



SCHOOL OF
ECONOMICS AND
MANAGEMENT

Building and Maintaining Psychological Safety and Trust in Virtual Teams

Julia Lilja & Chiara Milani
June 2020

Lund University School of Economics and Management
Master's Programme in Management
MGTN59: Degree Project

Supervisor: Iva Josefsson
Examiner: Ola Mattisson

Abstract

The recent virus COVID-19 has forced companies around the world to change the way they work. Teams who usually work together in the same physical space are now experiencing working virtually from home. Previous studies demonstrate the importance of psychological safety and trust in the aim of building high-performing and effective teams. A virtual setting implies new challenges and opportunities for managers. Hence, the researchers have tried to give an answer to the question: How can managers build and maintain psychological safety and trust in a team when going virtual?

The study was conducted using a qualitative method and semi-structured interviews. Eight managers and one psychologist currently working virtually due to COVID-19 participated in the research. The results from the interviews indicate that building and maintaining psychological safety and trust become even more important in a virtual setting. Based on this, they should be considered as top priorities for managers. Tools suggested by the participants for building and maintaining psychological safety and trust are presented in the study.

Keywords: *Psychological safety, trust, virtual teams, remote working, COVID-19, management, team dynamics*

Acknowledgments

First, we want to thank our supervisor, Iva Josefsson, for your availability, your precious and constructive feedback, and your attentive supervision during our research.

Secondly, thanks to Mattias for being so supportive and helpful. Your comments and suggestions have always been thoughtful and encouraging.

Thirdly, we want to thank all interviewees, the managers and the psychologist, for sharing your time and experience. It has been of great value for us to talk with all of you.

Finally, thank you to all our MiM classmates. It has been a great experience to share this year with you and to learn from you all. Particularly we would like to thank Jakob and Vincent, for your valuable feedback that helped us improve our work.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Research Gap	2
1.3 Purpose and Research Question	2
1.4 Disposition	3
2. Theoretical Framework	4
2.1 Psychological Safety	4
2.2 Trust	5
2.3 Relationship Between Psychological Safety and Trust	6
2.4 Working Virtually	6
2.5 Virtual Teams	7
2.6 Psychological Safety and Trust in Virtual Teams	8
3. Methodology	10
3.1 Research Approach	10
3.2 Literature Review	10
3.3 Data Collection	11
3.4 Data Analysis	13
3.5 Validity, Reliability and Reflexivity	13
3.6 Ethics	15
4. Presentation of Data	17
4.1 Characteristics of Virtual Meetings	17
4.2 Definitions of Psychological Safety	20
4.3 Definitions of Trust	22
4.4 Effects from Going Virtual	25
4.5 Tools for Building and Maintaining Psychological Safety and Trust in Virtual Teams	29
4.2.1 Reflective Tools	31
4.2.2 Social Tools	32
5. Discussion	35
5.1 Theory vs. Practice	35
5.1.1 Psychological Safety in Theory and Practice	35
5.1.2 Trust in Theory and Practice	36
5.2 Discussion of Identified Themes	38
5.2.1 Tools and How to Use Them	38

5.2.2 Virtual Communication	41
5.2.3 Pressure of Working Virtually	42
5.3 Theoretical Contributions	44
5.3.1 Reflective and Social Tools	44
5.3.2 Priorities	44
5.3.3 Resistance	45
6. Conclusion	46
6.1 Conclusions	46
6.2 Limitations and Future Research	47
References	49
Appendix A	54
Appendix B	55
Appendix C	56

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The recent virus COVID-19 has forced companies around the world to change the way they work. Teams who usually work together in the same physical space are now experiencing working virtually from home. Going virtual might seem like an easy thing because the technology is already available and the switch to virtual work does not necessarily create major issues from a practical aspect. Some organizations already perform their work virtually and have been doing so for many years. Therefore, we distinguish two kinds of virtual teams: the ones that have been working virtually also before the COVID-19, and the ones who have gone virtual as a result of the ongoing crisis. Our focus in this thesis will be only on the second type of virtual team.

Despite the technology for virtual work already being available, there are factors to consider. Throughout the Master's programme in Management we have learned about the importance that psychological safety and trust have on team performance and effectiveness. Working virtually means a separation in time and space, this can weaken social belonging and trust between team members - potentially affecting productivity (Varty, O'Neill, & Hambley, 2017). As stated by Morgan (2018), on a virtual platform human connection is condensed and therefore loses in richness. Our research is particularly relevant since psychological safety and trust need to be preserved and encouraged during these difficult times. Given that, we believe that managers today need tools they can turn to for building and maintaining psychological safety and trust in their virtual teams.

1.2 Research Gap

We found a lack of information in the existing literature on how to actually build and maintain psychological safety and trust in virtual teams. We have been able to find literature regarding psychological safety and trust as well as research investigating virtual teams, but not the two explored together. It seems like there is awareness about the importance of psychological safety and trust, but it is not clear how to work on them from a virtual platform. This is what we aim to investigate further in our research. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, teams in organizations around the world have been forced into social distancing and performing their work remotely from home (Jesuthasan, Malcolm & Cantrell, 2020). As working remotely is the only way to go and online coffee breaks are the norm for many teams right now, virtual work is in the spotlight and a relevant topic for managers today.

1.3 Purpose and Research Question

It is difficult enough to build and maintain trust in a physical workplace and this process gets even harder in a virtual environment where people do not meet in person (Ferazzi, 2012). The purpose of our thesis is to outline challenges and opportunities for a manager when attempting to build psychological safety and trust on a virtual platform. Based on our findings, we want to provide managers of today with some guidelines on how they can tackle this issue and give examples of concrete tools to turn to when doing so.

The identified purpose leads us to the following research question:

- How can managers build and maintain psychological safety and trust in a team when going virtual?

1.4 Disposition

Chapter 2 - In the following chapter we look to address the theoretical framework for the research. This chapter consists of theories and terminology identifying and describing the three main concepts of the research: psychological safety, trust, and virtual teams.

Chapter 3 - The third chapter describes the methods used during the research. First, the research approach is explained, and the research design is included as part of this section. After that, comes a description of how data was collected through literature and interviews and how this data was later analyzed. Validity, reliability, and ethics are other aspects elaborated on and discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 - The fourth chapter presents the data collected through the interviews performed.

Chapter 5 - In the fifth chapter we will compare the observations made during interviews with the available theory on the topic and our own reflections.

Chapter 6 - The last chapter of the thesis, chapter six, is an attempt to summarize and draw conclusions from the discussion. In this chapter we also discuss limitations and future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Psychological Safety

Edmondson (1999) defines psychological safety as a “*shared belief by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking*” (p.354). Another definition of the concept is the following: “*psychological safety is feeling able to show and employ one’s self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career*” (Kahn, 1990, p.708).

In this thesis, we adopt a view more in line with Edmondson’s definition where psychological safety is something experienced on a group level and that people working together usually have the same view on how psychologically safe their work environment is (Edmondson, 2019). The level of psychological safety in a team impacts the way the team learns and in a group where people feel safe in expressing their questions and concerns, problems will be identified quicker, and performance will be improved faster (Edmondson, 1999). When the level of psychological safety is high, there is mutual trust and respect within a team and as a result, confidence will be built (Edmondson, 1999). In a team with a high level of psychological safety, individuals feel confident in bringing up difficult issues and express feelings and ideas, in these teams learning is happening continuously and the performance of the team is improving (Cauwelier, 2019). On more of an individual level, psychological safety is a factor that increases the employee’s level of personal engagement at work (Kahn, 1990).

According to Edmondson (2019), there are three important steps in building a team or an organization with strong psychological safety, these are:

1. Set the stage
2. Invite participation
3. Respond productively

Setting the stage is about creating a shared expectation and meaning in the team, a manager can work on this through identifying what is at stake and why it matters and communicate this to the

team (Edmondson, 2019). Inviting participation is another crucial part, this is about creating an atmosphere in the group where everyone's voice is welcomed and needed, this can be accomplished through practicing intense listening or providing guidelines for discussions in the group (Edmondson, 2019). The third step, respond productively, is about always striving towards continuous learning and a manager can reach this through practicing acknowledgements, offer help, and have brainstorming sessions in teams (Edmondson, 2019).

A common situation in today's workplaces is that performance standards are high but psychological safety is low, this results in employees being anxious about speaking up and it affects the quality of work (Edmondson, 2018).

2.2 Trust

Psychological safety is not to be confused with trust, even if they have much in common (Edmondson, 2019). As explained above, psychological safety has to do with experiences on a group level and individuals in a group usually have the same view on how psychologically safe the environment is (Edmondson, 2019). Trust, on the other hand, has been defined in many different ways in literature, for instance as “*a reliance, a belief, a willingness, an expectation, a confidence and an attitude*” (Castaldo, Premazzi & Zerbini, 2010, p.663). Trust can also be defined as an individual being willing to be vulnerable to the action of another party (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). According to Edmondson (2019), trust is connected to an individual's perception of a specific person or thing.

According to Mayer et al. (1995) trustworthiness consists of three factors. The first one is *ability*, this refers to the skills, characteristics, and competencies that permit one individual or group to influence others (Mayer & Davis, 1999). The second factor is *benevolence* which refers to the extent an individual in trust believes that the party they trust wants to do good for them (Mayer & Davis, 1999). The third factor is *integrity*, this refers to the individual in trust's perception that

the party they trust in follows a set of principles that the individual in trust accepts (Mayer & Davis, 1999).

If the level of trust is low in an organization or a team, people tend to limit their involvement in the work they are entitled to (Jaffe, 2018). If the level of trust, on the other hand, is high, individuals instead tend to give more of themselves (Jaffe, 2018). According to Gilley et al. (2010), building and developing trust is the most central aspect in improving team results.

