptance and the stress of the situation, but also because they trusted that the agreement was legal.

Given that the patient transfer involves armed soldiers and is considered high-risk due to the possibility of being imprisoned or being injured, the health delegate's contextual vulnerability is apparent in this case. The fact that the patient is a prisoner adds to this fragility, increasing the hazards and strain of the procedure. However, interpersonal trust among coworkers reduces this risk. The delegate depends on the trust that has been built with their team, which includes faith in the skills and previous agreements of their colleagues. This trust helps to manage the anxiety and other problems of the circumstance by offering vital validation and support. Essentially, the delegate can make the transfer with more confidence and less danger because colleagues trust eases the vulnerability.

5.1.1.2) Navigating vulnerability in a hostile territory, relying on team trust for collective coping and support

In this next quote the speaker and his team were in the middle of a firefight, with no outside help. They were physically and mentally vulnerable, because of the risk of injury or worse, so they relied on their mutual trust to go through it, serving as a mental shield. The vulnerability is essentially countered thanks to their deep interpersonal trust among each other. More specifically trust and vulnerability coexist more dynamically; trust helps the team deal with the problem, while vulnerability strengthens trust. When vulnerability appears, people actively rely on pre-existing trust as a coping mechanism.

"Well, I was in a place where we were in the middle of the fighting. We were a small team of three, and somehow we were more or less left alone. We were completely cut off from the outside world. So there was some effort needed to ensure we didn't become too depressed and to find a way to cope with the situation. Even though you trust the others, there were still dangers, so you couldn't be completely relaxed. Once trust is established within the group, you feel much calmer and more in control of what's going on. You feel proud because you're working together to handle the situation. We were happy to have been able to overcome the situation."

The quote describes the interlocutor's terrifying experience of being stranded in the midst of active combat with two partners, cut off from the outside world. There were numerous physical vulnerabilities in the scenario, and there was always a chance of getting shot at or worse. The squad was effectively on its own, which led to a highly vulnerable situation where death was a genuine possibility.

The interlocutor emphasises the significant influence of the strong bond and trust he had with his teammates in spite of these great risks. This trust was a deeply intimate relationship that functioned as an essential mental support. His uneasiness calmed when he realised he could totally rely on his friends, which made it easier for him to deal with the circumstance and not let fear control him.

The interviewee observes that after this trust was solidified among the group, order and calm were restored during the chaos. Their mutual trust served as a mental and emotional barrier, enabling him to feel secure enough to handle the situation. The key to getting through the circumstance was having a sense of control and the pride that came from working as a unified team. In the end, the interviewee admits that his ability to endure the circumstance and somewhat cope with the existing contextual vulnerabilities on a mental and emotional level was largely due to his strong interpersonal trust with his coworkers, which goes much beyond simple professional respect. Their trust served as a relief against the stress and peril they encountered, enabling them to negotiate and ultimately escape the potentially fatal situation they found themselves in.

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In this next quote, the narrator is given a task of building a new strategy in a conflict zone where there is death and failure. Everyone expects him to fail because the situation is dire and desperate. He also feels this vulnerability because no one has hope, he thinks he will fail too. But because of his deep trust with his boss, who supports him anyhow, the vulnerability he feels is greatly diminished.

"So the ICRC had gone through a very difficult period in Pakistan with the death of one of their colleagues, massive downsizing, and a complete overhaul of the strategy. Nothing we had been doing previously was working. There was the idea that we had to change everything and really start over. I was given this specific file to take care of, and honestly, nobody had any expectations for it. People thought it was going to collapse, or maybe it would last for a year, and we'd have a few seminars, but nothing significant would really happen. In general, I had a lot of support from my boss, who had trusted me with many other things. But on this file, which eventually became my 100% job, he just said, 'You know, just see if it works. Most probably it won't, but just play with it.' And I think that was really great in the end because there was absolutely no pressure to perform, and at the same time, there was freedom to experiment. So yeah, I knew the worst that could happen was... well, you know."

The interlocutor is facing contextual vulnerability in this scenario as a result of a difficult situation where the organisation is in disarray due to a colleague's death, significant downsizing, and a strategic rebuilding. There was a sense of mental vulnerability and low expectations because the task given to the interlocutor was often seen as doomed to fail. At first, both parties believed that the mission was unlikely to succeed and this could be felt by the likelihood of failure.

But turning the vulnerability into an opportunity depends critically on the interlocutor's boss's interpersonal trust. Though things seem bad, the boss's confidence in the individual with whom he has a close personal relationship gives him the confidence he needs to tackle the issue in a new way. The interlocutor can experiment freely because of this trust, concentrating on completing the task at hand rather than giving in to fear of failing.

This example shows how a foundation of trust can reduce mental vulnerability. The boss's confidence in the interlocutor not only gives him the confidence to move on but also gives him the ability to actually try to succeed, which counteracts the initial weakness and opens up a road to perhaps winning against the odds.

5.1.2) Volitional vulnerability preceding trust

5.1.2.1) Strategically acting naive to build trust with counterparts, fostering a trust that enables work

The following quote shows the narrator explaining that to make some people trust them, he wants them to feel superior to him, and he does by that by faking or exaggerating his naivety or lack of skill. Showing us that making yourself look skill-less, more vulnerable, engages better trust building with some people. In this specific scenario, we are talking about a conditional trust that is being established.

"It happens sometimes, you know. There are situations where it's actually worth playing dumb or showing a bit of naivety because it helps people feel more in control. With some individuals, especially those who might be highly suspicious of you or think you're not genuine or transparent, appearing naive can be a way to make them feel more in control. And if they feel in control, they might become more comfortable as well."

The speaker in this instance explains an intentional vulnerability approach, which is the deliberate use of being unsophisticated or naive in order to gain the trust of peers. This method is specifically used to help people feel more comfortable and in charge, which can be very helpful when interacting with those who are extremely doubtful or suspicious. By portraying oneself as innocent, the speaker establishes a situation where the other feels more confident and in charge, which encourages trust.

By deliberately using this volitional vulnerability, early resistance or mistrust is countered, leading to better relationships and collaboration. It is deliberate to come across as less informed or direct in order to win over the other person's confidence and encourage cooperation. Because of this, this strategy not only reduces tensions right away but also puts the speaker in a position to reap long-term rewards and accomplish goals. It must be said that in this case we do not greatly impose vulnerability, meaning we do not exaggerate it, but more have a static way of naivety, just make the counterpart happy.

