Empirical Paper

Katarzyna Czernek-Marszałek*, Patrycja Klimas, Dagmara Wójcik

The dark side of social relationships – the context of the video game industry

https://doi.org/10.2478/ijme-2023-0025
Received: August 1, 2023; accepted: November 22, 2023

Abstract
Paper's objectives: The paper aims to explore the negative impacts of social relationships (SR) on business activity. As a research context, the video game industry (VGI) and the video game developers' (VGDs) relationships are analyzed.
Design/methods: 17 semistructured in-depth interviews and 1 focus group interview with Polish VGDs were conducted.
Findings: (1) support for five negatives of SR previously discussed in the literature (2) recognition of the four original negatives (i.e., employee turnover, buying up employees, inefficiency/termination of interorganizational cooperation, and confidential information leakage); and (3) recognition of the harmful results of SR as an industry-dependent issue.
Originality/value: (1) Analyzing the negative consequences of SR for business, which is less frequently considered compared to the positive consequences of these relationships for business; (2) identifying dark sides previously unidentified in the literature; and (3) using the VGI as the research context.

Keywords: creative industries, dark sides, interpersonal relationships, negative effects, video game developers
JEL Classification: L14, L29, M21

1 Introduction

Business activities in the modern world are embedded in "concrete personal relations and structures (or networks) of such relations" [Granovetter, 1985, p. 490]. These personal (social) relationships can take place within and outside the organization [Jo and Ellingson, 2019]. They play an important role in the business activities [Gulati et al., 2000] and in the decision-making processes of managers [Granovetter, 1985]; however, their impacts can not only be positive, but also negative [Anderson and Jap, 2005; Abosag et al., 2016].

Researchers indicate various positive effects of social relations (SRs) for business, e.g., access to resources, including information and knowledge [Anderson and Jap, 2005; Watson, 2008]; enhancing business performance [Chen et al., 2009] and its effectiveness [Yang et al., 2011]; knowledge creation, development, and sharing [Ahmed et al., 2015]; trustworthiness between business actors that helps them in day-to-day business activities [Czernek-Marszałek, 2020a]; facilitating cooperation [Wang et al., 2016]; stimulating innovations and innovativeness [Doh and Kim, 2014]; and providing a competitive advantage [Parmentier and Mangematin, 2014].

***Corresponding author: Katarzyna Czernek-Marszałek,** Management Theory Department, University of Economics in Katowice, Katowice, Poland. E-mail: katarzyna.czernek-marszalek@uekat.pl
Patrycja Klimas, Department of Advanced Research in Management, Wroclaw University of Economics and Business, Wrocław, Poland.
Dagmara Wójcik, Management Theory Department, University of Economics in Katowice, Katowice, Poland.

Open Access. © 2024 Czernek-Marszałek et al., published by Sciendo.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 License.

In the literature, this recognition of the positive effects of SRs on business activity is visibly dominant. At the same time, the negative effects of SRs are insufficiently investigated in both theoretical and conceptual works, as well as in empirical research. Thus, there is a cognitive gap with regard to the negative effects of social relationships on business activities. Moreover, the dark sides of social relationships are worth investigating because, as some research suggests [Baumeister et al., 2001], reducing the negatives within relationships has a greater influence on the success of business relationships rather than investing purely in developing the positive facets of such relationships. For instance, unresolved conflict, being a result of close SRs, can disrupt learning and impede the sharing of information [Chang and Gotcher, 2007], which in turn may increase the emotional distance and tension between partners. High levels of conflict can be detrimental, leading to reduced productivity, cooperation, and performance [Finch et al., 2013]. It can also serve to destroy value co-creation [Mele, 2011]. Simultaneously, the dark sides of SRs are worth investigating since their negative effects may sometimes be useful. For instance, conflicts induced by social dissensions may be beneficial in the long-term perspective, as managers might be more determined and thus also engaged despite being in conflict with a particular person. Indeed, the effective handling of conflict can lead to increased productivity [Anderson and Narus, 1990], improved creativity [Gadde et al., 2010], as well as further relationship benefits [Vaaland and Håkansson, 2003] and more significant value creation [Mele, 2011].

The role of SR seems to be fundamental in creative organizations [Oakley, 2006], including their creative workers in particular [Clare, 2013]. An example of such organizations are those operating in the video game industry (VGI). Video game development (GD) is a highly project-based activity [Tschang and Szczypula, 2006; Peticca-Harris et al., 2015; Freeman and McNeese, 2019]. This engenders cooperation and coopetition [Klimas and Czakon, 2018] and gives essential meaning to the relationships utilized by video game developers (VGDs) in their business models [Klimas, 2018]. Notably, it is not only the formal and interorganizational relationships that play a role [Johns, 2006; Marchand and Hennig-Thurau, 2013], but also social connections [Parmentier and Mangematin, 2014]. This is because VGDs function as occupational communities [Weststar, 2015], industry communities [Burger-Helmchen and Cohendet, 2011], or creativity-centric technological communities [Freeman and McNeese, 2019] and rely heavily on interpersonal links. Indeed, being a member of such communities – which is practically inevitable in this industry [Dubois and Weststar, 2022] – provides opportunities for fast and efficient improvement of skills, knowledge sharing, and the development of business careers mainly through "fruitful social networks" [Weststar, 2015, p. 1238]. Moreover, it also strengthens cross-organizational cooperation [Davidovici-Nora, 2009] and thus may lead to relational advantage [Klimas and Czakon, 2022]. SRs maintained inside the industry have been proven as significantly impacting the GD process in the direct form of "influence", and in the indirect form of "inspiration" [Tschang and Szczypula, 2006]. All this means that the study of SRs, due to their key importance in VGI, is of considerable importance.

There are, however, three main gaps in the literature regarding this topic. Firstly, according to the relational view, the focus so far has been on the effects of formal (contractual) intraindustry relationships [Klimas and Czakon, 2018]. Secondly, to date, the positive rather than the negative results of formal relationships have been analyzed. Therefore, the recognition of the negative effects of informal (social, interpersonal) intraindustry relationships offers two areas of novelty simultaneously. Thirdly, although video games and gamers attract huge research attention, those who make the video games, namely the VGDs, remain under-researched [Feijoó, 2012; Weststar, 2015; Dubois and Weststar, 2022; Klimas and Czakon, 2022]. Given both the scanty knowledge and the fact that the industry context fits the cognitive gap, this paper aims to identify, characterize, and thus better understand the negative effects of social relationships on the business activity of VGDs.

The exploration of the dark sides of SRs was implemented using a qualitative approach. In total, 17 in-depth, direct, semistructured interviews (IDIs) and one 6-person focus group interview (FGI) were conducted with Polish game developers.

Our findings show that there are varying negative impacts of SRs on business in VGI, including the high costs of relationship maintenance, limited economic rationality and efficiency, hampered innovativeness,

and different opportunistic behavior. As a main contribution, this paper offers some original negative effects, i.e., turnover or buying up of employees, inefficiency/termination of interorganizational cooperation, and confidential information leakage typical for VGDs and inherent in the VGI.

The paper begins with the theoretical background presenting the negative nature of SRs in business contexts in general and takes into account the specific features of the VGI and the potential negative consequences of SRs in this industry's context. Subsequently, the research method is presented. The body of the paper contains the findings of empirical research carried out in the VGI, followed by a discussion of the findings. Finally, contributions, main limitations, and future research directions are indicated.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 The negative face of social relationships in the business context

According to Bagozzi [2006, p. 457], "business-to-business relationships are not atomistic occurrences between distinct entities so much as they are mutual, social constructions whereby the parties to the relationship jointly commit themselves to satisfying commonly held goals." Individuals' role in business interaction is central, as is also shown by research into informal networks within formal organizational structures and interorganizational relationships [Marschan et al., 1996]. For instance, when entering an organization, people bring with them potential access to their social network, based on their personal history, family, friends, and education, and which has been called the "relationship sediment" [Axelsson and Agndal, 2000]. These contacts can be used for company purposes, providing the person is willing and able to use them. Ultimately, all business relationships are formed and developed in interactions between people [Halinen and Salmi, 2001], and part of these interactions are social relationships. In this paper, SRs are defined as "informal relations between individuals, characterized by a certain degree of emotionality" [Czernek-Marszałek et al ., 2023, p. 63].