2.3 Relationship Between Psychological Safety and Trust

According to Edmondson (1999), psychological safety is rooted in relationships with high levels of trust. Kahn (1990) argues that people in a trusting relationship find it easier to take on assignments without worrying about the consequences because they trust that potential criticism would be constructive. This suggests that trust can reduce individuals' concerns about the consequences of their behavior, something that will improve their level of psychological safety (Zhang et al., 2010). In line with this, recent studies show that psychological safety is fostered by trust in management which in return results in a stronger work engagement (Edmondson, 2018). Hence, it seems like psychological safety and trust are strongly interrelated. They both regard the relational processes and impact team effectiveness (Mayfield et al. 2016).

2.4 Working Virtually

During the 21st century, we have seen the globalization of our business, the information revolution, and improved technologies have had a great impact on how we work and are highly important aspects of the past years' evolution of organization (Windsor, 2001). Digital technologies have reshaped the way we work and have a strong position in the everyday life of many people around the globe (Webster & Randle, 2016). Virtual work can be defined as

interdependent work performed in different locations with the help of communication technologies (Martins et al. 2004). A key factor is that the spread of virtual work has been supported and relies on technological developments, and more specifically, the development of information and communication technologies (Webster & Randle, 2016). As mentioned above, the recent outbreak of COVID-19 has forced organizations around the world to start working remotely from home (Jesuthasan, Malcolm & Cantrell, 2020), putting virtual work in the spotlight now more than ever.

2.5 Virtual Teams

“A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable” (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, p.112). Hackman (1987) argues that a characteristic of teams is the need for people to collaborate in order to achieve a shared outcome. Much of the work performed in the business environment today is accomplished in teams (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Individuals with different expertise are required to work together and collaborate across boundaries to reach the goals of their organizations (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). One of the key concepts of any team working together is to create a context and a shared understanding of what the team is doing as well as why they are doing it (Mortensen, 2015). According to Mortensen (2015), teams with a shared understanding are more efficient as a result of everyone being on the same page.

As mentioned above, working virtually has been an increasing phenomenon in many organizations since the spread out of the COVID-19. The virtual team can be defined as a team that works across time zones, long distances, and organizational boundaries with the help of technology (Malhotra, Rosen & Majchrzak, 2007). In a virtual team, the members seldom meet up and work at the same location, instead, the work is performed on different geographical locations with help of technology and more specifically, long-distance communication channels (Windsor, 2001). In our research, we investigate a new kind of virtual teams: teams that due to

COVID-19 have been forced to go digital. Therefore, these virtual teams do not necessarily work across time zones or long distances, but still, they are experiencing the challenges of working in a virtual setting.

Warkentin et al. (1997) conducted research comparing virtual teams with teams working together physically. The results showed that the effectiveness of performance and communication was similar in the teams but the teams working in the same physical place reported a higher level of satisfaction (Warkentin et al., 1997). Another research investigated the effects of two weeks of trust-building exercises in 75 virtual teams (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). The exercises were shown to have a significant result on the team members' perception of their colleagues' ability, openness, and integrity (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998).

2.6 Psychological Safety and Trust in Virtual Teams

Even if a virtual team could be compared to a team working at the same location, we believe there are some aspects to consider. Morgan (2018) describes five common issues in working in a virtual team. These issues are *lack of feedback, lack of empathy, lack of control, lack of emotion, and lack of connection and commitment* (Morgan, 2018). According to Morgan (2018), relationships in virtual teams are more fragile as a result of the lack of physical interactions. In business, this can easily result in miscommunication and misunderstandings, as well as having to redo work (Morgan, 2018). If information is hardly accessed or limited, suspicion might build up in the team and from there it becomes more difficult to build trust (Mansour-Cole, 2001). One of the main difficulties in building trust in virtual teams is rooted in communication, the lack of non-verbal expressions and physical distance can many times be challenging for the group members (Greenberg et al., 2007). Lack of trust can have a negative impact on team communication and effectiveness (Kimble, 2011).

According to Windsor (2001), there is a dangerous assumption that interactions over time will result in personal relationships by themselves, in virtual work we need to think differently and

time has to be dedicated to building strong relationships. According to Ferazzi (2015), one of the most important aspects when working in a virtual team is to build common respect that is the norm in the team. Work in virtual teams also makes it more important to be focused in the meeting, all participants need to be fully present and aware of what is happening (Ferazzi, 2015).

Research shows that virtual teams with a high level of trust share personal information in the beginning phase of the team collaboration, use social messages for introductions, and establish clear roles even if they do not meet in person (Coutu, 1998). According to the research of Kanawattanachai & Yoo (2002), a virtual team that starts off with high levels of trust is likely to keep that high level throughout the whole project.

As in any team, we believe that psychological safety and trust are key aspects of performance, effectiveness, and wellbeing for the members of a virtual team. A team working together physically has a great variety of tools to try out when building and maintaining psychological safety and trust. According to Mansour-Cole (2001), there is reason to believe that virtual teams need to be creative and go beyond traditional exercises when it comes to building trust. With this study, we aim to help managers of virtual teams be creative in the research of these tools.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The thesis relies on a qualitative method. The reason for this is that the topic is complex, and we wanted to approach it with an open mindset. Qualitative research is focused on the nature of the phenomena studied and is an approach rather than a fixed set of techniques (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). It is an attempt to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018). In line with this, the qualitative research should consist of a wide variety of theoretical frames, sources of data, and samples (Tracy, 2010). Having a great number of theories and data is the best way a qualitative researcher can prepare to identify complexity and nuance in their work (Tracy, 2010). A lot of time was spent mapping the field and digging into published material within the field of the research. This resulted in us having access to a lot of potential lenses for interpreting the material.

The work started by studying a wide variety of available published material within the field of the research. Existing literature found relevant and useful were compiled in the theory review chapter and after that focus transferred to interviews.

3.2 Literature Review

There was a variety of published material connected to the topic of the research, including books, articles, reports, academic journals, and internet sources. Most of the literature was found through the Lund University library and online through LUBcat, LUBsearch, and Google Scholar. Getting familiar with the theory is a good way of helping researchers build their study on already existing knowledge, it is also a way of preventing the discovery of already existing knowledge (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

A variety of different material by Amy Edmondson is used, she has been active within her field for a long time and the publications referred to from her goes from the year 1999 to 2019. The reason behind referring to a lot of Edmondson's material is that she was one of the pioneers within the field of psychological safety through her publications, and she is one of the major experts on the subject.

3.3 Data Collection

Data has been collected through interviews with managers who started working in virtual teams as a result of the ongoing COVID-19. According to Kvale (2007), one of the biggest advantages of qualitative interviews is their openness. There are no strict rules on how to conduct a qualitative research interview but still, the researchers need to make some preparations, the first thing is to identify the purpose of the interviews and answer the questions *why*, *what* and *how* (Kvale, 2007). Our aim with conducting interviews was to gain perspective from individuals handling the topic of psychological safety and trust in virtual teams on an everyday basis. This would aid us in trying to answer the research question and give direction for the discussion and conclusion of the thesis. Throughout the work, we were reflecting on theory and expanding the theoretical review part of the thesis.

We started to reach out to potential participants early in the process and booked interviews approximately three weeks before they took place. According to Alvesson (2011), it is central to have a variation among the participants interviewed in order to cover the field of interest in a profound way. The researchers should avoid having a small group of participants that strongly over-represent the interview material and, in the end, the final result (Alvesson, 2011).

In line with this, we aimed to interview both senior and junior managers working in virtual teams. We had a hard time getting in contact with managers who were not part of our network. As a result, we decided to reach out to managers through the Master's in Management Alumni group on LinkedIn. Interviews were performed with eight managers working on companies in

different sectors around the globe. All interviews were conducted online through Skype, on average the interviews lasted around 30 minutes. We also interviewed a psychologist with a lot of experience in the field. The main reason for this was that we were interested to hear her experience with working on building psychological safety and trust in virtual teams. We were also interested in her experience of going virtual and in how her way of working had changed. The interview with the psychologist was performed over Zoom and lasted around 45 minutes.

All interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The level of transcription detail and measures taken to ensure transcript accuracy matters for the rigidity of the interviews (Tracy, 2010). We decided not to transcribe the full interviews and focused on the most important aspects of each interview. Alongside the recording, we did take some individual notes during the interviews to not miss out on personal reflections and subject feelings during the conversation (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Another key part of preparing for a qualitative interview is to plan the design of the interviews in advance (Kvale, 2007). According to Alvesson (2011), it is harder to find new and unexpected perspectives when using a high degree of structure in interviews. Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, tend to be more conversations than interviews where the topic might completely change during the interview (Leech, 2002). Based on this, we decided to perform semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Leech, 2002). There are risks with every interview approach, in particular, one risk with semi-structured interviews is that the answers from the participants might go in different directions (Alvesson, 2011). To avoid this, all participants were asked the same questions, but they were allowed to add things if they wanted to, and in some cases follow up questions were asked to get a clearer picture. Furthermore, during some interviews, we switched the order of the questions following the flow of information given by the participant. The interviews started with more simple questions about the participants' background and later we moved into the more sensitive questions. This is a way of avoiding the interview to come off as being too personal but rather about the specific issue we are focusing on (Leech, 2002). Overall, the questions aimed to direct the participants' answers as little as possible (see Appendix A).