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In the quote below, the speaker explains that to gain trust from someone or make building this trust more easily, acting vulnerable is a solution. Again he insists on stating that this must not be exaggerated or too dangerous, as long as the person in front believes this weakness, then it is enough. Showing imposed vulnerability contribute to better trust building.

"Well, I guess it goes back to what you mentioned earlier: you have to give to receive. To get something in return, you have to make yourself somewhat vulnerable, or at least appear to be. I'm not a fan of making myself overly vulnerable in these

situations. Whether dealing with an armed group or anyone else, I prefer to maintain control. However, it's important that others perceive me as vulnerable. It's not about pretending; it's about giving the appearance or making the gesture of vulnerability. Our organisation for instance, ensures the safety of its people and wouldn't send someone into a risky situation without proper protection. But the person on the other side might still see the situation as them being in control because we've shown some vulnerability by meeting on their terms. Behind the scenes, though, our security measures are thoroughly in place."

The speaker in this quotation talks about using vulnerability strategically to accomplish particular objectives. Here, the purposeful use of volitional vulnerability is to make interactions and discussions with others easier, especially in situations where there could be adversaries or high stakes. The fundamental concept here is that in order to receive something in return, one must, if only briefly, appear weak.

The speaker draws a contrast between pretending and actually being vulnerable. The intention is not to actually put oneself in danger, but rather to modify one's behaviour to give the impression that one is somewhat vulnerable to others. This may be as easy as taking on a more submissive demeanour or displaying indications of nervousness. Making others believe they are in charge or have the upper hand in a certain circumstance is the fundamental tactic. Smooth relationships and negotiations can be facilitated by this perception. The speaker makes it clear that this strategy is about displaying vulnerability rather than acting fake or dishonest. By implementing strong security measures, the organization's policy guarantees the safety of its employees. The appearance of weakness is a calculated approach meant to foster an atmosphere conducive to attaining objectives. In order to successfully negotiate or collaborate, the organisation must give the other party the impression that they are in control by compromising and displaying some vulnerability.

Instead of attempting to create personal friendships, this professional trust-building helps people get past obstacles and accomplish their goals. Here, the vulnerability serves as a deliberate, strategic instrument to promote cooperation and trust in a work setting, keeping the conversation going and in line with the organization's objectives.

5.1.2.2) Embrace vulnerability of being unarmed to foster respect and build trust with counterparts

In this next short but concise quote, the narrator firmly explains that embracing a vulnerability of being unarmed in a conflict zone, helps in building trust. Being unarmed surrounded by people that are armed, so using volitional vulnerability, helps trust building.

"In a conflict situation, our vulnerability is evident because we lack weapons or physical protection, relying solely on our emblems. This inherent vulnerability, I believe, actually helps build trust and provides us with a form of protection."

The speaker in this quotation discusses how being vulnerable in a conflict situation results from not having any defensive gear or physical defence. For protection, the speaker's organisation only has logo of its organisation, unlike soldiers who have armour and weapons. This susceptibility is a basic part of their role and regulations, not a calculated tactic.

The speaker admits that there is an interesting element to their apparent weakness, which results from their lack of protective tools like weapons or security measures. It really helps them establish trust with people they engage with, rather than undermining their position. Their devotion to their goal and their reliance on nonviolent methods to win respect and collaboration are highlighted by their lack of physical defences.

As a result, this volitional vulnerability acts as a kind of secret defence. It communicates their sincere and unarmed presence, which might increase people's confidence and goodwill towards them. The fact that they are neither armed or using forceful defence tactics indicates that their purpose is to provide aid and encouragement instead of forcing or confronting. Thus, their vulnerability mandated by their operational limitations becomes an asset that strengthens their role as protectors in a conflict setting and fosters beneficial relationships.

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Similarly to this previous quote, the narrator here recounts that embracing a vulnerability helps garner respect to individuals from this conflict zone country. Here he specifically suggests him and others coming from a country being very calm and safe, and going to one that is not, helps trust building with these people. Showing again that volitional vulnerability pushes towards better trust, and here it also shows that it doesn't necessarily entails a conditional trust because the message given is that they are of no harm, and are here to genuinely help.

"We are exposed and unarmed in a hostile environment, which garners a certain respect. Coming from places like New Zealand or Germany to this harsh setting,

leaving behind the safety and comfort of green fields, demonstrates a willingness to face discomfort. This act of vulnerability is respected. It prompts others to wonder why people from such privileged backgrounds would choose to help, which can lead them to believe in our genuine humanity."

The speaker highlights in this quotation how their organization's purposeful exposure and unarmed presence in dangerous situations help them gain respect. The context of their origins and the lack of weaponry are both factors that contribute to their vulnerability. The speaker emphasises that while working in tough and dangerous environments, they and their colleagues are from relatively safe and comfortable areas, like Germany or New Zealand. Their dedication to their goal is highlighted by the striking contrast between their calm country from which they come from and the difficult circumstances they encounter.

These individuals demonstrate a willingness to be in considerable discomfort and risk by relocating from the safety and comfort of their own country. In spite of the fact that they have no defence, this act of venturing outside of their comfort zones is regarded as a sincere will to their commitment and compassion.

The belief that they are willingly putting themselves in danger and enduring suffering in order to assist others is the source of their respect. People from privileged backgrounds are seen as sincere in their objectives and in giving when they choose to work in such harsh environments. Despite coming from stable and wealthy families, their vulnerability and obvious desire to have a positive impact lends them credibility and respect. The underlying message is that in the end, trust and respect are developed in the hostile environment because of their genuine desire to help and their willingness to endure discomfort and danger.

5.1.2.3) Using societal perceptions of female vulnerability on purpose to expedite tasks by leveraging stereotypes

The following quote shows the narrator explaining that using and exaggerating the stereotype of being a female in need of help, garners trust to various individuals. Although it has limits. Showcasing volitional vulnerability, of acting naïve through gender roles, as a tactic to gain trust from someone.

"You have this type of people. They play this female role of I'm not strong. I'm sweet. You have to help me. Trust me. I trust you. I need you. It works if the females are

young and pretty. A lot of them are not working too long with the organisation.
Because it doesn't work in the long term, because they will not be recognised as they
will not be fully accepted in a long term."

People may purposefully draw attention to or magnify their vulnerabilities in order to evoke a protective or encouraging response from others. This is evident in work or daily life settings, where displaying a certain amount of gullibility or reliance on others can encourage accountability and mutual trust. People can foster an environment in which others are forced to extend support and assistance by displaying vulnerability.