Social relationships can cause not only positive, but also negative effects on business activity [Abosag et al., 2016]. A literature review of the negative consequences of SRs on business was made by Czernek-Marszałek [2020b], pointing out the following: lower innovativeness, lower adaptability, incurring alternative costs, limiting economic efficiency, negative phenomena, e.g., nepotism; high costs associated with the development, maintenance, and also breaking of strong ties; interpersonal conflicts (IC); and greater susceptibility to opportunistic activities. The characteristics of these negative effects are presented in Table 1.

With regard to some of the above-mentioned dark sides of SRs, an example of limiting economic efficiency may be a situation when too close personal relations between business partners ultimately hamper a person's loyalty toward their own company. Then, decisions can be taken that are not optimal for business activity, but beneficial for the partner. Moreover, in some circumstances, close SRs lead to negative phenomena such as unethical business behavior giving rise, for example, to corruption [Salmi, 2000]. Personal contacts may function as a "door opener" in such a case. Moreover, they can also play a gatekeeper's role, blocking the entrance to a new relationship, thus limiting adaptability and business innovativeness, or resulting in nepotism [Czernek-Marszałek, 2020a,b].

SRs may work as a "promoter" fostering the maintenance and development of a business relationship [Halinen and Salmi, 2001], as well as an "inhibitor" hindering its maintenance and development. If a person feels humiliated or treated unfairly, the ending of a business relationship is likely to cause long-lasting damage and costs. Such broken personal relationships may erode the very basis for business exchange, particularly if the service or product exchanged is strongly dependent on individual people [Halinen and Salmi, 2001] . Problems in personal relationships, or – as business people often formulate it – a mismatch in "personal chemistry" leading to IC – may have various negative consequences for business relationships [Uzzi, 1997; Tähtinen and Blois, 2011].

Table 1. Typology of the negative effects of social relationships

No.	Type of negative effect	Characteristics
1.	Lower level of innovativeness	Remaining closed to resources (information, innovation, capital, etc.) and entities from the outside, which causes lack of diversity, reducing the inflow and use of new ideas – lack of a "fresh look" and the so-called "collective blindness."
2.	Lower adaptability	Adaptation to familiar partners resulting in lower adaptability.
3.	Incurring alternative costs	Loss of opportunities, e.g., for introducing a new product, lowering prices, etc., due to doing business with an unknown partner.
4.	Limiting economic efficiency	Suppression of economically effective activities, including entrepreneurship, due to the replacement of economic rationality with loyalty – the desire to fulfil expectations or abide by hidden rules.
5.	Negative phenomena, e.g., nepotism	The desire to meet expectations toward the other party leading to nepotism.
6.	High costs associated with the development and maintenance of strong ties	Costs of capital employed, time, engagement and other resources etc.
7.	The costs of breaking the existing strong ties (domino effect)	High risk and costs of unforeseen changes in the enterprise or partner organization resulting from strong dependence on the partner (e.g., adaptation costs and costs related to looking for a new partner).
8.	Interpersonal conflict	Quarrels or negative emotions (e.g., anger, humiliation) caused by being tired of the relationship and/or better knowledge about the partner and his/her faults.
9.	Greater susceptibility to opportunistic activities of partner(s)	Ties based on trust increasing the susceptibility of entities to partake in opportunistic activities (fraud); the more trust in a partner, the greater the potential benefit of his/her opportunism (active or passive).

Source: Czernek-Marszałek 2020b, p. 4.

2.2 The consequences of using SR in the VGI

Weststar [2015, p. 1241] claims that VGDs are linked by a dense network of social relationships, which result in a "blurring of work and leisure whereby members [of the intra-industry occupational community] are close friends with other members of their occupation and/or the work permeates non-work life." Indeed, as shown by Legault and Weststar [2012], nearly 60% of VGDs admit that they tend to socialize with other VGDs. This might be due to the primary role of creativity and individual innovativeness [Klimas and Czakon, 2018], which – in the case of the creative industries to which the VGI belongs [Lehtonen et al., 2020; Dubois and Weststar, 2022] – are significantly determined by social relationships [Clare, 2013].

Moreover, social relationships have been proven to be crucial for knowledge creation and sharing, including the exchanges of tacit knowledge and experiences [Chow and Chan, 2008] that are applied heavily in the context of R&D and new product-development activities in the high-tech industries [Allen et al., 2007] to which the VGI belongs [Zackariasson and Wilson, 2010]. The significant role of interpersonal relationships and intra-industry social embeddedness [Granovetter, 1985] results in VGDs possibly being seen as occupational communities [Weststar, 2015] or creativity-centric technological communities [Freeman and McNeese, 2019], and thus may be considered as prone to sharing beliefs, norms, values and social identity, but also to maintaining intense, strong and longitudinal informal relationships [Chow and Chan, 2008].

It is also worth noting that national video game industries, including VGDs, more often operate as gaming ecosystems, encompassing to the greatest extent technological and innovation ecosystems [Feijoó, 2012; Lehtonen et al., 2020; Klimas and Czakon, 2022]. These gaming ecosystems, as has been revealed in research on the Polish gaming innovation ecosystem, are built mainly on social connections [Klimas and Czakon, 2022].

Importantly, the social relationships exploited by VGDs are heterogeneous, taking into account the entities that are connected by them or the effects of the relationships themselves. These relationships may link VGDs with other VGDs [e.g., Johns, 2006; Klimas, 2018; Freeman and McNeese, 2019; Dubois and Weststar, 2022], but also with gamers [Burger-Helmchen and Cohendet, 2011; Marchand and Hennig-Thurau, 2013; Parmentier and Mangematin, 2014].

On the other hand, social relationships may bring various benefits [including intentional exploitation] such as value creation [Tschang, 2007], value co-creation [Davidovici-Nora, 2009; Zackariasson and Wilson, 2010], and co-innovations [Klimas and Czakon, 2022]. Nonetheless, alongside the positive effects of the social relationships of VGDs, the negative aspects are sometimes also signaled. One may point, for instance, to the tensions related to fair value capturing [Johns, 2006; Cennamo et al., 2016] or even value appropriation [Oh et al., 2015]. This reveals the interesting, but at the same time, rarely explored issue of the negative effects of social relationships in the VGI.

Our systematic literature review [Czernek-Marszałek et al., 2023] confirms the gap regarding the negative effects of the exploitation of social relationships in the creative industries, including SRs maintained by VGDs. However, given not only the broader context of the creative industries, but also the specificity of project- and team-based product-development processes, as well as the characteristics of the VGI, it is possible to consider several aspects of the potential negative influence of social relationships on VGDs.

It is an open secret that the VGI struggles with the significant problem of crunch [Cote and Harris, 2021, 2023]. It has been proven that working long hours, often with tight deadlines and high levels of stress, can lead to social isolation and strained relationships with family and friends [Peticca-Harris et al., 2015; Dubois and Weststar, 2022]. We claim that strong intra-industry SRs, recognizable in very different but dense communities of developers [Burger-Helmchen and Cohendet, 2011; Weststar, 2015; Freeman and McNeese, 2019] operating within gaming ecosystems [Feijoó, 2012; Klimas and Czakon, 2022], can lead to social and emotional engagement that may make it harder for VGDs to set clear boundaries regarding wellbeing and work–life balance. In addition, it may also deter protests against abuse or exhaustion and can increase the level of acceptance of crunch [Legault and Weststar, 2015; Larsson, 2018]. On the one hand, due to its high harmfulness, an increased level of acceptance of crunch may be seen as a negative implication of (primarily) superficial social relationships [Zaklan, 2023]. On the other hand, a higher level of crunch acceptance resulting in burnout, anxiety, and depression [Cote and Harris, 2023] may in turn have further negative implications for general social relationships, thus leading to decreased socialization [e.g., due to too high social pressure – Zaklan, 2023], withdrawal from friends and family, and conflicts in personal relationships in business and everyday life [van den Scott, 2014]. Also, these can further negatively affect business activity [Edholm et al., 2017; Larsson, 2018].