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data gathered from interviews was performed using a thematic analysis approach (Alvesson, 2011). Instead of analyzing the collected data after all interviews were performed, the analysis was an ongoing process alongside the interviews taking place (Alvesson, 2011). According to Alvesson (2011), an ongoing interpretation of material collected gives the researcher a chance to keep the research more open in the beginning and also to adjust expectations and purpose throughout the process. As part of a thematic analysis approach, conducting interviews is not only about collecting data but also to be involved in the process and continuously identify patterns from the participants (Alvesson, 2011). Adding on to this, good qualitative research tries to go beyond the surface and notice aspects that are assumed and might have become part of the participants' common sense (Tracy, 2010). Despite starting with prepared questions about only three themes - psychological safety, trust, and virtual setting - during the interviews we came across unexpected themes and patterns, such as resistance and priorities, that have enriched our perspective, interviews, and consequently our research.

In line with this approach, we have analyzed the results from interviews continuously throughout the process. The time between interviews was spent reflecting on how the latest interview went and in some cases making some improvements for the following interview (Alvesson, 2011). Even if the theory chapter was completed before the interviews began, we continued to read literature to some extent during the interview phase. According to Alvesson (2011), this could generate new interesting insights and thoughts on the topic.

3.5 Validity, Reliability and Reflexivity

Assessing validity and reliability in qualitative research can be difficult as a result of a lacking universally accepted criteria used to evaluate and judge qualitative research (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of analytical procedures (Noble & Smith, 2015), in order to increase this, all data from interviews were collected and analyzed in the same way. The interview questions were divided between the researchers and the same person asked the same question in every interview as another measure taken to increase reliability. Validity in qualitative research refers to the accuracy and veracity of the findings from the study (Brink, 1993). In order to increase validity, it was central that the interview questions were aligned with the research questions and the overall topic of the thesis. To secure this, the interview questions were overseen by our supervisor before starting interviewing. To further increase validity in the analysis of the data, we only presented and analyzed the patterns and similarities we found from the interview answers.

Another aspect to consider when it comes to validity and reliability in qualitative research is credibility, and one way to achieve this is through so-called thick descriptions (Tracy, 2010). The author argues that thick descriptions have to do with the insight that all things observed could mean a number of things depending on the context and the researchers have to take this into consideration when presenting the data. In fulfilling this, Tracy (2010), advises researchers to provide enough details when presenting data so that the reader may come to their own conclusion when reading the study. Hence, when compiling and presenting the data in our research we aimed at showing as much of it as possible and incorporate the different opinions we identified during the interviews. We describe how we interpret the finding we made but also leave it open to the readers to make their own conclusions by presenting a wide variety of direct quotes from the participants.

Since our research has a qualitative approach and it is based on interviews, we consider it important to mention potential biases of the researchers that could mine the reliability of our research. As researchers, we would have preferred to carry out the interviews in a face-to-face meeting, and we are biased in thinking that we would probably get better answers and results in that way. But we can also say that since we are investigating psychological safety and trust in virtual teams, we think that it is interesting information for us to experiment in first person how

our selected managers will interact with us because this can allow us to better imagine them in the guise of leaders in a virtual meeting.

Another aspect connected to this is self-reflexivity, relating to our role in the research. According to Tracy (2010), self-reflexivity is connected to sincerity, meaning the transparency and honesty about the researchers' role in their work. Self-reflexivity encourages the researchers to be open with what they consider their strengths as well as shortcomings (Tracy, 2010). The field of management was new for both of us prior to starting the Master's in Management. Throughout the programme we have gained knowledge and insight on the topic, regardless, we have no practical experience from working as managers. Therefore, we believe we have an outside perspective when investigating the field. As a result, the interviews conducted with managers having practical experience from managing virtual teams was crucial in our completion of this research.

3.6 Ethics

Qualitative interviews often allow the researcher to get access to and describe personal aspects of the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2004). As a result, there are a number of ethical issues to consider for qualitative research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2004).

Before starting the design of the interviews, we agreed in what way we wanted the interviews to contribute to the thesis and how they were beneficial for our work as described earlier in the methodology. Further, all information given by the participants was handled confidentially and was only available for the researchers. In line with the ideas of procedural ethics, research participants have a right to know that their participation is voluntary (Tracy, 2010).

To fulfill this, we took the following measures. Before starting an interview, informed consent was obtained through a message clearly informing the participants that all information would be handled with confidentiality and that their participation was anonymous. In the message, we also informed that we planned on recording the interview and later transcribing them. This

information was repeated at the beginning of all interviews. Further, the message also consisted of information about the study. After the interviews, all reported data was handled carefully, and we made sure that it was not misunderstood or misrepresented when presented and discussed later in the research.

4. Presentation of Data

In this chapter data collected as reflections as well as insights from both managers and the psychologist are presented. Our main source of data was through interviews with managers currently working in virtual teams (see Appendix A). We have decided to name the managers with letters, to give some sort of identity to them, and for the reader to be able to follow what the same person has said. The letters used are A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H. Apart from interviews with managers, one interview was conducted with an experienced psychologist working with teams in organizations (see Appendix B). Five headings are used to structure the compilation of data. The headlines describe the major themes we constructed the interviews around.

4.1 Characteristics of Virtual Meetings

The first four questions during the interviews regarded the practical aspects of the managers' virtual teams (see Appendix A). This was a way for us to get information on the participants' current situation as well as an idea of how the virtual teams were working and how virtual meetings can be performed. All eight managers interviewed started working virtually as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and at the time of the interviews, they had been working virtually for about one month.

The number of times the virtual teams were meeting up varied between the managers. Many of the managers we spoke with worked in different types of teams and therefore had many different meetings to attend. The figure below provides an idea of the average number of planned virtual meetings the managers performed during a week. Unplanned meetings with individual coworkers are not included in the figure. The figure shows the percentage of managers performing more than seven planned virtual meetings per week and the percentage performing equal or less than seven meetings weekly.

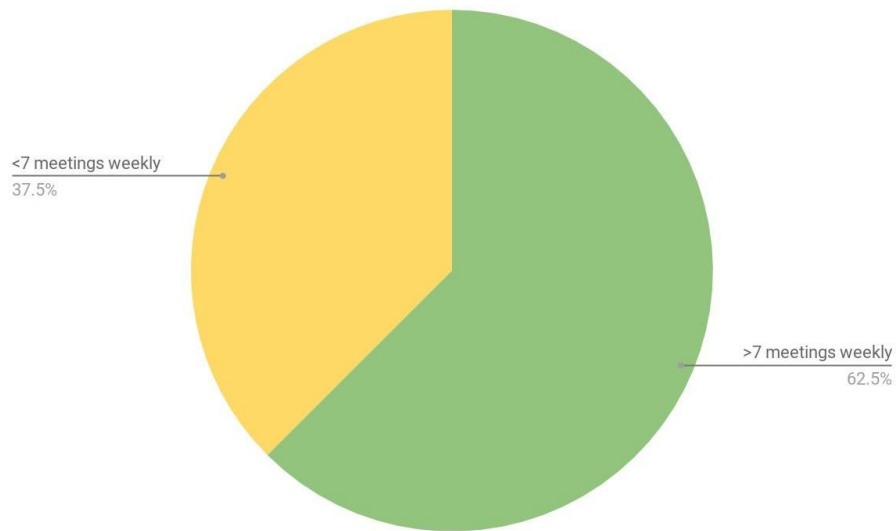


Figure 1: Number of weekly virtual meetings

Some of the managers interviewed described that the number of planned meetings increased since going virtual. Earlier, it was possible to simply go to someone's desk and ask questions without planning it in advance, but since this is no longer possible, even smaller things need to be scheduled to a larger extent. Some managers also experienced that their coworkers are in more need of support and guidance in their work since going virtual and that is resulting in more of those managers' time being spent in meetings.

From interviewing the participating managers, we got a fairly good picture of what a typical virtual meeting looks like. All the managers interviewed use programs such as Skype for Business, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Slack for their meetings. How a typical virtual meeting was set up differed amongst the participants. The figure 2 below provides an idea of how many managers used cameras all the time, the percentage using cameras most of the time but also use phone calls for some meetings and finally, the percentage never using cameras and only doing audio meetings.

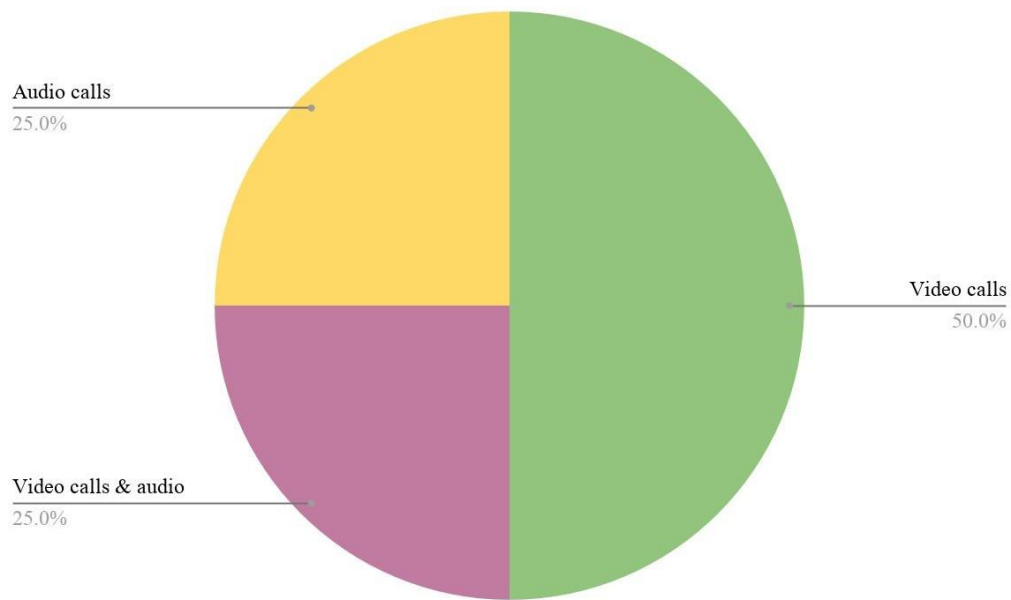


Figure 2: A typical virtual meeting

It is clear that there is a difference in the way virtual meetings are performed amongst the participants. In most of the virtual meetings, all team members have their web camera turned on throughout the meeting. Manager A who prefers video calls over audio calls said that:

“I discovered that I get much better reactions from people when they can see my face, it makes it feel a little bit more like we are together in the same room.”