Stereotypes about vulnerability in society and culture can be strategically exploited. In professional contexts, for example, younger or more attractive women may show the notion that they are helpless in order to get faster and more favourable answers. Putting oneself in a precarious or vulnerable situation has the power to inspire confidence in others receiving assistance or support. When people from comfortable and safe backgrounds voluntarily go into difficult or dangerous circumstances, it shows dedication. Respect and trust from locals or counterparts can be gained by this self-imposed fragility because it demonstrates a commitment to the cause and a willingness to bear some of the risks and sufferings. This form of trust is self-beneficial in nature, and it is purely professional or strategical.

This highlights how individuals can use their perceived weaknesses or vulnerable positions as tools to build trust and foster cooperation. This strategy is effective in various contexts, from professional environments to high-risk field missions, demonstrating the complex interplay between vulnerability and trust.

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The speaker in this next quote talks about the situation of a woman acting vulnerable to get faster treatment in an auto repair shop, this is done so she can repair her car faster and maybe go in front of customers. Describing a situation of volitional vulnerability for conditional trust, so not a long lasting trust relationship but to just obtain a strategic one for the situation present. This trust is not founded on a close or long-term connection, but rather on current societal dynamics. There is creation of trust in the mechanic's willingness to help, even though that trust might dissipate once the interaction is over.

"Well, yeah, that's called being a woman. Sometimes you need to throw yourself 100%
into a situation, and then things start to happen for you. Like, when you're on your

way to deal with something and start feeling uncomfortable, you have to lean into that. Take getting your car fixed, for example. Maybe it's springtime, and you need to get your winter tires changed. You know everyone's busy, and there's a long line. But because you're a woman—or maybe just because you're feeling lazy—you can use a bit of that female vulnerability to get it done a little faster."

This quotation explores the idea of taking advantage of gender-based vulnerability as a tactic to obtain an advantage in particular circumstances. The speaker explains how women can intentionally use cultural beliefs and prejudices related to femininity in specific situations to get what they want. For instance, a woman may "play the gender card" by seeming more helpless or in need of support when faced with a routine but difficult chore, like having her car mended during a busy season. This conduct plays into deeply known societal conventions that frequently link women to being in need of assistance, particularly in fields that have been dominated by men, like auto repair.

By doing this, the woman might win the temporary respect or trust of those nearby, such the mechanic or other guys in queue, which would enable her to skip the regular wait period or get preferential treatment. This strategy is a calculated attempt to manipulate social dynamics, not necessarily a reflection of genuine fragility but rather of an imposed vulnerability. The speaker admits that this is a gender-specific tool that works in some circumstances, but she also seems to be making a larger point about the social systems that support these kinds of tactics. This illustration shows how gender may operate as a tool for influence and trust within a particular social situation.

5.1.3) Socio-economic vulnerability preceding conditional trust

5.1.3.1) Threat of physical harm from armed groups forcing trust-building with stakeholders to ensure safety

The quote here after discusses the vulnerability of being physically harmed by an armed group and the importance here of building trust with actors that might mitigate this vulnerability. It goes more in depth in describing this type of trust that is said conditional, because it requires both actors of the relationship to have their own goals fulfilled, meaning that words are kept, so the trust can keep working.

" So mainly the armed groups or even among beneficiaries you might have armed people who might want to harm you. But let's say with the main stakeholders we

always try to have this trust to mitigate the risk of having an attack against us. When it comes to beneficiaries of course it's also very important because it also relates to our acceptance and perception. If we keep on promising something that we don't deliver we might not be then perceived as a trustful actor. And this is... for example where I worked here in Lebanon it was very important actually because to keep this very as much as possible transparent relation with the beneficiaries it helps to build this reputation and we could see the difference with other actors as well that themselves very often promise many things but they never fulfill them."

In this context, the socio economic vulnerability is important, it necessitates the creation of trust, particularly in professional interactions aimed at safeguarding personal safety. The presence of physical threats, such as those posed by armed groups or during conflicts, compels individuals and organizations to engage in trust-building activities with stakeholders. This trust is not only a relational concept but a strategic one, crucial for ensuring the security and well-being of those involved. It underscores the steps taken to establish reliable relationships, manage risks effectively, and navigate complex situations where personal and organizational safety are important concerns.

Building and preserving confidence with stakeholders becomes essential in situations when there is a chance of danger from armed groups or mistrust among beneficiaries. This trust reduces the socio-economic vulnerabilities that are present in these situations as a preventive step. Building conditional trust entails include stakeholders in decision-making procedures and making sure their opinions are heard. This cooperative strategy contributes to a more effective and long-lasting response by giving power to stakeholders and recipients while also fortifying ties.

The strategic necessity of developing trust in situations where there are physical threats and conflict dynamics is highlighted here. It emphasises the active application of trust as a coping strategy for tricky and possibly dangerous circumstances, highlighting its critical role in promoting security, resolving conflicts, and maintaining operational resilience in trying circumstances. It must be noted here that this type of trust is strictly conditional, meaning we do not have a deep interpersonal connection, we have a goal oriented approach, meaning that in another context if the interlocutor was not in danger or in need of their help they would establish any type of personal or non-personal relationship.

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Like last quote, here the narrator emphasizes the dangers of a hostile country, where armed groups are present, and the physical vulnerability that is there. Again it is said that building trust mitigates this, because it helps in being accepted. Although the trust is conditional, meaning it strictly made for surviving this conflict zone, he also notes that the risk is always there, the vulnerability is always felt at least a bit, regardless of how much trust counters the vulnerability. They have to take the risk of trusting others in order to be accepted and to get by in their surroundings. This initial vulnerability, which results from having to interact with potentially hostile people, gives trust the chance to grow via repeated encounters.

"You try to be confident, but you can never be completely sure. If you've been to a place several times and the people aren't suspicious of you, you start to feel somewhat accepted. However, you can never predict how things might change, especially when everyone is armed. It's a situation where you have to trust, but always stay on high alert. This creates an uncomfortable tension because you can't be certain that you'll be 100% accepted. You might have a connection with a leader who understands your purpose and facilitates things for you, but you never know how things will turn out later. In a war zone, trust is essential to enter an area, but that state of alert can never fully disappear because you never know what might happen."

This quotation explores the intricate and risky aspects of working in a hostile environment where vulnerability and trust are closely related. The speaker talks on the disturbing reality of working in places where there are always armed people around. Socioeconomic vulnerability is real in such an environment. One is constantly aware of the physical risks that could happen at any time.