Social relationships, although intuitively linked to positive relationships such as friendship and positive emotions such as sympathy, enjoyment, fun, etc., may also involve negative emotions (e.g., anger, rage, disappointment, fury, etc.). We claim that VGDs coworking with people with whom they have this type of social relationship (i.e., embedded in negative emotions) can bear the consequences of inefficient teamwork [Scholl, 2018].

Firstly, poorer communication is due to the difficulty of expressing oneself in front of a person with whom one is in conflict. Indeed, personal conflicts and negative interpersonal relationships may lead to organizational conflicts and misunderstandings (i.e., a person is closed-minded, stubborn, and adversely affected), thus may lead to missed opportunities and poor team efficiency [Simons and Peterson, 2000].

Secondly, there are poorer time management and distraction issues due to delays in information exchange as people also avoid contact, finding it difficult to entirely focus on their work because they are plagued by negative emotions and anxiety. All of the above may lead to delays in GD [Petrillo et al., 2009].

Thirdly, when based on negative emotions, social relationships may reduce internal motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction and thus (again) lead to a reduction in efficiency and team and firm performance [Rezvani et al., 2019].

It should be emphasized, however, that the indicated negative effects of SR in the VGI were not the result of broader and in-depth research on this issue in this industry, but were only pointed out alongside other considerations; hence, research into them has been fragmentary so far.

3 Method

In the study, qualitative research following the interpretive paradigm [Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007] was used to identify the negative consequences of SR. This assumes that the reality being studied is as the interviewees themselves perceive it. This approach was justified twofold. Firstly, relationships are formed by specific individuals, and it was their perception of these relationships and their consequences that was important to us. Secondly, qualitative research is used to study issues that are new and about which little is known, as well as complex issues and those in which the social context is of great importance.

The importance of SR in the VGI – especially in negative terms – is a relatively under-recognized issue, as well as a complex one – if only because of the complexity of the relationships themselves, which consist of trust, reciprocity, affection, etc. At the same time, the context of the VGI is very specific, while this specificity – recognized through in-depth qualitative research – in many cases determines the importance of the relationships studied.

The interviewees in the research were representatives of Polish gaming companies. Their selection for the study was purposeful and made according to the following criteria: (1) the companies belong to the VGI and are well known in this environment, (2) they are members of associations/groups uniting entities in this industry and establishing cooperative relationships – various types of databases were used here, and (3) they differ in terms of the type of product offered, location, number of employees, duration of operation on the market, and legal form – ensuring the diversity important in qualitative research.

The research had two stages. First, semistructured in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with 17 interviewees between February and March 2020. Second, in June 2021, in order to deepen the findings from the IDIs, an FGI was conducted with 6 interviewees. In both cases, the key informants were developers but – as SR may link not only VGDs – but also publishers and distributors of video games. Most informants live and work in cities that are enclaves of the game industry in Poland, i.e., Wroclaw, Łódź, Katowice, Kraków, or Poznań. Finally, they were primarily the owners of private micro-firms, usually operating on the market for several years. A more detailed profile of the interviewees is presented in Table 2.

In the first stage of the research, interviewees were asked questions about the importance of SR for their business. The interviewees mentioned the benefits and negative consequences of SR in the VGI. In this paper, we focus on the latter. In the second stage of the research – the FGI – encouraged more in-depth discussion among the FGI participants, deepening the understanding of the importance of SR in the VGI, including the dark sides of SR.

The average IDI lasted 90 min, and the FGI lasted 2 h and 7 min. The IDIs were conducted face-to-face since they were done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, while the FGI was carried out remotely. Both the IDIs and FGI were recorded with the consent of the interviewees.

The material collected during both research stages was transcribed and coded. Coding began with broader groups of deductive codes in the form of negative SR consequences known from the literature (i.e., nine groups identified in Table 1). During the analysis, some of these codes were integrated (e.g., limiting innovativeness and lowering adaptability), while others were divided into separate subcategories (e.g., ICs and nepotism as reasons for a negative atmosphere at work). Then, as the material from the IDIs and FGIs was read and analyzed, these deductive groups were made more specific, taking into account the specifics and context of the VGI (see column 'characteristics' in Table 3). Moreover, new codes were added, reflecting entirely new groups of negative consequences of SRs that emerged inductively from the research material and not previously identified in the literature (e.g., buying up employees or confidential information leakage).

To ensure the trustworthiness [Lincoln and Guba, 1985] of the research, the following activities were undertaken: prolonged engagement at each of the two research stages, triangulation of methods (IDI and FGI) and persistent observation (credibility); thick description (transferability); setting up a detailed protocol; creating and checking the full transcripts and codes (dependability) and interview notes describing the setting and aspects of the interview that were noted during the interview (confirmability).

Table 2. IDI and FGI interviewee characteristics

No.	Code	Position	Establishment	Headquarters	Size [based on employment]	Form of ownership	Scope of activity	Type of activity
IDIs								
1.	G1	Owner	2007	Katowice	Middle	Priv. comp.	Global	GD
2.	G2	Owner	2012	Katowice	Middle	Priv. comp.	Global	GD
3.	G3	Game designer	2010	Wrocław	Middle	Priv. comp.	Global	GD
4.	G4	Owner	2005	Łódź	Micro	Private sole	Global	GD
5.	G5	Owner	2015	Łódź	Micro	Private sole	Global	GD
6.	G6	Owner	2005	Kamionki	Micro	Private sole	Global	GD
7.	G7	Animation director	1991	Wrocław	Big	Priv. comp.	Global	GD & GP
8.	G8	Owner	2014	Łódź	Micro	Private sole	Global	GD
9.	G9	Owner	2014	Poznań	Micro	Priv. comp.	Global	GD
10.	G10	Game designer	2007	Poznań	Micro	Private sole	Global	GD
11.	G11	Owner	2018	Łódź	Micro	Private sole	Global	GD
12.	G12	Owner	2013	Plewiska	Micro	Private sole	Global	GD
13.	R1	Owner	2011	Wrocław	Middle	Public company	Global	GD
14.	R2	Senior developer	1999	Wrocław	Big	Priv. comp.	Global	GD
15.	R3	Senior developer	2011	Bielsko- Biała	Small	Private sole	Europe	GDS
16.	D1	Publishing director	2012	Warsaw	Small	Priv. comp.	Global	GD, GP & GDS
17.	D2	Company president	2015	Warsaw	Small	Priv. comp.	Global	GD
FGI								
1.	R1	Owner	2012	Katowice	Micro	Private sole	Global	GD
2.	R2	Owner	2020	Katowice	Small	Priv. comp.	Global	GD
3.	R3	Owner	2019	Kraków	Micro	Priv. comp.	Global	GD
4.	R4	Developer	2004	Kraków	Micro	Private sole	Global	GD
5.	R5	Board member, managing director	2001	Wrocław	Small	Priv. comp.	Global	Other
6.	R6	Owner	2016	Toruń	Micro	Spin off	Global	GD & GDS

Source: own elaboration.
FGI, focus group interview; GD, game development; GDS, game distribution; GP, game publishing.