The managers arguing for keeping cameras on believed that the cameras do a lot for the virtual meetings and having them on gives a better dynamic and a stronger feeling of connection to the others. Manager B argued that having the cameras on makes the meeting less anonymous and it also helps with focus during the meeting:

“In order to keep building the team and have a better connection you have to have your camera on.”

Some of the managers used a mix of virtual meetings and audio meetings, in these cases, most audio meetings were the first ones in the morning, and then throughout the day, they used cameras on. Manager F described the reason for this as follow:

“Some if they’re on the West Coast keep them off because it’s very early for them but I tend to be open using mine.”

It seemed like the use of cameras also depended on the size of the meeting. During larger virtual meetings participants preferred to keep the cameras off. The managers only using audio calls believed this is simpler and these managers also had a large number of people joining the virtual meetings which they believed made the use of cameras trickier. Manager G, who mainly used audio calls described the reason for it in the following way:

“These people that we are meeting in the virtual setup we know each other already, so I don’t think there is much need to actually see the face unless there is a specific reason to give out some kind of information and try to understand the reaction.”

To summarize, most managers interviewed used cameras during the majority of their virtual meetings. Using cameras seems to be a way of creating a stronger feeling of connection and closeness when team members are physically separated. It seems like whether managers keep cameras on or off is mainly related to personal preferences.

4.2 Definitions of Psychological Safety

One central question during the interviews was when the participants were asked to share their definitions of what psychological safety is. We were interested in hearing their personal understanding of the concept and investigating in what ways their ideas were alike and in what ways they differed. None of the managers’ definitions of psychological safety were identical and everyone had their personal idea of what the concept meant for them. Some of the managers

connected psychological safety to a feeling of being able to be yourself regardless of the situation and the circumstances. In line with this, manager C described it in the following way:

“It means that you are feeling well, that you have a working environment that works for you, that you feel safe in and that you feel comfortable in, that it is not stressful. You are happy and content with your situation.”

For others, psychological safety was connected to being heard and the feeling of daring to share thoughts and opinions in a team. Manager A explained:

“For me, psychological safety is a person’s feeling that they can say and feel things freely. So, if they are uncomfortable in a situation, they can say that they are uncomfortable in that situation. If they are happy about it, yeah, they can say that as well. And for me specifically, psychological safety is when people feel that they can come to me and tell me that there is an issue.”

Some of the participants referred to it as being able to communicate difficult topics in the team without fearing to meet opposition and being criticized. In line with this, manager H said the following:

“Psychological safety for me is feeling safe, being secure, being able to communicate things that are unpleasant openly in a group or in one-on-one meetings. Not having a fear of being hurt or personally offended. Being able to speak up and communicate what is on your mind. It relates a lot to open communication and feel valued in what you do.”

It was interesting to hear the different definitions of psychological safety. Even if every manager had their own way of describing it, the definitions were in some way connected to the feeling of being able to speak your mind freely and be yourself. Another interesting observation we made during the interviews was that at least three of the managers brought up the concept of trust when describing psychological safety. Manager B explained that:

“It has a work-related aspect which is that I can do tasks the way I want to do them, and that’s ok. That I can be who I am in the workplace. I think that trust is one of the things that you are trusted with your tasks.”

Manager D brought up trust when describing psychological safety in the following way:

“I think for me, psychological safety is all about having a place where people can put forward their ideas, thoughts, comments, and opinions openly and trust that whatever decision the team or the manager makes will be considered fairly and that the team is all working together and not against each other.”

Similarly, manager F said:

“I would probably define psychological safety as a mutual feeling of trust in a team. The openness and the vulnerability to share your opinions or thoughts free of consequences or negative action.”

At first, we were a bit surprised about the way the managers defined psychological safety and we did not expect to get such diverse responses as presented above. From literature, psychological safety is something experienced on a group level (Edmondson, 1999) and we thought more of the participants would connect it directly to this. As we analyzed the answers, though, we realized that many of the managers actually do connect the concept of psychological safety to something happening on a group level even if they do not use the precise word.

4.3 Definitions of Trust

Another central question during the interviews was how the managers defined the concept of trust. As with psychological safety, we were interested in hearing their personal understanding of the concept and investigating in what ways their ideas were alike and in what ways they differed.

When being asked this question, many of the managers hesitated a bit before answering, and the answers on how they defined trust were even more diverse and varied compared to how they defined psychological safety.

Some managers defined trust as a personal concept and connected it to being trusted to perform their work assignments to the best of their capabilities by their team members and other people in the organization. Manager B described it as follows:

“That I am being trusted that I do my best (...) trust that I am actually working eight hours a day.”

Other managers connected it to involvement, transparency, and openness in the workplace. Manager C was one of the participants who did this:

“A feeling that you can open up, that you can be transparent and know that what you say will be treated with confidentiality and that you can rely on someone.”

Manager F defined it in a similar way, arguing that:

“I think it goes with vulnerability, when people feel comfortable among others and are free of negative consequences, not fearing to be judged for thinking a certain way. Openness and ability to understand things from different aspects.”

Other managers instead connected trust to the assignments at work and defined trust as having reliable employees who will perform their tasks without the need for constant checking and supervision. Manager D defined it in the following way:

“Trust for a team is about not having the second guess that other members of the team are working for the common good.”

Manager A had a similar definition, stating that:

“Trust for me is when I can ask somebody to do something and they will do it and they don’t require me to chase them constantly.”

Another definition shared by some managers was that trust is about giving as well as receiving the freedom to experiment and make mistakes in their role and grow as individuals. Manager H expressed it as follows:

“The safety of knowing that no one lets you down (...) Trust should give a person the freedom of trying things out.”

As stated above, trust was on some occasions mentioned when the managers described psychological safety and now, as the managers described trust, we noticed the same thing. During the interviews, trust was often mixed with psychological safety. Some of the managers argued that psychological safety and trust go hand in hand and are closely related. Manager G expressed that:

“One is the cause and the other is the effect. If you have psychological safety, you can build up trust.”

After going through all answers, we were able to divide the managers’ definitions of trust into two categories. One side believes that trust is something you have from the start, it is something given and it will remain as long as it is not harmed. This side believes that trust comes first, and relationships are built on that. Manager A, for instance, stated that:

“I feel like trust comes completely naturally, for me, you have my trust until you lose it.”

According to the managers standing on the other side, trust is not there from the start and it is something you have to build up for a long period of time. These managers believe that

everything starts with the relationship and that trust is later built from there. Many managers agreed that trust requires a lot of time both building and maintaining and when disrupted it is hard to rebuild, as stated below by manager G:

“Trust is something that is built up in a long time, very hard and I think it is one level beyond the relationship. So, the relationship is the first thing that you do and then after that it is trust.”

Similarly to when the participants were describing psychological safety, their definitions of trust were different in many ways. This was not as big of a surprise for us and instead, we anticipated that the definitions would be spread since there is not one shared picture of how the concept should be defined in the literature. As stated in chapter two, the explanations of trust in literature are widely spread and there are many ideas on what it really means (Castaldo, Premazzi & Zerbini, 2010). We could clearly see the same pattern during the interviews and we were not able to draw a general conclusion on how the managers defined trust. Even if we were not able to draw any conclusion on how the managers defined trust, we found that they either described it as something that you have from the beginning or something you have to build up over time.

4.4 Effects from Going Virtual

Since all managers interviewed usually meet their teams in an office, we were interested in investigating how important they believed psychological safety and trust are in their virtual teams. We were also interested in knowing how these two aspects had been affected by going virtual.

A majority of managers argued that psychological safety had become even more important since going virtual. They believed that since the teams are not working together at the same location,

maintaining a high degree of psychological safety is central in order to be able to bring up issues in the group. Manager A and D commented on this:

“I feel like in the virtual team now, due to Corona, it is much more important to maintain psychological safety.”

“It is a little more important in a virtual team because in a virtual team you do miss out on some of the non-verbal cues, there is much more scope for misinterpretation.”

This made us think that many managers felt the insecurity that comes when the communication goes virtual. In the next chapter, we will reflect more on the consequences that these new virtual communication dynamics have on teams.

Many managers brought up that the trust aspect is also becoming increasingly important in the virtual team since the manager cannot track what the team members are doing to the same extent and have to rely on the employees to perform to the best of their capabilities. On this matter, we report what manager E and C said:

“Trust becomes much more important in this situation. I need to be able to know that they are doing their job at the best of their capabilities.”

“I think it is more important when you are working remotely. You cannot really keep track of operations and you really have to rely on people working towards the same goal. It is more important to have trust, especially.”

Manager G, instead, said that psychological safety and trust are not necessarily more important, but it is important that they are maintained.

“I don't think it is more important necessarily, but I feel like it is more important to make sure that it is maintained.”

From these data, we can drive the conclusion that for the majority of the respondents both psychological safety and trust become more important in a virtual setting. Managers are afraid to lose psychological safety because of the change in communication, whereas the fear of losing trust has been related to the inability to check and supervise team members like in an office-based setting.

From our interviews, it has been said and confirmed that psychological safety and trust are crucial elements also in a virtual team, and managers worry about the consequences a virtual setting can have on these two elements. Many managers considered psychological safety and trust to be even more important in a virtual setting. When it comes to how psychological safety and trust had been affected by going virtual the experiences varied. At the moment of the interview, about one month after going virtual, some expressed that the changes were very small or even non-existing and that the team felt the same way as before. Others had been so caught up by the current situation that they did not have the time to reflect properly on the effects. Manager G expressed:

“I have not reflected so much about it yet, but I can say that it has not gone bad and I haven't seen a negative impact yet.”