The speaker stresses the significance of developing trust with varied opponents in order to negotiate this rough terrain. The goal of this long and delicate procedure is to gradually get a sense of acceptance among these potentially morally bad groups through repeated interactions. The dynamic that emerges is essentially one of cooperation rather than strong, intimate trust. It is a strategic trust that is required to lessen current dangers and permit a sustained presence in the region, so work related here. This trust is not, however long-lasting. It's more like a flimsy barrier that can block some risk but never totally removes it. The speaker admits that the vulnerabilities never completely goes away despite efforts to foster confidence. The environment is still fundamentally unstable, and the confidence built up with local actors might change quickly and frequently without notice. Because of this, one must always be on the lookout and understand that although trust might reduce certain risks, it cannot ensure safety. Because of this constant state of vulnerability, it's important to strike

a delicate balance between having enough trust to function in the area and always being aware that things could turn dangerous at any time.

His situation highlights the realistic and conditional nature of trust in these settings, which prioritises survival over the development of strong, long-lasting relationships. The trust is based on a need rather than a wish for friendship or understanding between parties, and it is vulnerable to the reality of a chaotic world, coming from a distressed socio-economic setting where alliances can change and danger is always there.

5.1.3.2) Caught in crossfire, negotiating safety through communication and trust to secure a ceasefire.

In this quote, the narrator recounts an incident where they were told to meet with counterparts at a place, at an exact time, which seemed suspicious and raised vulnerabilities where they were scared of physical retribution. But because of their built relationship, they decide to trust each other, and follow the orders. Resulting in the narrator being safe, but learning that had they not followed the orders they might have perished. Showing how their vulnerability pushed them to lean on their conditional trust with the counterparts, helping them essentially save their own lives.

"The next day, we got in the car and drove to the military establishment for some first aid training. We arrived around 11 in the morning, and spent some time drinking tea and socializing to ease the process. Then, at midday, there was a massive explosion—three petrol tankers were blown up. We didn't know exactly what would happen, but we knew something was coming. About 35 people were killed, but we were safe. They wanted to continue the operations and had no intention of harming us. Without trust, they could have easily told us to leave, but they didn't. I thought, *Oh, that's why they told us to be there before midday.***"**

This comment serves as an excellent illustration of how people in conflict zones may be forced to rely mostly on trust in order to maintain their safety due to socioeconomic vulnerability. The speaker recounts an incident in which they were assigned a certain time to go to a military facility for first aid training after developing a rapport and earning the trust of the local armed forces. Given the ongoing possibility of violence and explosions, this situation is dangerous by nature, which emphasises the speaker's fragility.

It is important that the speaker chose to believe the timing that their counterparts recommended. Even though they knew something harmful was about to happen, they decided to follow the directions because they trusted the relationship more than their own judgement to stay safe. This choice to follow the counterpart's advice in spite of the obvious uneasiness is an illustration of how, in such risky situations, trust turns into a calculated risk, one that is required for survival.

Here, the trust is not in the relationship's early development but rather in its real expression during a crucial moment. Had they disregarded the suggestion to arrive by midday, the speaker and their team might have been trapped in the explosion. In the end, their safety was guaranteed by their faith in their counterparts, who really wished them well. This scenario demonstrates how vulnerability can cause people to rely on trust as a survival strategy, in this case, because of the conflict's unexpected and violent character. The quotation demonstrates how confidence built through prior dealings with local authorities can be the difference between life and death, even in situations where the outcome is unpredictable and potentially fatal. It emphasises the idea that, although trust cannot totally remove risk in such situations, it may greatly lessen vulnerability and shield people when they most need it.

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The following quote describes a situation where the speaker is caught in a crossfire in a police station. The vulnerability here being of physical threat, and so this forces the speaker to call the counterparts for a ceasefire so they can escape. During this time they are in a constant state of stress, of uncertainty, regardless of the call being made and accepted. Here the conditional trust they have helps them introduce a ceasefire to prevent the vulnerability, although the risk is always still there.

"He was doing first-aid training at a police recruitment center. Then the opposition attacked the police station with rockets and guns, trying to kill them all. My colleague and the assistant were there and had to hide in a corner behind concrete barriers. They were stuck while the shooting was going on. They had the wisdom to use the telephone to call the police and say, 'We are stuck here. At 9:30, we want to go. Can you stop shooting?' They called the telephone commander, using the numbers they had, and explained their situation, asking if the shooting could stop at 9:30 so they could leave. And we don't want to be killed here, you know? At 9:30, there was suddenly silence. This worked. They quickly ran away, got in the vehicle, and drove to the Red Cross compound. Ten minutes later, the shooting started again."

In this situation, a crew at a police recruitment centre finds themselves in the line of fire. The immediate vulnerability results from the high risk of being caught off guard in a gun and rocket attack. The squad is physically exposed to the ongoing violence because they are confined behind concrete barricades. There is a high chance of harm or death as a result of this.

The team's ability to survive depends on their current rapport and level of trust with the opposing parties. They ask for a temporary ceasefire through the lines of communication they have already established. They are using the trust they have developed with these parties to protect them by contacting the police and attempting to negotiate a short stop to the violence. The request to cease shooting at a given moment demonstrates a crucial dependence on trust as well as a planned use of it.

The quote's sentence, "We don't want to be killed here, you know?" captures a deep sense of anxiety and uncertainty. Their vulnerability is further highlighted by this concern, since they are dependent on the goodwill and dependability of their contacts to keep the truce in place. Anxiety is always present since there is an inherent possibility that the agreement won't be upheld. The fact that the ceasefire was carried out successfully and the team managed to escape unharmed serves as evidence of how effective trust is at reducing immediate risk. They calculate that they will uphold the ceasefire and trust in order to feel less vulnerable because they believe that their counterparts are trustworthy, despite the constant fear that anything could happen at any time, including them shooting or breaking their word. The depth of their cooperative relationships with the parties involved is demonstrated by the fact that the ceasefire was respected. But the fact that filming started as soon as they left also serves as a reminder of how loose this kind of trust is in conflict areas.