Table 3. Negative results of social relationships perceived by VGDs

No.	Negative consequences of SRs	Characteristics	Type of SR participant
1.	Negative atmosphere at work (due to IC and nepotism)	IC: 1. IC resolution resulting from too strong SR requiring time and effort, which negatively affects the functioning of the team 2. IC absorbing employees' attention on negative emotions, which does not serve productivity and creativity 3. IC resulting from strong SR, which can cause burnout and the desire to change jobs 4. IC resulting from the inability of the team to intervene in a strong relationship between a supervisor and an employee	Employees
		Unequal treatment of employees or accusations of favoritism toward those with whom a supervisor has strong SR (nepotism): 1. Greater leniency with regard to mistakes made by a person with whom a supervisor has a strong relationship 2. Hiring friends 3. Making decisions under the influence of and for the benefit of people with whom a superior has a strong relationship 4. Higher pay for a person with whom a supervisor has a closer relationship relative to other people in the same position, or the distribution of the company's salary pool taking into account an additional person hired because of strong SR with a supervisor	Employees
2.	Employee turnover	Dismissal of well-liked employees entailing the departure of others	Employees
3.	Buying up employees	High familiarity with the community making it easier to reach and 'poach' potential new employees	Employees
4.	Breakdown of business cooperation and/or high costs associated with cooperation	1. Termination of cooperation due to the mixing of private and business relations 2. In a situation of dissatisfaction with cooperation with people with whom strong SR are maintained, dilemmas about the future of the relationship 3. The high cost of ending cooperation with a person with whom SR are maintained (due to the frequent lack of formal agreements)	Co-operators
5.	High cost of building, maintaining, and breaking off SR	1. The cost of attending events, e.g., industry conferences, team-building outings, to maintain relationships that have already been established 2. Costs associated with the large amount of time spent on an ongoing basis to maintain close relationships 3. Costs outweighing the benefits of building a community of strong SR in the VGI 4. Difficulties and costs associated with fighting for one's own priorities 5. Fear of incurring costs in the form of damaging relationships in the future (domino effect) 6. Difficulty of entering some communities, more-or-less deliberately isolating others, and being closed to outsiders 7. Disturbed work–life balance, which also leads to costs (for the company and in one's personal life) and may ultimately negatively affect the functioning of the company (domino effect)	Co-operators, employees

Continued

Table 3. Continued

No.	Negative consequences of SRs	Characteristics	Type of SR participant
6.	Reducing economic rationality and efficiency [bearing alternative costs]	1. Lowering the margin in transactions with a friendly entity (bearing alternative costs) 2. Choosing the offer of friendly entities, even though from an economic point of view they are not optimal for the company (bearing alternative costs) 3. Making economic decisions as other friendly entities do – the herd phenomenon – even though these decisions are not optimal for the enterprise	Co-operators
		1. The difficulty of making certain decisions that are necessary for the good of the organization, such as admonishing or firing an employee 2. Lack of objectivity, which can lead to inefficient operations in the company	Employees
7.	Limiting innovativeness and lowering adaptability	1. Reducing the need for innovative activities when access to them is facilitated by contacts with a friendly entity 2. Being closed to other relationships and the new opportunities that they bring (low adaptability)	Employees, co-operators
8.	Risk of disclosure of important and confidential information	Greater risk of passing on information that is confidential in nature, often even by accident	Different external entities
9.	Opportunistic behavior	1. Possibility of suffering losses due to overconfidence 2. The difficulty of enforcing penalties against a trusted person with whom strong SRs are maintained	Employees, co-operators

Source: own elaboration.
IC, interpersonal conflicts; SRs, social relationships; VGDs, video game developers; VGI, video game industry.

4 Findings

The research identified nine groups of negative effects of maintaining strong SRs in the VGI. They are listed and characterized in synthetic form in Table 3. Interestingly, we found that the negatives can be categorized using the type of actor linked by social relationships. Indeed, some of the identified issues concerned co-operators only, some related to employees, and some to both groups, while one group concerned entities external to the company in general.

4.1 Negative atmosphere at work

Interviewees claimed that too strong SRs may cause a negative work atmosphere, which subsequently negatively affects the functioning of the entire company. Here they pointed out, firstly, that strong SRs foster IC, and secondly, that they foster unequal treatment of employees or generate accusations of favoring some at the expense of others. All of this, according to the interviewees, negatively affects the work atmosphere in the team and consequently the company as a whole.

In terms of ICs, these were identified in the research, especially among employees. It was indicated that resolving ICs takes a relatively long time and requires effort, which negatively affects the team. The interlocutors stressed that ICs, being a result of close SR, make employees focus on the negative emotions associated with such conflicts instead of productivity and creativity. Moreover, they stressed that SRs are so important in the industry that ICs can even lead to job burnout and the desire to change jobs:

> Such conflicts can hit the smoothness of a project very hard because they cause a bit of a distraction from the goal of working on the project, and they sort of focus people around some negative emotions, it is known, especially in the creative industry, you need to keep a lot of peace of mind, because otherwise productivity and creativity suffer a lot. And it is productivity and creativity in our industry that require such, well, energy to maintain, that is, especially after a few years of experience, it is already a bit of a struggle with burnout, and you have to stimulate yourself very strongly in order to maintain such high motivation and high productivity, and such disruptions in relationships with people, with friends, with partners can be one of the reasons… one of the reasons, for example, for wanting to change jobs because we no longer like it, because we no longer have such nice relationships [G7].

In addition, it was also emphasized that when there is a strong social relationship between a supervisor and an employee, there may also be conflicts due to the inability of the team to interfere in such a relationship:

> Well… here there are even examples, at least from us in the company, where there is a married couple in an employee relationship [...] this can sometimes lead to additional conflicts like this. Because others may just think that because they know each other so well, well, outsiders don't have a chance to sort of step into such a relationship [G7].

One of the interviewees said that due to the high negative impact of these conflicts on the team and the work atmosphere, there might even be a desire on the part of a supervisor to weaken this relationship in order to protect the team, which is the most important at work:

> We might want to weaken that relationship if we know it's hurting the rest of the team, as it were. If I'm responsible for the whole team and I know that I have a better relationship with someone this can be a problem for the whole team, because, after all, the well-being of the whole team should be more important than each individual in that team individually [G7].

The second element that negatively affects the team atmosphere and results from the maintenance of strong SRs in VGI was nepotism in supervisor–employee relations. Interviewees' opinions referred to three main themes. First, bosses may be more lenient toward mistakes made by people with whom they have strong SRs or they may make decisions under the influence of and for the benefit of such people. Second, strong ties may lead to hiring acquaintances, which may not be supported by team members. Third, it may be that a higher salary is awarded to a person with whom a supervisor has a closer relationship than to others in the same position.

All of the above can have a very negative impact on the work atmosphere in the team:

> This is quite dangerous. Because it is known that if we give too much sympathy to a person, we may just turn a blind eye to certain things that may be poorly perceived in this group. It is known that no one likes it if someone is favored, so this could, be a certain disturbance [G3].
> If I like someone more, well, by the very nature of things, I'm inclined to give more to such a person, and you have to remind yourself from time to time that you sort of treat everyone fairly, although depending on how such people are able to use or manipulate it, well, there have been situations where someone… maybe not necessarily to me, but came with some kind of request, demand to his superior, who is a closer colleague and this superior treated this person much better than others, or someone… a new manager was hired from outside and this new manager also hired his friends from the previous company and gave them a much higher salary than the people already here in a similar position. So it's a very big risk and I think it should be one of the priorities for the employer to avoid such situations [G7].

4.2 Employee turnover

Interviewees indicated that due to the generally close, informal relationships that characterize relations among people from the VGI, an important and relatively frequent negative consequence of strong SRs in this industry is the departure of additional team members in the event of the dismissal or quitting of employees or supervisors who are liked. This results in quite high employee turnover, especially in large companies:

> It often happens in large corporations that when the boss leaves, about half of the company leaves with him, or some large team does [G4].