Whereas, some of the managers had experienced more of a negative change since going virtual, in particular, manager D who reported that:

“A lot of my team members need a lot more proactive reinforcement and encouragement, that has certainly increased, (...) we have had a couple of incidents of miscommunication and a bit of gossip around the team, some is due to being virtual and some are due to the stress of being in lock-down.”

Another negative experience regarded trust, manager C shared the following happening in the team:

“Speaking of trust, there have been a couple of occasions where coworkers have used this opportunity in the wrong way, they have exceeded their breaks and not participated in meetings. My reflection is that it is not a behavior that they would have had in the office, I think that it might be easier to do these kinds of things when you are not physically monitored.”

Another negative experience since going virtual is that it is no longer possible to have small talks with colleagues and instead all interactions need to be scheduled in advance. One thing that many managers brought up was the importance of still keeping in touch with the members of the team at this moment. Asking questions about how people are doing and discussing issues and challenges are highly important. A majority of the managers believed that maintaining social interactions and keeping familiarity alive are some of the biggest challenges in these times since they do not physically meet. Miscommunication is another issue brought up by some of the managers, due to the lack of regular and casual interactions. The lack of familiarity and interactions therefore impact both psychological safety, because people feel disconnected and trust, because miscommunication and misunderstandings bring problems in the tasks. Manager C stated:

“When you take away the physical meeting some aspect of communication is lost and it is not the same as before”

According to some of the managers experiencing these issues, one of the reasons miscommunications happens could be that when working virtually, individuals tend to focus on their own work to a higher extent. They are more focused on their personal task compared to the goals of the team as a whole. Manager D who had experienced this, expressed:

“I have certainly noticed that different areas of the organization have a harder time working together, people have become more narrowly focused on their area of expertise and are a lot more focused on their key areas.”

We identified communication as a recurrent theme and it will be discussed on a deeper level in the following chapter.

Common for all managers was trying to keep similar routines as they had when working together physically. Most managers agreed that the effects of going virtual were different depending on the individual and their personality. Some people really struggled since going virtual and found it difficult to be isolated at home. One manager described how some of the members of his team felt lonely from the social distancing and that this caused a drop in motivation level which could affect performance. Other managers described how some of their team members felt satisfied working from home, even enjoyed it, and that it had increased their productivity.

All the data gathered until here suggests that the managers have started to perceive some changes after one month of working virtually. Many expressed a perceived change in the communication dynamics but few connected it to be a potential threat for psychological safety and trust. At this point, we think it is fundamental to have available a series of tools that can help managers in building and maintaining psychological safety and trust when going virtual.

4.5 Tools for Building and Maintaining Psychological Safety and Trust in Virtual Teams

Almost all managers interviewed confirmed a need for more concrete tools when building and maintaining psychological safety and trust in virtual teams and expressed interest in knowing more about the tools we would identify in our work. The psychologist interviewed had experienced a strong interest in the field in the past months. Webinars on the topic that the psychologist, together with colleagues, had organized met strong interest and many events became fully booked quickly.

Despite the strong interest, none of the managers interviewed had hired someone external, like a psychologist, to strengthen psychological safety and trust in their virtual team. Some of them had done it in their teams before going virtual but many expressed that they had not even thought of

doing it in the virtual setting or that they did not know how it could be done. Manager A and G explained:

“I have not really thought about it, I think there is no need for it yet.”

“I don't really think that anybody thought about hiring a psychologist because it's probably not high on the company's priorities list, but I do think that it would benefit the teams quite a lot.”

This made us reflect on the prioritization that psychological safety and trust have and the role they play. Priorities and resistance are themes that we will explore further in the discussion.

Many of the managers did use tools for building and maintaining psychological safety and trust in their virtual teams. After summarizing the tools they described using, we have identified some patterns and we have divided and named them into two categories: reflective tools and social tools. The reflective tools include activities aiming team members to reflect individually and in group. Reflective tools are an opportunity for a team to get to know each other on a deeper and more personal level. Social tools, instead, are activities aiming to create a good atmosphere and stronger social bonds in the team. We realized that from the answers we got from interviews, it is not possible to divide the tools into tools aimed at building psychological safety and tools aimed at building trust. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the two concepts, even if different, are closely related, therefore we think that the tools proposed can help in building and maintaining both. During the interviews, we asked the managers to give concrete examples of tools that they use when building and maintaining psychological safety and trust in their virtual teams. The tools suggested by the managers are presented in the two tables below. The two last reflective tools in the first table have instead been recommended by the psychologist.

4.2.1 Reflective Tools

Tool	Description/aim of tool	How it can be done virtually
Check-in and check-out sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used in the beginning and end of meetings - Can be made in many different ways, for example letting everyone in the team explain how they feel at that moment - A way to make team members be present and feel heard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over video call or audio call
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate individual and team performance - If used continuously it can help create and build psychological safety and trust in a team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduled online feedback sessions - Surveys
Ice-breakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Done at the beginning of a meeting to make people feel more at ease - A way to reflect on a more playful level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over video call or audio call - Through short and simple exercises/games
Book club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team members are required to read the same short novel and later share reflections in the group - A way of creating a shared mindset in a team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduled online meetings - Different books e.g. StrengthsFinder (2007)
&Frankly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A program to measure and reinforce team members engagement and satisfaction - A way for a manager to identify signs of disengagement from team members in an early stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is a program available for purchasing online
Group sessions discussing common goals, purpose and expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Done through open conversations about what team members need from each other and what type of atmosphere is desirable - A way to strengthen relationships in a team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduled online meetings

Team coaching sessions led by a psychologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tailored-made team sessions - A way to develop and strengthen relationships in a team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduled online meetings with psychologist
--	--	---

Table 1: Reflective tools

4.2.2 Social Tools

Tool	Description/aim of tool	How it can be done virtually
Powerbreaks with games and quizzes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Short breaks during the day focusing on other things besides work - A way to create a light atmosphere and socialize in the team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online sessions where team members are invited - e.g. a quiz through the program Kahoot
Kudos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A tool where you openly can give “kudos” to someone in your team (thank you for doing this..., I appreciate that you...) - A way to show appreciation of an individual or a group's work performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is done through the Kudos app
HeyTaco!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A tool where you give a “taco emoji” and write a short positive message to someone in the team - A way to show appreciation of an individual or a group's work performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A tool that exists in the program Slack
After work/remote hanging out (drinking beer etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A way of socializing and strengthening relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a open virtual meeting accessible to everyone through a link
Remote team event (e.g. beer testing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special events for team-bonding planned in advance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a open virtual meeting accessible to everyone through a link
Virtual kitchen for coffee breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A way to socialize in a spontaneous way without having 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a open virtual meeting accessible to everyone through a

	to plan it in advance, people can join whenever they have a break - A way to socialize with colleagues and talk about things other than work	link - The meeting is open throughout the day and people can join when they have time
Chat	- A way to have a flowing conversation not work-related along the day	- Create a chat and invite the team members

Table 2: Social tools

Some of the tools presented above were implemented after going virtual, but others were transferred and adjusted from a physical to a virtual setting. The psychologist discussed how the tools she usually employed worked pretty much in the same way in a virtual setting, twisting them a tiny bit:

“At the beginning, I thought I would not be able to do anything I used to but I realize more and more that there are so many things we still can do.”

The psychologist interviewed highlighted that it is important to continuously work on psychological safety and trust through different activities in order to build and maintain them in a team. Something brought up by a few of the managers was that sometimes team-building exercises can meet resistance from team members. They described how you cannot force individuals to participate in activities and if people agree to be part of exercises but do not really engage in them, they will not benefit much from them. We brought up this potential situation with the psychologist who recommended managers who face this issue to turn to science and literature as a way to argue that the exercises are beneficial. According to the psychologist, a manager could claim that it is their responsibility to create the best possible conditions for the team members and that a psychologically unsafe environment can result in inefficiency. It is also central to listen to individuals who are resistant to the activities and understand why they feel the way they are. According to the psychologist, these activities do not always achieve the desired means, instead, they elicit anxiety and ambiguity leading to a resistance:

“Some people are reluctant to do these activities because they are also a bit anxious about what it means, (...) sometimes I notice the resistance and slowly invite people into having a concrete experience of it without pushing.”

It was interesting to compile all tools that the managers we interviewed use in their virtual teams. Before starting the interviews, we did not have any idea of what tools we would hear of and we also did not know if all managers even used any tools. The tools presented in the two tables in this chapter are examples of activities that a manager of a virtual team can turn to as a measure to build and maintain psychological safety and trust in a virtual team. As we started compiling them, we realized that it was not possible to divide them into tools aiming at building and maintaining trust and tools aimed at building and maintaining psychological safety. Instead, we saw a way of dividing them into reflective tools and social tools, this is something we have not found in literature and this will be further elaborated on in the discussion section of the thesis.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theory vs. Practice

In this section, we will compare the observations made during interviews with the available theory on the topic and our own reflections.

5.1.1 Psychological Safety in Theory and Practice

Considering the results from our interviews, we noticed that the managers had different definitions of what psychological safety is. The majority of the managers described it as more of an individual phenomenon rather than something experienced on a group level. From literature, it is argued that on a group level, building psychological safety can improve team performance, and on an individual level, working in a psychologically safe team can increase the level of personal engagement at work (Edmondson, 1999; Kahn, 1990). In a study that Google made on their teams' performance, psychological safety was ranked by far the most important key dynamic of effective teams (Google, 2015). We noticed that the managers interviewed did not link the concept of psychological safety to something aimed at improving performance and reaching goals. We believe this might be a result of people in general not being aware of the benefits that psychological safety could have on team results and performance.