5.2) Vulnerabilities proceeding trust

We will now oversee the second category of the data, as visible from Figure 3, vulnerabilities proceeding trust, they will contain 2 main aggregate dimensions that will be discussed in detail in the same manner as the previous results.

| First order concepts	Second order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Taking the first step to trust someone involves sharing something that could be exploited, but choosing to trust them anyway because of the relationship built and to deepen it. This leap of faith is crucial in forming a cohesive team based on trust.	Risking confidentiality to build trust, trusting the established relationship by sharing sensitive information that could be exploited, creating vulnerability.	Relational vulnerabilities emerge after trust
Sharing confidential information before trust is fully established is risky, especially when confidence in the outcome is low. Sometimes, pressing issues force the decision, even when it's preferable to wait and strengthen the relationship first.		
A lack of transparency about patient needs led to the provision of unnecessary resources, undermining the trust relationship. The discovery of this dishonesty resulted in frustration and a sense of betrayal towards both the organization and those supporting it.	Trust is compromised when concerns of unethical behavior or mismanagement emerge, leading to increased anxiety and dissatisfaction in the relationship.	
The lack of accountability and reporting on donated items can create anxiety and frustration, especially when there is concern about potential misuse or corruption, highlighting the critical role of a trustful relationship.		
Strict adherence to organizational protocols can cause frustration when simple tasks are delayed by formal procedures, leading to anxiety about potential failures and highlighting the tension between efficiency and following the rules.	In a trusting organisational environment, strict protocols can still increase vulnerability, causing frustration and anxiety when independent action is restricted.	Institutional trust leads to a feeling of imposed vulnerability
The decision to adhere to organizational protocols and reject immediate help from a local commander resulted in the tragic loss of a colleague, leaving the interlocutor feeling profound guilt and vulnerability over their perceived failure to act.		

Figure 3 Second category of data
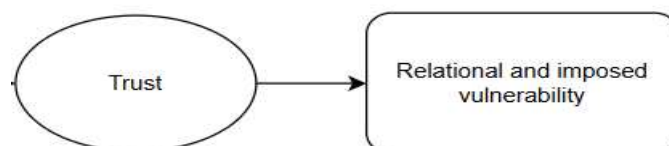
Figure 4 Vulnerabilities proceeding trust

Here figure 4 showcases a visual representation of what this second part of the findings consists of; Vulnerabilities proceeding trust.

5.2.1) Relational vulnerabilities emerge after trust

5.2.1.1) Risking confidentiality to build trust, trusting the established relationship by sharing sensitive information that could be exploited, creating vulnerability.

In the quote below, the narrator explains that during relationship building, at one point in time, one of the persons will divulge more personal or deep information, that can be used for wrong. This happens when the trust relationship has been built long enough for this scenario to happen. This vulnerability is relational, it directly relates to their trust relationship and comes after the trust has been built.

"Someone has to make that first move and say I am going to tell you something which you could either use against me or you could exploit. But I am going to trust you. We have built a sufficient relationship. I am going to trust you with this information or with this action. I have faith that you will not betray that trust. There is still a leap of faith. But for me that photograph represents a relationship of total trust that you would have within a cohesive team."

The idea that relationships built on trust are vulnerable to relational weaknesses like deceit and exploitation highlights the inherent dangers associated with maintaining trust. When people or institutions trust each other, they both expect the other to act honourably, dependably, and morally. This trust, however, is susceptible to exploitation when trust is used for one's own benefit or at the expense of the party placing their faith and deception where one party may conceal or mislead information.

Deeper levels of trust, where people feel safe giving more private or sensitive information, are usually when established trust relationships become vulnerable to deceit and abuse. Openness and transparency are frequently encouraged by a sense of security and mutual understanding that arises with growing trust. Nonetheless, a higher emotional commitment is also required at this level of trust since people may divulge sensitive or significant parts of themselves. Because it entails giving another person access to personal information or sentiments that could be abused or exploited, sharing can make one feel vulnerable.

Generally here we have am example of after calculating that the level of trust is high enough we can share information or sentiments we usually would not. We are this stage therefore prone to relational vulnerability as we have a shared a sensitive part of us that can be possibly betrayed, even though we fully trust the person in front of us.

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The quote below recounts a story similar to the previous one. Here we still discuss the appearance of relational vulnerability after trust has been built between the narrator and another person. Because of a pressing mattter he makes himself vulnerable by divulging an information that can be used in wrong. The difference between the previous quote is that, here the narrator acknowledges that he deemed the information given was too early stage-wise in the relationship.

"Yes, because I can think of at least one instance where I was about to share something confidential, which would have made us a bit vulnerable. It was a leap of faith, especially since it was with someone in Zaloka that we hadn't known for very long. But we needed to address the issue and move forward. You're never 100% sure it's going to be okay, but most of the time, you don't take that leap unless you're at least 90% sure. In this case, we were probably only 60% to 70% sure. I didn't really want to do it—I would have preferred to wait until a few months down the line when we had a stronger relationship and knew each other better."

This quotation illustrates a situation in which a relationship feels in one part vulnerable because trust is built before it is fully developed, and also because of the nature of the information itself. The speaker recalls a particular incident in which, despite their little acquaintance, they had to divulge sensitive information. Making this choice required a "leap of faith," since disclosing this information might have had unfavourable effects and left them feeling exposed.

Acting quickly was required due to the situation, which forced the speaker to take a "leap of faith." Here, trust comes before total certainty. According to the speaker, they were only between 60% and 70% certain that disclosing this information would be secure. The speaker's internal conflict is reflected in this percentage. While they understand that they must trust their counterpart to achieve their shared objectives, they are also aware of the hazards, as there is a substantial likelihood that things won't turn out as planned. This situation demonstrates the careful balancing act between vulnerability and trust. The speaker felt more vulnerable as a result of the choice to divulge the information, even though the trust relationship was established. This is a recurring dynamic in the creation of trust. As the speaker here finds out, when trust is offered too soon or out of necessity, it can leave a lasting sense of uncertainty and. The urgency of resolving a problem led to the choice to divulge private information, but it also exposed the parties to possible dangers, highlighting the inherent uncertainty that comes with trust.

This remark essentially captures the idea that building trust frequently necessitates taking risks before complete security is achieved. The speaker's experience illustrates the larger idea that relationships sometimes need to be vulnerable in order to extend confidence when complete assurance is not available. The speaker made the decision to proceed in spite of the uncertainty, showing that regardless of its inherent risk trust is a crucial first step in developing connections and resolving problems.

5.2.1.2) Trust is compromised when concerns of unethical behavior or mismanagement emerge, leading to increased anxiety and dissatisfaction in the relationship.

In this next quote, the speaker talks about a time where his team were trusting a person and his organisation. His team was providing them with medical supplies, without knowing the exact number they needed, for quite a long time. Although supsicious at first, he realised only later that they were being betrayed and the trust was broken. This quote really shows a situation where a deemed trust relationship, really brought vulnerability to him and his team.