4.3 Employee buy-ups

The relative ease of reaching out to potential new employees with the aim of "hoovering" them up was cited as another negative consequence. Notably, it was argued that this is a peculiar feature of working in this industry, and it is difficult to avoid the occurrence of such situations:

> The only perhaps negative effect that occurs, and one that cannot be prevented anyway, is that because we all know one another, a situation also sometimes occurs when someone takes an employee from one company to another. Colloquially speaking, he bribes them, but that is not exactly how it looks, of course. But such openness also results in the fact that, as it were, companies know more about each other and look at each other, and maybe sometimes it's easier to be able to, I don't know, take away an employee [D2].

4.4 Breakup of business cooperation and/or high costs associated with it

Interviewees also indicated that a negative consequence of too strong SRs maintained in the VGI is the breakdown of business cooperation or dilemmas regarding its future. Here they pointed out that it is because of the frequent mixing of private and business relationships in the VGI that such cooperation often has to end or raises problems and dilemmas:

> I would say, on the other hand, that sometimes it is more difficult. That is when there are very good relations, but unfortunately, cooperation for some reason doesn't work out, well then there is a dilemma about what to do about it. And it happened to me several times. This is then also a double-edged sword, cooperation with someone like that [FR1].

Another theme pointed out by one of the interviewees during the FGI was that in the case of business cooperation with a person with whom a close relationship is maintained, many times, various types of contracts are not written because they are based on trust. Then, if for various reasons there is a need to terminate such cooperation, it becomes formally more complex and often involves additional costs:

> I've encountered something like this, and of course, it was one of the more difficult situations I've had to resolve in the last three years, so indeed, private contacts are nice if everything goes according to plan and everyone is happy. But as it is, well contracts are always for bad times, so in general, these private contacts can also sometimes make it difficult to resolve certain situations that seem clear from at least a company management perspective [FR6].

4.5 High cost of building, maintaining, and breaking off social relationships

Interviewees also mentioned the high (diverse) costs of building, maintaining, and breaking off SRs. This applied, for example, both to relations with employees and co-operators, the costs of participation in industry events, the organization of team-building trips, or attendance at conferences, where SR are built:

> *Interviewee*: I mean, well, I think that here these various previously mentioned trips, this is a kind of cost incurred, sorry to maintain relationships, well, yes.
> *Researcher*: Are we talking about industry conferences and trade fairs?
> *Interviewee*: Well, yes, yes, because it's obviously about knowledge exchange, of course, when it comes to business contacts, but also, well, some events you go just to meet with friends and talk to each other, all these elements come together. Also, well there is some actual cost that is incurred [G6].

At the same time, it was emphasized that people who miss these types of meetings lose a lot because they are isolated from the rest of the community, and thus are intentionally excluded from social interactions, which leads to social rejection and industry ostracism.

Interviewees also said that creating a community where members maintain close SRs, as is the case in the VGI, is costly, as it requires spending a lot of time and effort. According to the interlocuters, its time-consuming nature also requires determining which relationships are a priority and – through a very conscious approach, frequent conversations, building trust, etc. – striving for a situation where the benefits of strong SR will outweigh the costs*:*

> Well, it's not possible to have a relationship with literally everyone we will potentially have in our database. It's just difficult, so it's like I said, this prioritization is insanely important to learn so that you don't get consumed by it for, I don't know, two hundred hours a week, because you can't embrace that [D1].
> I think it requires a very conscious approach to make it work really well. A very high level of confidence and a very sober assessment of reality and skills. It's extremely difficult. And I don't think I know how to do it well. The ability to speak, to talk openly about difficult topics with people. Also then, you can keep most of the pluses and mitigate, as it were, the risks associated with the minuses. They will always be there, but it can be done, I think this is such an ideal community, in my opinion. At the same time, sometimes the cost of getting through to such a community is so high […]. We're not going to try to do something like that. Because there are a lot of things that may not work out, may not succeed. Maybe something simpler. That's OK too. I think we are trying to make an ideal community, so you can see that it's difficult. [G1].

As a negative consequence of maintaining SRs with co-operators in the VGI, interviewees also emphasized the fear of costs associated with fighting for one's own priorities in business cooperation, as well as the costs associated with this fight in the form of breaking off the relationship in the future [leading to potential negative domino effects]:

> If such a business problem arises somewhere, and we have, let's say, some such friendly company with which we have agreed on something and there is some kind of scuffle somewhere, let's say that it is slightly more difficult to fight for one's priorities then, knowing that they also have their priorities. Well, we wouldn't want to spoil such a relationship either, including a business one. This can be a bit of a problem. But at the end of the day, we are adults, so we communicate, and it seems to me that if both sides are sincere and want to talk, then in the end, it is possible, somehow, to find some compromise [FR3].

Interlocutors also pointed out the difficulty of entering specific communities whose members have strong relationships. They cited the Warsaw gaming community as an example:

> Well, that's what Warsaw is. There is a community of a specific identity there, despite the fact that no one there is deliberately trying to isolate the rest of Poland from each other [laughs], but you feel, from the conversations of these people, listening to them, being there somewhere, well, you feel that there is a community stronger than the nationwide one [FR5].

Referring to the costs associated with maintaining strong SRs in the VGI, interlocutors also spoke of the costs to the company and the costs incurred in their personal lives due to the disruption of their work–life balance:

> I just had to limit my contacts with people here for the reason that my other relationships suffered because of this. Because if people are here all the time for a minimum of, let's say, these eight hours, it's usually more, they bond so strongly that it kind of transfers to life outside work. But you have to keep that balance somewhere so that you can have other relationships as well [G7].

4.6 Limitation of economic rationality and efficiency – bearing alternative costs

A reduction in economic rationality and efficiency was mentioned as another cost of maintaining SRs in the VGI.

Firstly, focus was placed on the costs of reducing margins in transactions with friendly partners or choosing offers that are not necessarily optimal from an economic point of view. Thus, the company incurred some opportunity costs. At the same time, it is worth noting that in the end, however, it was considered as having positive results (referring to the long-term benefits of maintaining strong SR):

> Yes, here, it can have a negative impact on turnover, on the profitability of the company. If these relationships are friendlier than actually, for example, the price, it may cause a slight reduction in margin, but I think further on, it comes out as a positive [R3].
> Maybe even the offer that someone would do this port, I don't know, faster, better, and that somewhere these personal considerations decide it, and not some cold calculation, so maybe here is the disadvantage right away. But sometimes we decide to work with an entity because we know someone there, or we have some connections, or we know how to work with them [FR4].

Secondly, a problem also seems to be the difficulty in making some decisions that are crucial from the point of view of the company, but at the same time, are inconvenient and unpleasant for the manager responsible for the firm. An example can be firing or admonishing employees who have close social relationships with the manager. However, as the interlocutors stressed, if these decisions were not made, the company's economic efficiency would be negatively affected:

> When firing, for example, if we have a very strong relationship. When it is good when we work, it helps, but when you have to part ways, it's even more difficult. For example, this year I, and not just me, had to lay off quite a few people I really liked, with whom I would have been happy to continue working, but it just couldn't be justified business-wise. And that has an impact on me for sure. For me it was more difficult, I stressed about it, I brooded over it to some extent, I had to work through it [G1].
> It can be a problem when the other person with whom we have such a relationship does something wrong. He or she messes up his or her job, and then you have to separate the feelings from the merits, well then it doesn't help […]. Good acquaintances, being colleagues versus problems, don't always work. And you have to learn, however, to act in such conditions, to be able to say to someone that "listen, I really like you, we've known each other for 10 years and I can steal horses with you, but this is what I'm not able to do with you, because you're doing it wrong," and these are very difficult things to say [FR5].

Interlocutors also indicated that a problem is a lack of objectivity toward employees with whom the supervisor has a strong SR, which can also lead to ineffective or irrational actions. In addition, they argued that strong SRs sometimes lead to economic decisions in favor of friendly companies, which is not always optimal for the organization (the phenomenon of herding).