Another thing noticed during the interviews was that, although many managers did use some tools to build and maintain psychological safety, the use of these tools many times was not consistent. As stated by the psychologist interviewed, it is important to continuously work on psychological safety and trust through different activities in order to build and maintain them in a team. We believe that this inconsistency can be a consequence of psychological safety not being a shared concept. There are many suggestions on how to build psychological safety consistently, in the study performed by Google they present a list of practices as a way of nurturing psychological safety (Google, 2015). These suggestions could be valuable, but we believe that they are applicable more on a personal level rather than a team level. One model that we have

run into multiple times during our research and that we have already presented in the literature review chapter is Edmondson's (2019) three steps: *set the stage*, *invite participation* and *respond productively*. We believe following these steps could be useful for consistently building psychological safety.

Our observation is that, in general, some of the managers we spoke to tend to skip the first stage when it comes to team exercises. The first step, *set the stage*, is about creating a shared expectation and meaning in the team, we believe it is always beneficial to create a shared purpose before starting new projects. Further, we see that the second step, *invite participation*, which relates to trying to make everyone in the team feel integrated, is something most managers do through the tools they use. The third step, *respond productively*, is connected to striving towards continuous learning and this is a step we believe some managers we spoke to do underestimate. As we saw during the interviews, some managers expressed that building and maintaining psychological safety was important, but not a top priority for them.

Hence, throughout our interviews and based on available research, we would argue that there is a misinterpretation of what psychological safety means and how it should be built.

5.1.2 Trust in Theory and Practice

An interesting observation from our interviews with managers was that there is a tendency to confound psychological safety with trust. As stated by Edmondson (2019), even if the two concepts are intertwined and have similarities, they should not be confused. Psychological safety is something experienced on a group level while trust is more of an individual phenomenon (Edmondson, 2019). The very different interpretations of trust were not a surprising result for us and confirmed the general confusion among researchers on how to define trust that we noticed in the literature review (Castaldo, Premazzi, & Zerbini, 2010). We decided to integrate both psychological safety and trust in our research and also ask the participants to define both because we were interested to compare how the concepts were described in the literature and perceived by managers.

As emerged from the carried interviews, many of the managers agreed that trust is easily disrupted and then hard to rebuild, confirming the fragility of trust already demonstrated by Currall and Epstein (2003). This concern was not raised to the same extent when it comes to psychological safety. We can, therefore, assume that trust seems to be more fragile than psychological safety in virtual teams since trust was estimated to be more easily harmed by most managers. According to the psychologist interviewed, miscommunication and misunderstanding is something that tends to undermine and damage trust in a team. This is in accord with what stated by Greenberg (2007), that trust in a virtual setting is highly dependent on the team's ability to communicate efficiently to avoid misunderstandings. When a team is lacking trust, Kimble (2011) argues it can have a negative impact on team effectiveness. Therefore, we could argue that digital communication makes trust even more fragile. Furthermore, from our interviews emerged that there is also a risk that some team members take advantage of the freedom working virtually provides. For example, through not attending virtual meetings or taking longer breaks.

Another interesting observation we made during the interviews is that trust in some cases seemed to clash with psychological safety. On one hand, many managers argued that in a psychologically safe environment, team members should feel safe enough to take risks without worrying about the consequences. This implies that making mistakes is okay and goes in line with Kahn's (1990) ideas of psychological safety as a feeling of being able to show one's self without fear of negative consequences. On the other hand, some managers described how if a team member made mistakes at work or behaved suspiciously it gives a feeling of that person not being trustworthy and that could result in trust being harmed. As stated by Schweitzer et al. (2006), when trust is harmed it creates strong negative emotions, and rebuilding trust requires a willingness from both parts.

5.2 Discussion of Identified Themes

In this part of the discussion, we aim to present the main themes identified during the interviews with managers.

5.2.1 Tools and How to Use Them

There is limited published material available about practical tools that managers can use for building and maintaining psychological safety and trust in virtual teams. As a result of the lacking literature, we have had to rely mainly on the data from the managers, the psychologist, and our own experience for this part of the discussion.

When compiling the different tools provided by managers and the psychologist in the data presentation, we decided to divide them into reflective and social tools. We believe that when building psychological safety and trust, tools from both categories are necessary and complementary. From interviewing managers, we realized that organizations put different emphasis on different tools, some tend to turn to social tools and others prefer reflective tools and we explain this behavior by the fact that there is not a very good agreement on the definitions of psychological safety and trust. We believe that the way a manager defines psychological safety and trust affects what kind of tools the manager turns to for building and maintaining them both. We intend social tools to be tools that can help create a good atmosphere and stronger social bonds in the team, and reflective tools as tools that can help teams get to know each other on a deeper and more personal level. According to Hackman (2011), it can be beneficial for a team to try out different ways of proceeding with their work, it can create a greater understanding of what the team is supposed to achieve. Therefore, in order to build and maintain psychological safety and trust, we believe that it is central to find a balance between reflective and social tools.

Some of the managers interviewed use the same tools as they did prior to going virtual, such as check-in, check-out, and feedback, while others have tried new ones since the change. Examples

of tools that have been introduced after going virtual are remote beer testing and the virtual kitchen. It seems to be possible to adapt most of the tools usually used when office-based also in a virtual setting. In line with this, the psychologist interviewed expressed positive experiences from trying out the same tools usually used in a physical setting in a virtual one.

There is not a unique way of implementing tools in a team. For instance, a tool like feedback can be done in many different ways. From our interviews with managers, we realized that in some teams, feedback sessions are seen and used as an instrument only on a personal level and something happening between the manager and a single team member. In other teams feedback is always happening on a team level, concerning how people feel and experience working together. Check-in and check-out sessions are another popular tool for many managers to use when starting and ending a meeting. Morgan (2018), described the check-in phase as a quick but powerful method to kick off a meeting and connect everyone and this is similar to how many of the managers described the benefits of the tool. We believe it is an easy tool to turn to and simple to use as it can be made in many different ways. One way of doing it can be to simply let everyone in the team shortly describe how they are feeling at that moment, another way of checking in could be through an ice-breaker.

Another reflective tool suggested by a manager is &Frankly which can give a sense of the wellbeing and engagement of team members. It makes it possible for a manager to quickly identify when team members' experience is changing. We consider ice-breakers as a reflective tool that can be done in more of a playful way.

Book clubs could be a fun way of bringing in a reflective tool for building psychological safety and trust. The books could for example be related to individual performance or mindset. It is a way to reflect together within the team, and it can result in fruitful discussions.

The possibilities for conducting virtual team-building exercises are many. Many of the social tools take a short time during the workday, for instance, sending a “kudos” to a team member

does not take a lot of time but can make a big difference. After work or remote beer tasting are examples of social tools that can be performed at the end of the workday and therefore not affect the working time. According to Petelczyc et al. (2018), play such as games requires high levels of interaction and can increase bonding among colleagues. Different types of games and quizzes are good ways of socializing, getting to know each other in a team, and creating a good atmosphere.

None of the interviewed managers had hired someone external, like a psychologist, to help the team build and maintain psychological safety and trust since going virtual. Most of the managers had not thought at all about hiring someone externally. If a manager is struggling with bringing in reflective tools in their team, we believe it could be a good idea to turn to someone like a psychologist to get some help and guidance in getting started. Moreover, hiring a psychologist can benefit the outcomes as stated by Bisbey et al. (2019), who argue that team training supported by a psychologist can result in improved performance and fewer errors.

Important to keep in mind is that every individual is different, and everyone will feel and react in different ways. Some people might prefer social tools and think that they are the best way for building psychological safety and trust. Others might have opposite opinions and prefer reflective tools when building a stronger team. If a team only implements social tools or only reflective tools, they are likely missing a chance to develop psychological safety and trust even further. Again, we believe it is a good idea to try out many different types of tools to continue building and maintaining psychological safety and trust in a team. We would also like to suggest some tools that we have used personally and found helpful for building and maintaining psychological safety and trust in our base teams. We propose a virtual adjusted version of them in Appendix C.

5.2.2 Virtual Communication

All managers agreed that communication had undergone changes since going virtual. It became clear to us that in the virtual setting, every interaction has to be scheduled in advance and some managers experienced more miscommunication since going virtual. This is in line with Greenberg et al. (2007), who argue that one of the main difficulties in virtual teams is rooted in communication and more specifically, the lack of non-verbal expressions and the physical distance. This goes in line with our observations from the interviews, it seems like the pressure on the quality of communication is higher in a virtual team, it is harder to have informal conversations since it is easier that things get misunderstood when you lack spoken words and body language. As stated by Furnham & Petrova (2010), body language complements conversations and helps regulate and coordinate communication between people. This is an aspect that is lacking in many virtual interactions.

As shown in *Figure 2* above, the majority of managers interviewed had their video cameras on when in virtual meetings. From interviews, it seems like keeping cameras on can have a double positive effect on communication, it is a way of seeing that everyone in the team is actively listening and participating in the meeting. As stated by Ferrazzi (2015), it is important to create an environment where everyone is active and participative. Some of the managers we spoke to argued that keeping the cameras on is a way of creating a feeling of closeness. Keeping cameras on can also be a way of making team members more engaged, it becomes harder to get distracted or multitask (Meyer, 2018). Based on this, in combination with Furnham & Petrovas (2010) arguments about the importance of body language, we believe that keeping cameras during virtual meetings can be a way of strengthening communication. From our interviews, some managers had team members who did not want to turn their camera on when working from home because they are in an informal setting or they did not feel comfortable on video. Despite this, we believe it is a good idea to try and have cameras on as much as possible during virtual meetings for the reasons above.