"So, this was an organization that we supported. They weren't transparent about their patients, which was a problem because, for the specific health program we support, we need patient information to ensure that our assistance aligns with their actual needs. For a long time, they refused to provide us with this information, claiming confidentiality and other reasons.

Despite this, we continued to supply them with the necessary medicines and consumables, assuming they were needed. However, I eventually realized that this wasn't the case at all, they didn't need nearly as much as they claimed. This made me very angry, not just with them for providing unrealistic numbers, but also with ourselves for continuing to support them when it was clear they didn't trust us enough to be honest. It left me feeling tense, dissatisfied, and nervous about the whole situation."

Here, an organisation was cooperating with the interlocutor and their team. Each person relied on the other to carry out their respective duties in this partnership, which was based on trust. The team of the interlocutor supplied necessary medications and supplies, relying on the health organisation to be open and truthful about their need. This confidence was essential because the health program's efficacy required correct patient data to guarantee that the assistance given was genuinely required and in line with the patients' demands.

But as time went on, the investigator learnt that the medical facility had withheld patient data, citing privacy concerns among other things. The interlocutor's team continued to provide the required resources in spite of this lack of transparency, assuming that the organisation was functioning honestly. The person conducting the interview experienced a strong sense of betrayal when it was discovered that the organisation did not actually need as many supplies as they had said. They felt vulnerable when they realised that their faith in this organisation was misguided and that their goodness had been exploited. A series of emotions were set off by this feeling of betrayal. The health organization's false information had led the interlocutor to spend time and money, and for that, they were furious. In addition, there was self-directed rage for not realising the problem sooner and for sticking with the organisation in spite of the warning signs. The interlocutor was extremely stressed and anxious because they were worried about the repercussions of having their confidence betrayed. This incident serves as a reminder of how sensitive trust is in cooperative relationships and how betraying it can have serious emotional and professional repercussions.

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The quote below explains a situation in a hopsital where the narrator and the headperson of the hospital have a trust relationship. The narrator supplied donations to the hospital and the headperson, but there is never written or seen proof that these donations are being used in goodwill or in misuse. Therefore this trust relationship leads to an openess to be relationally vulnerable, because of the uncertainty.

"We're not working directly in the hospital, but we're establishing a relationship with its head, to whom we donate items. However, we lack accountability and reporting on the use of these donations. This can lead to feelings of anxiety, frustration, or dissatisfaction, especially if there's concern that the donated items might not be reaching their intended destinations. Such situations raise worries about potential corruption and highlight the importance of a trustful relationship."

There is a trust relationship that has been formed. The hospital's director is the one who manages and uses the given items. The donor is not directly involved in the hospital's activities. Because the donor lacks direct ways of observing or confirming the use of these products, this trust is essential.

The interaction between the hospital's head and donor clearly demonstrates the interplay between trust and vulnerability. The donor depends on the hospital's chief administrator to appropriately handle the given goods. Because the donor lacks direct monitoring or

accountability mechanisms to monitor how the products are used, this trust is essential. The donor's dependence on the hospital head's honesty in this situation creates a relational vulnerability, even in the absence of clear reporting or verification procedures. Because there is an underlying uncertainty about whether the donations are being used as intended, this vulnerability causes anxiety and irritation for the contributor. Although there isn't any concrete proof of misconduct, the prospect of corruption or abuse puts the donor's trust to the test. This instance illustrates the conflict between vulnerability and trust. The hospital director must be trusted by the donor to manage the objects properly, but without a way to confirm this, they remain open to vulnerability. This ambiguity causes stress and worry, demonstrating how a lack of accountability and openness can undermine trust and increase the vulnerability of relationships.

5.2.2) Institutional trust leads to a feeling of imposed vulnerability

5.2.2.1) In a trusting organisational environment, strict protocols can still increase vulnerability, causing frustration and anxiety when independent action is restricted.

The narrator below explains an incident where his trust in his company led to him feeling vulnerability, which was imposed on him. He fully trusts his insitution, but decisions they took and rules they put upon him led to him having to delegate his work to soemone else, which made the situation worse. Had he not trusted the organisation and done it himself, he might have made the situation better, but at the cost of the trust he had.

"So it was a situation when there was a thing that I could have very easily done myself, which would have taken maybe like one minute. But then I was not kind of allowed to because I need to obey rules and protocols and guidelines and I need to go via some people and get it done by someone else. So that made me dissatisfied. It made me anxious and it made me feel miserable because the thing was not working, not even after two weeks. And I was all the time afraid that it's going to fall apart, but I was not allowed to touch it because it's an electrical thing. Okay. So we needed a biomedical engineer from the company to come and try on the screws. But that was my fault because I opened my mouth. If I would have just done it and not told for anybody, it would have been done, but not by the book."

The type of trust involved here is an institutional trust, in comparison to a direct person to person relationship here we have more of a trust atmosphere, where individuals place their confidence in the institution they work for, its policies, and its decision-making processes. This organizational trust is pivotal for creating a stable and predictable work environment,

where employees believe in the integrity, competence, and reliability of their organization. However, this trust can lead to vulnerabilities when organizational actions or decisions impose constraints or limitations on individuals.

This instance demonstrates how institutional frameworks, which are meant to uphold compliance and order, can unintentionally cause emotions of vulnerability when they cause delays in dealing with pressing matters. When people find themselves unable to influence procedures that directly affect their work and outcomes, their original trust in the organisation is put to the test. People who rely too much on institutional commands may feel vulnerable as a result of feeling limited in their ability to influence or manage their work environment.

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In a more extreme case here, the situation below shows a colleague of the narrator being kidnapped and killed, after the organisation tried to save him. During the attempted save, the organisation refused the narrator's help, because it deemed they could handle it. This resulted in a failure, the narrator being imposed to this vulnerbaility of feeling sad an anxious for what happened to the colleague. He put his institutional trust in the company, that resulted in imposed vulnerability on him.

"After nearly three months, the head of the sub-delegation announced in the morning meeting that our friend had been killed. He was found dismembered and left in a plastic bag by the side of the road. Earlier, shortly after the kidnapping, I reached out to a local commander from the opposition who might have information due to his extensive network. The next day, he returned and confirmed that the friend was with criminals, not their group, and they were demanding a ransom. He kindly offered to attempt a rescue. I rushed to inform the head of the sub-delegation about this offer, believing it might be our chance to save him.