4.7 Limitation of innovativeness and lower adaptability

Reduction in a firm's innovativeness was cited as another negative consequence of maintaining SR in the VGI. In this context, interviewees pointed to a reduction in the need for innovative activities when access to them was facilitated by contacts with a friendly entity. As a negative consequence of SR, they also mentioned adaptation to familiar partners resulting in lower adaptability and being closed to new relationships that provide new opportunities:

> *Researcher*: And did you perceive that these relationships can limit, for example, innovative activities?
> *Interviewee*: In a way, I think so, because if someone shows us a certain solution that he himself uses, we won't think about how to reach the same solution with other ways, right? [G10].
> I think it can happen, like in human relationships, that this repetitive nature of relationships can close our eyes to other potential relationships. And it's also the case that perhaps some issue of being used to one person or one entity sometimes makes us miss other potential relationship possibilities [FR2].

4.8 Risk of disclosure of important and confidential information

The risk of disclosure of important and confidential information, which occurs relatively frequently in the VGI, if only in connection with events such as game launches, was cited as another group of negative consequences of strong SR. Such risks, according to interviewees, apply to relationships with various external entities. Interviewees admitted that due to close relationships, sometimes even by accident, some confidential information is passed on, which can lead to various types of speculation on the stock market in the future:

> Some risks exist in the style of data leaking out by accident, that is, some betrayal of secrets, which is a certain theoretical risk […]. On the other hand, especially at the level of managers, we are in contact with those managers completely informally, sometimes we say certain things to each other […]. Someone will say that, for example, well, we have such problems in production now that, I don't know, we don't have enough people, well, you can infer, if they have not enough people, well, maybe they won't be able to meet the deadline, and this is kind of a conclusion that can affect, I don't know, speculation on the stock market, right [G7].

4.9 Opportunistic behavior

Opportunistic behavior was identified as the last group of negative consequences of maintaining close SRs in the VGI and can lead to losses due to overconfidence in a person with whom one maintains a strong SR. Informants also emphasized the difficulty of enforcing punishments against people who are overly trusted:

> If someone has some bad intentions, well, based on such a trust that is kind of created by this relationship, he can try somewhere to weave his interests into it completely unnoticed and take advantage of this trust that was kind of built beforehand [G7].
> When building a certain community in an industry or company, [you should] build it on certain pillars, and one of those pillars can be trust, for example. It can be excessive, and it can be reasonable. Because of overconfidence, I myself have such problems, certain problems or unpleasant situations can be born. This has to be taken into account, and one has to be aware of it. The problem is that when one of these pillars is trust, and this trust becomes excessive, it is very difficult to enforce some penalties, and consequences for something, [when] someone did something as a result of excessive trust […]. When we give someone a task to make a video or a character or design anything, and he, for example, does it for two weeks. And this overconfidence is such that we don't verify it, we don't monitor it, or we don't ask him what his idea or concept is. And it turns out that he totally missed the point, and it doesn't work, and it's something we really needed because we're two weeks behind […] [G8].

This type of negative consequence of maintaining strong SRs was considered relatively common in the VGI, a specific feature of which is precisely the maintenance of informal relationships based on trust.

5 Discussion

The issue of social relationships in terms of their negative consequences for business activities is overlooked in research. Therefore, it is reasoned to consider the dark sides of SR as they are claimed to be the most closely linked with profitable professional relationships – "relationships that appear to be doing well are often the most vulnerable to the forces of destruction that are quietly building beneath the surface of the relationship" [Anderson and Jap, 2005, p. 75].

The contribution of this paper is, first of all, to take up a thread hitherto far less often analyzed in the literature, concerning informal rather than formal relationships in business [Klimas and Czakon, 2018]. Although informal relationships are often established or maintained outside of business, a significant proportion of them, as the results of the VGI research have shown, are built and maintained within business and concretely affect it. This is therefore an issue worth exploring.

Secondly, the research focused on the negative consequences of social relationships for business, rather than on the positive aspects of these relationships so far more often analyzed in the literature. In doing so, existing knowledge has been developed and new insights have been provided. Regarding broadening previous knowledge, the negative consequences of SR identified earlier in other business contexts have been presented and characterized with the specific context of the VGI. Referring to the new knowledge on the topic provided by these research findings, entirely new negative effects of SR for the VGI have been identified and presented. Moreover, this was done from the perspective of VGDs (maintaining such relationships with their employees, co-operators and other entities from the outside the company), who as subjects of the VGI to date have not received much empirical analysis [Feijoó, 2012; Weststar, 2015; Dubois and Weststar, 2022; Klimas and Czakon, 2022].

Our study empirically identifies nine specific groups of negative results of SRs observed in VGI business reality. Among the dark sides identified by us and in line with previous literature (see Table 1), we should mention: (1) a negative atmosphere at work linked to negative phenomena, including nepotism [Anderson and Jap, 2005; Jack et al., 2008] or IC [Uzzi, 1997; Waluszewski and Håkansson, 2006; Tähtinen and Blois, 2011]; (2) the high cost of building, maintaining, and breaking off SR [Larson, 1992; Uzzi, 1997; Jack et al., 2008; Obukhova and Zhang, 2017]; (3) reducing economic rationality and efficiency, including bearing some alternative costs [Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1997; Mizruchi and Stearns, 2001; Anderson and Jap, 2005; Grégoire and Fisher, 2008]; (4) limiting innovativeness and lower adaptability [e.g., Uzzi, 1997; Håkansson and Snehota, 1998; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Gargiulo and Benassi, 2000; Mizruchi and Stearns, 2001; Mitręga and Żółkiewski, 2012]; and (5) opportunistic behavior [Granovetter, 1973; Wathne and Heide, 2000; Anderson and Jap, 2005; Mitręga and Żółkiewski, 2012; Seggie et al., 2013; Chowdhury et al., 2016].

The newly recognized negatives are the following: (1) employee turnover; (2) buying up of employees; (3) breakdown of business cooperation and/or high costs associated with cooperation; and (4) risk of disclosure of important and confidential information. These aspects are significant from the point of view of activities in the VGI, which are focused on the creativity of individual people, as well as the synergistic effects of the teams created by them.

It was emphasized, for example, that ICs resulting from strong SRs are particularly harmful in the VGI because they focus employees' attention on negative emotions, which does not serve the creativity and productivity that is so important in this industry. Also, an interesting feature that is quite characteristic of the VGI was the departure of employees from the company as a result of the earlier departure of others, which was indicated as a negative consequence of strong SR. In the VGI, where close informal relationships are something common and natural, such an effect occurs quite often. So does the buying up of employees – who, because of their close relationships and familiarity with the community, are often easier to reach and about whom it is easier to gain the necessary knowledge. It was also emphasized that in the VGI, business relationships are mixed with private ones, and this causes problems in business cooperation and the dilemmas related to it (e.g., how to end such cooperation). Also characteristic of the VGI and emphasized by the interlocutors were the costs of maintaining social relationships, such as those associated with frequent participation in various events, i.e., conferences or trade fairs. At the same time, emphasis was placed on the potential costs of being excluded if one does not attend such events. It was also pointed out that

being in this community requires building relationships all the time, which is time-consuming and involves commitment. A very interesting, characteristic negative side of SR in the VGI was the risk of disclosure of important and confidential information that is vital in this industry, e.g., information regarding the release date of a game, which, if leaked to the community, could be the cause of, for example, stock market speculation and certain financial costs associated with it. Finally, the interviewees emphasized that trust in co-operators in the VGI can be abused and used for acting opportunistically, while also, if not accompanied by monitoring of a partner's actions, can generate additional costs, for example, the creation of video or game characters different from that which was expected.