During our interviews, we also experienced in first person how a virtual meeting can be like. This made us reflect on the fact that working from home is highly affected by the person's home environment. For instance, during one of our interviews, a baby started crying and we think that probably this made the manager hastier in ending the video call. Working from home means that every team member has a different work environment. According to Jain and Kaus (2014), the workplace environment will have an effect on the body and mind of an employee. Adding on to this, the work environment has an impact on the level of satisfaction and motivation of team members (Jain & Kaus, 2014). Everyone has different prerequisites when it comes to working from home and we believe this might affect a person's ability to perform their work and also have an effect on how they are feeling.

From our observations, it seems like relationships in virtual teams tend to be more fragile as a result of the lack of physical interactions. As stated above, in business the physical distance can easily lead to miscommunication and misunderstandings, as well as having to redo work. We believe that, perhaps, when these aspects are lacking in a physical team, it becomes noticeable rather quickly and the manager is forced to do something to change the situation. In a virtual team, on the other hand, lacking these aspects might not be as clear and it is harder for the manager to detect it and take action on it. Therefore, we think it is central that a manager of a virtual team appraises the importance of communication for securing psychological safety and trust. Since team members cannot be supervised like in a physical setting, communication and the flow of information are the only things that can be actually controlled.

5.2.3 Pressure of Working Virtually

Even if working virtually many times is functioning well from a technical aspect and all managers interviewed were able to perform their work completely from home, the pressure of working virtually was something we many times came back to during the interviews. Many managers experienced virtual meetings as more exhausting compared to physical ones and had

team members experiencing the same thing. This goes in line with the research comparing virtual and physical teams that found physical teams to have a higher level of satisfaction (Warkentin et al., 1997). Scheduling and performing virtual interviews ourselves gave us first-hand experience on issues one could face in a virtual setting. As mentioned above we had to reschedule two interviews due to miscommunication. Other issues we faced during some of the interviews were technical problems with audio, video, and background noise. We experienced all issues as stressful to some extent and can truly relate to the managers' concerns on the topic.

We believe that some people might have a harder time expressing themselves in a virtual meeting. It is probably highly dependent on the individual and how comfortable a person is feeling in a virtual setting. Some people might not be bothered at all while others might struggle a lot and that could result in these people not being as invested in a virtual meeting as they would be in a physical one. As stated by Cauwelier (2019), individuals in a team with strong psychological safety are confident in bringing up difficult issues and express feelings and ideas and this was confirmed by managers during the interviews.

As mentioned before, many managers believed trust to be more fragile in a virtual setting and if questions do not flow freely in a team and team members do not know what they are expected to do from others, we believe trust could be harmed. As stated by Jaffe (2018), low trust in a team tends to result in people limiting their involvement in the work. In line with this, building and maintaining trust is highly central for team development (Gilley et al., 2010).

From our observations, it seems like the strengths of a virtual team also can be its weaknesses. Working in virtual teams is a more fragile way of working and has the potential to lead to a variety of undesirable outcomes. In order to avoid being in a situation where psychological safety and trust are at risk due to team members feeling exhausted when working virtually or disliking it, we believe measures taken in the early stages would be beneficial. Turning to the reflective and social tools used by the interviewed managers and the psychologist could be a way of keeping a strong team through maintaining psychological safety and trust.

5.3 Theoretical Contributions

Our research allowed us to identify three additional main concepts that connect with psychological safety and trust: social and reflective tools, priorities, and resistance. The distinction among tools is our own categorization, whereas the other two are recurrent themes we have spotted during our interviews but have not found in the available literature.

5.3.1 Reflective and Social Tools

We decided to divide the tools we identified from interviewing managers into social tools and reflective tools. This was not something we found in the literature but instead something we thought could be valuable for managers when deciding what tools to use. When compiling all the tools we found, it became clear to us that they had different characteristics and that they seemed to work in different ways. As mentioned earlier, we consider reflective tools as an opportunity for a team to get to know each other on a deeper and more personal level. We see social tools, instead, as activities aiming to create a good atmosphere and stronger social bonds in the team. We believe that through categorizing the tools it becomes clearer what their aim is and it will also be easier for managers to pick tools aimed at specific areas they want to work within their teams. We also think that categorizing the tools can provide a more shared definition of what psychological safety and trust are. This distinction among tools could be seen as a first step and it is something that could be further developed in different ways, for example through more categories.

5.3.2 Priorities

Even if there is a great variation of tools for building and maintaining psychological safety and trust available out there, a manager will have to take action and schedule time to make it happen. Some of the managers we talked to described how the current COVID-19 situation makes their companies particularly focused on results and work processes. This results in team activities not

being high on the priority list for everyone right now. Some managers believed that if they would be forced to work virtually longer they might do more team activities but for now, the focus is on results. We find this interesting since all managers believe psychological safety and trust to be very important in their teams, many even said it became more important since going virtual. Despite this, some are not prioritizing it. As stated by Cartwright (2007), personal values can influence the way of setting priorities, therefore we can argue that psychological safety and trust are not a top priority for all the interviewees. That being said, psychological safety and trust have not been studied under this lens in the available research and this could warrant further studies.

5.3.3 Resistance

Another issue with the use of tools brought up by some of the managers was resistance from team members. They describe that it can be hard to make all members on board with the exercises. If individuals agree to be part of team-building activities but do not really engage in them, they will not benefit much from them. According to Baker (1987), a common reason behind resistance to change from employees is an uncertainty of what effects it will have. Even if team-building activities is not an organizational change, we believe that some team members' uncertainty about the effects could be a common reason for resistance in this setting as well.

We believe that it is important not to avoid exercises if there is resistance but instead try different tools and make it a priority in the team. This current situation could be seen as an opportunity to build and maintain even stronger psychological safety and trust in teams. It is a unique chance to test the team in a new setting and if time and effort are spent in continuing developing the team in these circumstances, the team might go out of isolation even stronger than before. Therefore, we think that resistance is a big theme to investigate in correlation with psychological safety and trust.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Conclusions

To conclude, working virtually has become a new reality for many teams after the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual teams will likely become a more frequent phenomenon in the future business environment as technology develops. This new way of working has challenged teams in many ways and forced changes in the way work is performed.

This study aimed to outline challenges and opportunities for managers today when attempting to build and maintain psychological safety and trust in virtual teams. The goal was to provide useful guidelines and tools that can help managers in building and maintaining psychological safety. With this research, we have tried to give an answer to the question: How can managers build and maintain psychological safety and trust in a team when going virtual?

To gather data we interviewed eight managers and one psychologist currently working virtually due to COVID-19. During the interviews the participants showed an interest in the topic, confirming the value and need of this research. The data collected from interviews make it evident that managers are adapting their working routines to a virtual setting and they are trying to make the best out of their teams by trial and error. The research indicates that managers find it more challenging to work virtually, the virtual setting puts pressure on team members and the lack of physical interaction affects teams' dynamics.

The research found that all managers use tools to some extent, some have employed new ones since going virtual and others use the same ones as prior to going virtual. We gathered all tools presented by managers and the psychologist and compiled them into two groups, reflective tools and social tools. The tools presented in this thesis are examples given by the interviewed managers and the psychologist but there are many more out there. Some managers tend to use social tools over reflective tools and vice versa. The research also found that the managers'

definitions of psychological safety and trust were diverse, and this is believed to have an impact on what kind of tools they prefer to use. We would suggest trying out many different ones, make sure to include both reflective and social ones, and try to find out what works best for each team.

To conclude, it seems like psychological safety and trust are considered even more important in a virtual team, and therefore, we believe it should be at the top of the priority list. If ignored or underestimated there is a risk of damaging them which could impact teams negatively. Based on our research, we believe that managers today should keep dedicating time to build and maintain psychological safety and trust in their now virtual teams, dealing with the resistance that they could meet. Hence, psychological safety and trust should be seen as an ongoing process that needs constant and continuous work.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

One of the limitations of our study is the limited variety of our sample. All our interviewed managers attended the Master's programme in Management at Lund University. Since psychological safety and trust are important parts of the programme, they might be more familiar with the concepts than people in general. To still have a diverse group of participants, we tried to reach out to managers of different genders, from different countries and with different years of experience of working as a manager. Despite being a limitation, we believe it could also be interesting to do future research interviewing managers who have not attended the Master's in Management and comparing the results.

Another area that would be interesting to research further is to instead of managers, investigate team members' views on how to build and maintain psychological safety and trust when going virtual. It would be ideal to do this in the teams of the managers already interviewed and see in what ways the managers and team members' views correlate and in what ways they do not. It could be interesting to see if psychological safety is a concept shared on a team level, as stated

by Edmondson (1999), or if even within the same team, discrepancies on how to define psychological safety can be spotted.

Another limitation of our research that we recognize could be that we only investigate teams that already knew each other before going virtual. The teams had already consolidated team dynamics when working together in the same physical setting and we believe this had an effect on how the psychological safety and trust were in the now virtual teams. We have not investigated any teams where working virtually is the normal setting and that have started working remotely from the beginning. This is another interesting area for future research and we believe it would be enriching to compare these two different virtual teams and individuate similarities and differences.

We can imagine that when the COVID-19 pandemic is a thing of the past and teams are back together working in the office, some will have ended up stronger and others weaker. Hence, another interesting future research would be to explore what actions managers of teams took during the period of virtual work and what effects this had on their teams. This could be a way of investigating what actions led to a better or worse team experience. Adding on to this, it would also be interesting to see if teams, once back to normality, will keep in the restored daily life what they had learnt only after going virtual.

References

Alvesson, M. (2011). *Doing interviews*. London: SAGE Publications.

Alvesson, M. & Sjöldberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Baker, S.L. (1987). Managing Resistance to Change, *Critical issues in library personnel management*, no. 29, pp. 53-61.