However, I was told to politely decline the offer by our organisation as the crisis cell team in Geneva was handling the situation, and we didn't want any interruptions. I relayed this to the commander, who was disappointed but respected our decision. After the news of our friend's death, the same commander visited my office again, receiving his usual supplies like medicines and bandages. During our conversation, he expressed deep sadness, suggesting that the friend might have been saved if we had accepted his help. This left me feeling guilty, as though I could have done more."

This quotation aptly captures the relationship between trust in an institution and the consequent vulnerability that arises when that trust is put in institutional procedures. The organization's crisis management team managed the situation when a colleague was

abducted. The coworker was found dead after almost three months, which was a sad ending despite the faith that was placed in this well-established institution. A local commander's offer of assistance who was a friend of the interlocutor was turned down by the organisation, which contributed to the fatal outcome. The organisation refused to let the commander, who told the interlocutor that he knew how to rescue as he had access to vital information, since it wanted to handle things internally using its own procedures.

The trust in the organization's processes unintentionally increased vulnerability even though it was meant to guarantee careful and expert handling of the crisis. The inability to save the colleague was a result of the decision to rigidly follow these standards rather than receiving emergency aid. The interviewee consequently felt a great deal of remorse and anxiety, because of the imposed vulnerability, that was imposed by the institution he trusted. They believed that the colleague's death may have been caused by their trust in the organization's strategy and their decision to turn down the offer of assistance as a result. This imposed vulnerability serves as a reminder of how institutional actions, even when made with the intention of upholding established rules and order, can occasionally end in disastrous outcomes and personal regret if those judgements cause one to pass up early possibilities to save lives.

6) Discussion

The findings section has enlightened us with various discoveries on the research topic and interesting points that allow us to answer the research question of this study. Here below we will polish all this flow of information and discuss these results more in detail. We will reflect upon them and also individually find the sepcific literature contributions and practical contributions.

6.1) Reflection

Given the results, we have successfully addressed the research issue posed by successfully identifying and classifying several vulnerability categories that come before and after trust. These vulnerabilities are represented visually in Figure 5, which also shows where they are situated in relation to trust. This successfully answers the research question previously established of ***"What types of vulnerabilities proceed trust and which ones follow?".*** In here, we will delve deeper into these findings, examining how the nature of trust, whether in

its early or later stages, and whether it is coming from a professional, personal, or institutional contexts, makes certain types of vulnerabilities to arise.
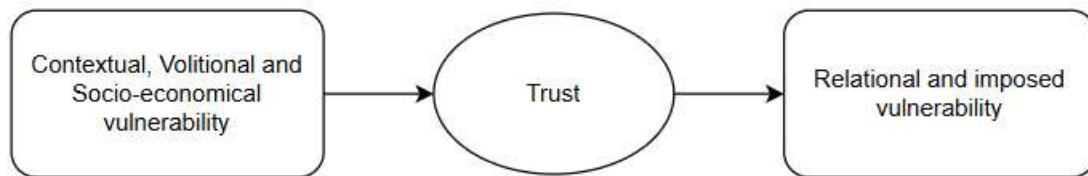

Figure 5 Research question findings

The study has revealed a strong correlation between **contextual vulnerabilities preceding interpersonal trust**. Contextual vulnerabilities are those resulting from outside variables like power disparities stemming from leadership dynamics, or from working in hostile environments. In this context, interpersonal trust refers to a close-knit, private type of trust that frequently arises from amicable relationships between people. People feel driven by these contextual vulnerabilities to seek out and develop interpersonal trust as a way to assist or cope with the risks and uncertainties they experience. Interpersonal trust becomes a vital survival and psychological resilience strategy in such circumstances. It acts as a shield, assisting people in navigating the risks and difficulties of their line of work. Humanitarian workers establish support networks by depending on close-knit connections based on trust.

The important role that **socioeconomic vulnerabilities play in the development of conditional trust** is further shown by our research. Even though socio-economic vulnerabilities are a subset of more general contextual vulnerabilities, it's crucial to remember that because of the unique way that they affect trust dynamics, they require special attention. The vulnerabilities here at play are mainly physcial dangers, that might also turn into psychological dangers if the event is traumatic or not. Within this particular context, conditional trust refers to a type of trust that is less personal and more work-oriented, arising between stakeholders who need to work together to accomplish common objectives, ensure actual survival, or just facilitate the continuation and progress of work. Conditional trust, as opposed to interpersonal trust, which is based on interpersonal interactions, is based on shared duties and mutual dependencies, enabling stakeholders to collaborate effectively. Furthermore, this type of trust is necessary for the sustainability of humanitarian workers' job as well as their physical survival in these dangerous situations. The capacity for handling risks, action coordination, and long-term goal achievement would all be seriously hampered in the absence of conditional trust. Therefore, the building of

conditional trust is driven by the need to overcome socio-economic vulnerabilities, and it is an essential element of successful humanitarian interventions.

We can see on a general note that Contextual vulnerabilities are more likely to precede trust, whether the trust is personal or not, wheter it is conditional or not.

In any type of trust relationships, the idea of **volitional vulnerability precedes the development of trust**. By definition, volitional vulnerability is the result of a conscious decision to put oneself in danger or suffer injury. The expression of volitional vulnerability can take several forms. One approach is embracing vulnerability, in which a person chooses to accept and manage their vulnerability in the hopes of achieving positive results, even though they may not have put themselves in a vulnerable circumstance on purpose. Putting oneself in a vulnerable situation on purpose in order to foster or increase trust is another example of volitional vulnerability. Here, volitional vulnerability is a deliberate, strategic choice made with the intention of fulfilling a personal need or objective rather than a passive state. This vulnerbality precedes many forms of trust relationships, wheter a friend, a colleague or a stranger. Its end goal is to reach a personal objective of ours independent of the strenght of the trust with the person.

The results of our study show that **relational vulnerabilities frequently emerge once trust has been established**, especially in professional or shorter-term trust relationships. The dynamics of the trust connections themselves are the root cause of these relational vulnerabilities, which are essentially psychological. The risks and anxieties resulting from the emotional and psychological components of interactions based on trust are known as relational vulnerabilities. They become apparent when trust has been established. Considering the nature of the trust required, it becomes reasonable that these vulnerabilities will surface after trust. In work environments, trust is frequently built to promote cooperation or the accomplishment of common objectives. The level of trust, however, might be constrained because these relationships are usually more transactional or goal-oriented. Demonstrating that relational vulnerability increases with decreasing levels of trust, explaining why it may be extremely uncommon or nonexistent in partnerships with very strong and close levels of trust.