6 Conclusions

This study is highly contextual, therefore, next to the contribution to knowledge, it is possible to outline some managerial implications for VGDs. Given that game developers usually create strongly socially embedded occupational communities [Klimas and Czakon, 2022], it would be reasoned to make them aware that when it comes to social relationships within the industry, next to pros, there are also cons. First, taking the internal perspective on SRs inside the development studio, the negative effects may lead to a negative atmosphere at work, decreases in economic results as well as lower and later innovation outputs. Second, taking the external perspective on SRs linking the development studio with other members of VGI, the negative effects may take the form of opportunistic behavior (e.g., leading to buying up employees, disclosure of confidential information) or disruption of business cooperation and/or coopetition. Therefore, on the ground of social relationships which cannot be isolated from business activity [Granovetter, 1985], it is needed to try to keep the right balance between different types of relationships – i.e., the so-called weak ties [which may be very valuable – Czernek-Marszałek et al., 2023] and strong ties, which may provide the negative results recognized in our study.

Our research has some limitations, based on which we can also formulate directions for future research. Regarding research limitations, they may result firstly from the adopted qualitative approach. Thus, our findings are prone not only to subjectivity and cognitive bias, but also to a limited ability to draw general conclusions. One opportunity for managing the above was the research triangulation technique, but also triangulation of informants as not only VGDs were interviewed. The adopted approach was reasoned by the novelty of the area of investigation; therefore, the findings should be tested in quantitative investigation.

Secondly, there may be contextual limitations resulting from the national and industry contexts of data collection. On the one hand, the research was run in a Polish context, whereas the VGI operates globally [Klimas and Czakon, 2022]. On the other hand, the industry context was reasoned as SR are shown as critically relevant in creative [Oakley, 2006; Clare, 2013] and project-based industries [Freeman and McNeese, 2019]. We believe that consideration of SR maintained by VGDs has leveraged the opportunity to explore the negative effects of SR experienced in business practice.

The research also identified directions for future analysis of SR and its importance in business. Firstly, it would be interesting to study the comparable dark sides of SR in other industries, especially creative industries, where creativity requires the maintaining of close social relationships, as in the case of the VGI. As the research findings have shown, industry specifics can significantly differentiate the negative consequences of SR. Secondly, it would also be valuable as part of the next phase of research into the dark sides of SR in the VGI to conduct a quantitative study showing which of the identified factors are most prevalent and which have the greatest impact on business operations. Knowledge in this regard would allow developers to learn how to counteract these negative consequences, or manage them so that in the long run they translate positively into business operations in the industry. The conclusions of such studies would in part be universal because, as the research findings have shown, despite certain differences, some SR negatives in business are similar across different industries.

Funding

The work was supported by the National Science Center [grant number UMO- 2017/27/B/HS4/01051].

References

Abosag, I., Yen, D.A., Barnes, B.R. (2016), What is dark about the dark-side of business relationships? Industrial Marketing Management, No. 55, pp. 5–9.

Ahmed, J.U., Rifat, A., Nisha, N., Uddin, M.J. (2015), Deshi Dosh: the case on integration of ten rivals in the fashion industry of Bangladesh, Decision, Vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 87–103.

Allen, J., James, A.D., Gamlen, P. (2007), Formal versus informal knowledge networks in R&D: a case study using social network analysis, R&D Management, Vol. 37, No. 3, pp. 179–196.

Anderson, E., Jap, S.D. (2005), The dark side of close relationships, MIT Sloan Management Review, Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 75–82.

Anderson, J.C., Narus, J.A. (1990), A model of distributor firm and manufacturer firm working partnerships, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 54, No. 1, pp. 42–58.

Axelsson, B., Agndal, H. (2000), Internationalization of the firm. A note on the crucial role of the individual's contact network. Or fragments to a theory of individual's relationship sediments and opportunity networks as driving forces and enablers of internationalization, in: *16th IMP Conference*, Bath, UK, pp. 7–9.

Bagozzi, R.P. (2006), The role of social and self-conscious emotions in the regulation of business-to-business relationships in salesperson-customer interactions, Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, Vol. 21, No. 7, pp. 453–457.

Baumeister, R.F., Bratslavsky, E., Finkenauer, C., Vohs, K.D. (2001), Bad is stronger than good, Review of General Psychology, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 323–370.

Burger-Helmchen, T., Cohendet, P. (2011), User communities and social software in the video game industry, Long Range Planning, Vol. 44, No. 5–6, pp. 317–343.

Cennamo, C., Gu, Y., Zhu, F. (2016), Value co-creation and capture in the creative industry: the US home video game market. Working Paper.

Chang, K.H., Gotcher, D.F. (2007), Safeguarding investments and creation of transaction value in asymmetric international subcontracting relationships: the role of relationship learning and relational capital, Journal of World Business, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 477–488.

Chen, Y.S., Lin, M.J.J., Chang, C.H. (2009), The positive effects of relationship learning and absorptive capacity on innovation performance and competitive advantage in industrial markets, Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 152–158.

Chow, W.S., Chan, L.S. (2008), Social network, social trust and shared goals in organizational knowledge sharing, Information & Management, Vol. 45, No. 7, pp. 458–465.

Chowdhury, I.N., Gruber, T., Zolkiewski, J. (2016), Every cloud has a silver lining – Exploring the dark side of value co-creation in B2B Service Networks, Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 97–109.

Clare, K. (2013), The essential role of place within the creative industries: boundaries, networks and play, Cities, No. 34, pp. 52–57.

Cote, A.C., Harris, B.C. (2021), Weekends became something other people did: understanding and intervening in the habitus of video game crunch, Convergence, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 161–176.

Cote, A.C., Harris, B.C. (2023), The cruel optimism of good crunch: how game industry discourses perpetuate unsustainable labor practices, New Media & Society, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 609–627.

Czernek-Marszałek, K. (2020a), Social embeddedness and its benefits for cooperation in a tourism destination. Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, Vol. 15, March, 100401, pp. 1–17.

Czernek-Marszałek, K. (2020b), The overembeddedness impact on tourism cooperation. Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 81, March,102852, pp. 1–12.

Czernek-Marszałek, K., Klimas, P., Juszczyk, P., Wójcik, D. (2023), Social relationships: the secret ingredient of synergistic venture cooperation, in: *Bleeding-edge entrepreneurship: digitalization, blockchains, space, the ocean, and artificial intelligence*, Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 51–90.

Davidovici-Nora, M. (2009), The dynamics of co-creation in the video game industry: the case of world of Warcraft, Communications & Strategies, No. 73, pp. 43–66.

Doh, S., Kim, B. (2014), Government support for SME innovations in the regional industries: the case of government financial support program in South Korea, Research Policy, Vol. 43, No. 9, pp. 1557–1569.

Dubois, L.E., Weststar, J. (2022), Games-as-a-service: conflicted identities on the new front-line of video game development, New Media & Society, Vol. 24, No. 10, pp. 2332–2353.

Edholm, H., Lidström, M., Steghöfer, J.P., Burden, H. (2017, May), Crunch time: the reasons and effects of unpaid overtime in the games industry, In: *2017 IEEE/ACM 39th International Conference on Software Engineering: Software Engineering in Practice Track (ICSE-SEIP)*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Hoboken, New Jersey, IEEE, pp. 43–52.

Eisenhardt, K.M., Graebner, M.E. (2007), Theory building from cases: opportunities and challenges, Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 25–32.

Feijoó, C. (2012), An exploration of the mobile gaming ecosystem from developers' perspective, in: P. Zackariasson, T.L. Wilson, (Eds), *The video game industry. Formation, present state and future*, Routledge, New York, pp. 76–95.