The research has shown, **trust within an institution or organisation can frequently result in an additional kind of vulnerability called imposed vulnerability**. Institutional trust is a type of trust that is established in an organisation or institution's infrastructure, rules, regulations, and culture rather than on interpersonal interactions. This kind of trust is atmospheric in nature, shaped more by people's faith and confidence in the institution's

processes and judgements than in their personal relationships with one another. When people put their trust in an organisation, they are essentially putting their faith in the ability of the establishment to act in their best interests, honour its rules, and preserve a stable and equitable environment. This reliance on institutional trust, however, may result in imposed vulnerabilities, when people become susceptible as a result of choices or laws that are out of their control. These imposed vulnerabilities result from the structural and systemic governance of the institution that people have chosen to trust, not from decisions made on a human level. This sense of imposed vulnerability is not exclusive to work environments or groups. It can also happen in other settings where there is a need for institutional trust, such political parties or governmental organisations.

After now discussing and reflecting on the findings we will delve and touch upon how they contribute theoretically to the literature, and how they expand upong existing researches and articles.

6.2) Theoretical contributions

This research has gone deep in trying to define vulnerability, it has strived to defining and splitting the word vulnerability in very distinctive categories. One notable example is for relational vulnerability that as we have seen in the results arises in very specific scenarios with the context of trust (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008). Especially when taking into account the varying literature on trust that insisted on vulnerability being a given of trust relationships, (Bigley & Pearce, 1998) we can confidently say that the vunerability is specifically relational, and it is seen in specific types of relationships at specific stages, in this case when the exisitng trust is very loose and not very close knit. This was the small glimpse that was seen in literature of vulnerability being integrated around trust. It revolved mostly around a set stage of a trust relationship between 2 persons, and the vulnerability that came with trusting each other.

For the bigger picture, thanks to the varying literature describing the different types of vulnerabilities and this research, we have bridged an exisitng gap between scholars specialising in trust and others in vulnerability (Misztal, 2012). This study provided a contribution to both worlds, and manages to find a detailed explanation on how their interplay comes to be. Although the focus of this research has been on a very general definition of trust, we have contributed to some specifics. The most notable one would be differentiating trust from a interpersonal relationship level to a institutional level, vulnerability types are also specific to those types of trust (Geller, 1999). Also it must be noted that this

has been made possible thanks to the highly valuable humanitarian setting of the critical incidents, sheddling more light on high vulnerability contexts. That also in turn contribute to the generalisation of some of these results to more common trust relationships and vulnerability settings.

6.3) Practical contributions

This research offers a profound, experience-based knowledge of trust and vulnerability in extreme circumstances, which has substantial practical implications for the humanitarian sector specifically. In contrast to earlier research or existing books and stories that frequently depended on preconceived experiences or broad assumptions regarding the vulnerabilities encountered by humanitarian workers (Russbach & Fink, 1994), the present study is based in the firsthand experiences of individuals operating at the forefront. The research reveals subtle insights that challenge conventional beliefs. Future humanitarian workers training and preparation may be influenced by these observations. Organisations can better prepare employees to handle the complexity of trust and vulnerability in hostile situations by incorporating these results into their training programs. The study additionally highlights the psychological toll that humanitarian workers frequently face as one important issue. They are in the same risks as the people they are trying to assist, and they often witness horrible incidents. The urgent needs of those who have been harmed by war or battle, however, may take precedence over their experiences and tales. This may result in their not getting enough attention or recognition for their own psychological needs. Comprehending the psychological effects on humanitarian workers is essential for organisations that aim to offer assistance.

Despite the humanitarian context in which this study was conducted, the lessons learnt have wider implications. For example, business settings, educational institutions, and community organisations can all benefit from understanding the differences between interpersonal and institutional trust as well as the vulnerabilities that go along with it. Organisations and leaders should be aware, for instance, that in transactional or professional trust relationships, relational vulnerabilities are more likely to surface. Upon realising this, leaders can take action to improve these connections, maybe by providing more dependable assistance or opening up more transparent lines of communication to ease concerns about betrayal or uncertainty.

Although this research has been a source of knowledge and information, we must assert that there are limitations upon it. We will discuss shortly in what ways is the research limited but also what we can potentially do more and differently on a future research project.

6.4) Limitations and further research

This study provides a varied number of valuable inisghts, although of course it has its limitations. One of the main drawbacks is its research orientation of being a qualitative analysis. The main negative here of qualitative analysis is that, because it is not highly statistically significant, its conclusions cannot be extended to larger populations with the same level of confidence as those obtained from quantitative methods (Ochieng, 2009). Is those not mean our findings here cannot be translated more genrally, it just proposes that they cannot be translated just as good as if they were also more quantitative. Another possible limitation of this study can be centered around the critical incidents and the context of this research, being around humanitarian scenarios. These insights were extremely useful thanks to this specific context, but it can also be said that it might be limiting due to the lack of variation of geographical locations. It is fair to say that having locations set in countries not set in a hostile or dire setting can have some different insights perhaps.

For possible future research, an integration of a mixed method approach might be beneficial or somewhat further enhance the signification of a set of results and might also broaden the scope of this. Although it must be noted that the primary disadvantage of mixed method research is that in order to acquire extra qualitative data, researchers must either be involved in the initial data collection or have access to unique identifiers. However, it is becoming more difficult for researchers to comply with these regulations due to the increasing availability of secondary data and growing concerns about data confidentiality and safeguarding study participants, which is limiting the use of mixed-method designs (Leahey, 2007). This could be indeed done, but the time limit is one major factor to take into account.

7) Conclusion

The research subject of identifying and categorising different types of vulnerabilities that come before and after trust has been effectively addressed by this study. We have investigated through a thorough analysis how various vulnerabilities; contextual, volitional, relational, and imposed, appears in the context of trust, whether it institutional, conditional, or interpersonal.

Our main source of data was critical incidents, which we carefully examined using a careful coding procedure to get a solid set of conclusions. As the following sections show, the

study's discoveries were incredibly insightful, providing new insights and filling up significant gaps. These revelations have improved our comprehension of the complex connection between vulnerability and trust while also bridging previously disconnected areas of study.

As the conversation went on, it became evident how much this research might theoretically and practically provide. The study adds to our theoretical understanding of how trust and vulnerability interact in various circumstances and provides useful information that can be immediately implemented to enhance our day-to-day operations.

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