Finch, J., Zhang, S., Geiger, S. (2013), Managing in conflict: how actors distribute conflict in an industrial network, Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 42, No. 7, pp. 1063–1073.
Freeman, G., McNeese, N.J. (2019), Exploring indie game development: team practices and social experiences in A creativity-centric technology community, Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW), Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 723–748.
Gadde, L.E., Håkansson, H., Persson, G. (2010), *Supply network strategies*, John Wiley & Sons.
Gargiulo, M., Benassi, M. (2000), Trapped in your own net? Network cohesion, structural holes, and the adaptation of social capital, Organization Science, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 183–196.
Granovetter, M.S. (1985), Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddedness, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 91, No.3, pp. 481–510.
Grégoire, Y., Fisher, R.J. (2008), Customer betrayal and retaliation: when your best customers become your worst enemies, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 247–261.
Gulati, R., Nohria, N., Zaheer, A. (2000), Strategic networks, Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 203–215.
Håkansson, H., Snehota, I. (1998), The burden of relationships or who's next? in: P. Naude, P.W. Turnbull, (Eds), *Network dynamics in international marketing*, Oxford, Pergamon, pp. 16–25.
Halinen, A., Salmi, A. (2001), Managing the informal side of business interaction: personal contacts in the critical phases of business relationships, in: *Proceedings from the 17th Annual IMP Conference*, 9–11 September, Oslo, Norway, retrieved from: https://www.impgroup.org/uploads/papers/188.pdf
Jack, S.L., Dodd, S.D., Anderson, A.R. (2008), Change and the development of entrepreneurial networks over time: a processual perspective, Entrepreneurship & Regional Development, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 125–159.
Jo, J., Ellingson, J.E. (2019), Social relationships and turnover: a multidisciplinary review and integration, Group & Organization Management, Vol. 44, No. 2, pp. 247–287.
Johns, J. (2006), Video games production networks: value capture, power relations and embeddedness, Journal of Economic Geography, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 151–180.
Klimas, P. (2018), Key resources in game developers' business models, Journal of Management and Financial Sciences, Vol. XI, No. 31, pp. 135–149.
Klimas, P., Czakon, W. (2018), Organizational innovativeness and coopetition: a study of video game developers, Review of Managerial Science, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 469–497.
Klimas, P., Czakon, W. (2022), Gaming innovation ecosystem: actors, roles and co-innovation processes, Review of Managerial Science, Vol. 16, No. 7, pp. 2213–2259.
Larson, A. (1992), Network Dyads in entrepreneurial settings: a study of the governance of exchange relationships, Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 76–104.
Larsson, C. (2018), The art of crunch – a quantitative study on the effects of a high-pressured period during video game production on organizational commitment, Master Thesis, Gothenburg University. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2077/58129.
Legault, M.-J., Weststar, J. (2012), More than the numbers: independent Analysis of the IGDA 2009, Quality of Life Survey. Retrieved on 1.08.2023 from http://gameqol.org.
Legault, M.-J., Weststar, J. (2015), *Working time among video game developers 2004-2014: Summary Report*. Retrieved on 1.08.2023 from https://www.gameqol.org.
Lehtonen, M.J., Ainamo, A., Harviainen, J. (2020), The four faces of creative industries: visualising the game industry ecosystem in Helsinki and Tokyo, Industry and Innovation, Vol. 27, No. 9, pp. 1062–1087.
Lincoln, Y.S., Guba, E.G. (1985), *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
Marchand, A., Hennig-Thurau, T. (2013), Value creation in the video game industry: industry economics, consumer benefits, and research opportunities, Journal of Interactive Marketing, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 141–157.
Marschan, R., Welch, D., Welch, L. (1996). Control in less-hierarchical multinationals: The role of personal networks and informal communication. International Business Review, Vol. 5 No. 2, 137–150.
Mele, C. (2011), Conflicts and value co-creation in project networks, Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 40, No. 8, pp. 1377–1385.
Mitręga, M., Zolkiewski, J. (2012), Negative consequences of deep relationships with suppliers: an exploratory study in Poland, Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 41, No. 5, pp. 886–894.
Mizruchi, M., Stearns, L.B. (2001), Getting deals done: the use of social networks in bank decision-making, American Sociological Review, Vol. 66, No. 5, pp. 647–672.
Nahapiet, J., Ghoshal, S. (1998), Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage, Academy of Management Review, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 242–266.
Oakley, K. (2006), Include us out—economic development and social policy in the creative industries, Cultural Trends, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 255–273.
Obukhova, E., Zhang, L. (2017), Social capital and job search in urban China: the strength-of-strong-ties hypothesis revisited, Chinese Sociological Review, Vol. 49. No. 4, pp. 340–361.
Oh, J., Koh, B., Raghunathan, S. (2015), Value appropriation between the platform provider and app developers in mobile platform mediated networks, Journal of Information Technology, Vol. 30, No. 3, pp. 245–259.

Parmentier, G., Mangematin, V. (2014), Orchestrating innovation with user communities in the creative industries, Technological Forecasting and Social Change, No. 83, pp. 40–53.
Peticca-Harris, A., Weststar, J., McKenna, S. (2015), The perils of project-based work: attempting resistance to extreme work practices in video game development. Organization, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 570–587.
Petrillo, F., Pimenta, M., Trindade, F., Dietrich, C. (2009), What went wrong? A survey of problems in game development, Computers in Entertainment, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 1–22.
Rezvani, A., Barrett, R., Khosravi, P. (2019), Investigating the relationships among team emotional intelligence, trust, conflict and team performance, Team Performance Management: An International Journal, Vol. 25, No. (1/2), pp. 120–137.
Salmi, A. (2000), Corruption: do we skip unpleasant issues of business interaction, in: *16th IMP Conference*, Bath, UK, 7–9.
Scholl, W. (2018). Effective teamwork – a theoretical model and a test in the field, in: E. Witte, J. Davis, (Eds), *Understanding group behavior*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, Psychology Press, pp. 127–146.
Seggie, S.H., Griffith, D.A., Jap, S.D. (2013), Passive and active opportunism in interorganizational exchange, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 77, No. 6, pp. 73–90.
Simons, T.L., Peterson, R.S. (2000), Task conflict and relationship conflict in top management teams: the pivotal role of intragroup trust, Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 85, No. 1, pp. 102–111
Tähtinen, J., Blois, K. (2011), The involvement and influence of emotions in problematic business relationships, Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 40, No. 6, pp. 907–918.
Tschang, F.T. (2007), Balancing the tensions between rationalization and creativity in the video games industry, Organization Science, Vol. 18, No. 6, pp. 989–1005.
Tschang, F.T., Szczypula, J. (2006), Idea creation, constructivism and evolution as key characteristics in the videogame artifact design process, European Management Journal, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 270–287.
Uzzi, B. (1997), Social structure and competition in interfirm networks: the paradox of embeddedness, Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1, pp. 35–67.
Vaaland, T.I., Håkansson, H. (2003), Exploring interorganizational conflict in complex projects, Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 127–138.
van den Scott, L.J.K. (2014), Beyond the time crunch: new directions in the sociology of time and work, Sociology Compass, Vol. 8, No. 5, pp. 478–490.
Waluszewski, A., Håkansson, H. (2006), The importance of angry actors, in: *Paper Presented at the Proceedings of the 22nd Annual IMP Conference*, Milan, Italy, retrieved from: https://www.impgroup.org/uploads/papers/5706.pdf.
Wang, B., Childerhouse, P., Kang, Y., Huo, B., Mathrani, S. (2016), Enablers of supply chain integration: interpersonal and inter-organizational relationship perspectives, Industrial Management & Data Systems, Vol. 116, No. 4, pp. 838–855.
Wathne, K.H., Heide, J.B. (2000), Opportunism in interfirm relationships: forms, outcomes, and solutions, Journal of Marketing, Vol. 64, No. 4, pp. 36–51.
Watson, A. (2008), Global music city: knowledge and geographical proximity in London's recorded music industry, Area, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 12–23.
Weststar, J. (2015), Understanding video game developers as an occupational community, Information, Communication & Society, Vol. 18, No. 10, pp. 1238–1252.
Yang, J., Brashear Alejandro, T.G., Boles, J.S. (2011), The role of social capital and knowledge transfer in selling center performance, Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 152–161.
Zackariasson, P., Wilson, T.L. (2010), Paradigm shifts in the video game industry, Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 139–151.
Zaklan, D. (2023), Why do we crunch? Developers' self-reported motivations behind the practice of crunch, Doctoral Dissertation. Breda University of Applied Science.