Bisbey, T.M., Reyes, D.L., Traylor, A.M. & Salas, E. (2019). Teams of Psychologists Helping Teams: The Evolution of the Science of Team Training. *American Psychological Association*, vol. 74, no. 3, pp. 278-289.

Brink, H.I.L. (1993). Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research. *Curationis*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 35-38.

Brinkmann, S. & Kvale, S. (2006). Confronting the Ethics of Qualitative Research. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 157-181.

Cartwright, T. (2007). *Setting Priorities: Personal Values, Organizational Results*. Wiley: Center for Creative Leadership (CCL).

Castaldo, S., Premazzi, K. & Zerbini F. (2010). The Meaning(s) of Trust. A Content Analysis on the Diverse Conceptualizations of Trust. *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 96, no. 4, pp. 657-668.

Cauwelier, P. (2019). Building high-performance teams through action learning, *Action Learning: Research and Practice*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 68-76.

Coutu, D. L. (1998). Trust in virtual teams. *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 76, no. 3, pp. 20-21.

Currall, S. C., Epstein, M. J. (2003). The Fragility of Organizational Trust: Lessons From the Rise and Fall of Enron, *Organizational Dynamics*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 193-206.

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 350-383.

Edmondson, A & Lei, Z. (2014). Psychological Safety: The History, Renaissance, and Future of an Interpersonal Construct. *The Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, vol. 1, pp. 23-43.

Edmondson, A. (2018). The Importance of Psychological Safety. *HR Magazine*. Available online: <https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/the-importance-of-psychological-safety> [Accessed 18/3-2020]

Edmondson, A. (2019). *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation and Growth*. New Jersey: Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ferazzi, K. (2012). How to Build Trust in a Virtual Workplace? *Harvard Business Review*. Available online: <https://hbr.org/2012/10/how-to-build-trust-in-virtual> [Accessed 18/3-2020]

Ferazzi, K. (2015). How to Run a Great Virtual Meeting. *Harvard Business Review*. Available online: <https://hbr.org/2015/03/how-to-run-a-great-virtual-meeting> [Accessed 18/3-2020]

Furnham, A. & Petrova. E. (2010). *Body language in business, decoding the signals*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Greenberg, C.C., Regenbogen, S.E., Studdert, D.M., Lipsitz, S., Rogers, S.O., Zinner, M.J. & Gawande, A.A. (2007). Patterns of Communication Breakdowns Resulting in Injury to Surgical Patients. *The American College of Surgeons*, vol. 204, no. 4, pp. 533-540.

Gilley, J. W., Morris, M. L., Waite, A. M., Coates, T., & Veliquette, A. (2010). Integrated theoretical model for building effective teams. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 7-28.

Google. (2015). Guide: Understand team effectiveness. Available online: <https://rework.withgoogle.com/print/guides/5721312655835136/> [Accessed 14/5-2020].

Hackman, J.R. (2011), *Collaborative Intelligence: Using Teams to Solve Hard Problems*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Hackman, J.R. (1987). The design of work teams. In J.W.Loresch (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior*. Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Jain, R., & Kaus, S. (2014). Impact of Work Environment on Job Satisfaction. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 547-554.

Jarvenpaa, S. L., Knoll, K. & Leidner, D. E. (1998). Is anybody out there? Antecedents of trust in global virtual teams. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 29-64.

Jaffe, D. (2018). The Essential Importance Of Trust: How To Build It Or Restore It. *Forbes*. Available at:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dennisjaffe/2018/12/05/the-essential-importance-of-trust-how-to-build-it-or-restore-it/#695a983a64fe> [Accessed 18/3-2020]

Jesuthasan, R., Malcolm, T. & Cantrell, S. (2020). How the Coronavirus Crisis Is Redefining Jobs. *Harvard Business Review*. Available online:

<https://hbr.org/2020/04/how-the-coronavirus-crisis-is-redefining-jobs> [Accessed 2/6-2020]

Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 692-724.

Kanawattanachaia, P. & Yoo, Y. (2002). Dynamic Nature of Trust in Virtual Teams. Case Western Reserve University, USA. *Sprouts: Working Papers on Information Systems*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 42-58.

Katzenbach, J. R. & Smith, D. K. (1992). The wisdom of teams: Creating the high-performance organization. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Kimble, C. (2011). Building Effective Virtual Teams: How to Overcome the Problems of Trust and Identity in Virtual Teams. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence* Available through: LUBSearch website: <https://www.lub.lu.se/en/find/lubsearch> [Accessed 20/3-2020].

Kvale, S. (2007). Doing interviews. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Leech, B.L. (2002). Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 665-668.

Malhotra, A., Rosen, B. & Majchrzak, A. (2007). Leading Virtual Teams. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, vol. 21, pp. 60-70.

Mansour-Cole, D. (2001), Team identity formation in virtual teams. In book: *Virtual Teams, Advances in Interdisciplinary Studies of Work Teams*, pp. 41-58. Editors: Beyerlein, M., Johnson, D. & Beyerlein, S. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Martins, L.L., Gilson, L.L., & Maynard, M.T. (2004). Virtual teams: What do we know and where do we go from here? *Journal of Management*, vol. 30 no. 6, pp. 805-835.

Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (1999). The effect of the performance appraisal system on trust for management: A field quasi-experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 84 no.1, pp.123-136.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H. & Schoorman, F.D. (1995). An Integrated Model of Organizational Trust. *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 709-734.

Mayfield, C.O., Tombaugh, J.R. & Lee, M. (2016). Psychological Collectivism and Team Effectiveness: Moderating effects of trust and psychological safety. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 78-94.

Meyer, C. (2018). Better virtual meetings, *Journal of Accountancy*, vol. 226, no.4, pp. 21-22.

Morgan, N. (2018). Can you hear me? How to connect with people in a virtual world. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press.

Morgan, G. & Smircich, L. (1980). The Case for Qualitative Research. *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 491-500.

Mortensen, M. (2015). A First-Time Manager's Guide to Leading Virtual Teams, *Harvard Business Review*. Available online:
<https://hbr.org/2015/09/a-first-time-managers-guide-to-leading-virtual-teams> [Accessed 18/3-2020]

Noble, H. & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, vol. 18, pp. 34-35.

Ofman, D. (2004). Core Qualities: A Gateway to Human Resources. London: Cyan Communications.

Petelczyc, C.A., Capezio, A., Wang, L., Simon Lloyd D. Restubog, S.L.D. & Aquino, K. (2018). Play at Work: An Integrative Review and Agenda for Future Research Claire Aislinn. *Journal of Management*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 161-190.

Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R. (2016). Research Methods for Business. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Schweitzer, M.E., Hershey, J.C. & Bradlow, E.T. (2006). Promises and Lies: Restoring Violated Trust. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, vol. 101, no. 1, pp. 1-19

Tracy, S. (2010). Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 16, pp. 837-851.

Varty, C.T., O'Neill, T.A. & Hambley, L. (2017). Leading Anywhere Workers: A Scientific and Practical Framework. In book: Anywhere Working and the New Era of Telecommuting. Editor: Blount, Y. & Gloet, M. Pennsylvania: IGI Global.

Warkentin, M. E., Sayeed, L., & Hightower, R. (1997). Virtual teams versus fact-to-fact teams; An exploratory study of a web-based conference system. *Decision Sciences*, vol. 28, pp. 975-996.

Webster, J. & Randle, K. (2016). *Virtual Workers and the Global Labour Market*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Windsor, D. (2001), *International Virtual Teams: Opportunities and Issues*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

.

Appendix A

Q1. Before we start, do you have any questions for us?

Q2. Could you briefly tell us about your current position?

Q3. When did you start working virtually?

Q4. How often do you meet your virtual team?

Q5. Describe a typical virtual meeting (microphone on/off, webcam on/off, etc.)

Q6. What is psychological safety for you?

Q7. What is trust for you?

Q8. In this case how important would you say psychological safety and trust is for you in your virtual team?

Q9. Have you ever done team-building exercises in your virtual team? What kind of exercises and tools did you use? How often?

Q10. Could you describe how you make sure that everyone in the virtual team feels at ease?

Q11. Have you ever hired a psychologist (or other professional) to improve psychological safety and trust in your virtual team?

Q12. Have the psychological safety and trust in your team been affected from going virtual?

Q13. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix B

Q1. Before we start, do you have any questions for us?

Q2. For how long have you been working with team development in organizations?

Q3. In your opinion, is psychological safety and trust equally important in virtual teams as in physical teams? Why?

Q4. In the teams that you work with, how have psychological safety and trust been affected by going virtual?

Q5. In your experience, what are the best tools to use when building psychological safety and trust in teams?

Q6. What tools have you been using recently when working with virtual teams?

Q7. Have you adjusted the tools you usually use or are you using different/new tools?

Q8. From our interviews with managers, many have brought up that it can be difficult to make everyone in the team feel onboard with the measures taken and this can affect the outcome of, for example, team-building exercises. How can you make members of a team feel that these exercises are not a waste of time?

Q9. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix C

Reflective tools

Tool	Description/aim of tool	How it can be done virtually
Ofman's core quality quadrant model (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the core qualities, pitfalls, allergies and challenges of the team members - A model that can help members of a team getting to know each other better and understand what potential friction could arise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The model is available online. Each member gets a copy of it and fills it in. After this, the team as a whole discusses the results of each member - Scheduled online team sessions
Stop & reflect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Similar to a feedback session but taking place during the process instead of afterwards - A way to make sure that the work is heading in the right direction. Also a way to let team members express how they feel about their work and if they need assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduled online team sessions

Table 3: Reflective tools

Social tools

Tool	Description/aim of tool	How it can be done virtually
Movie club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team members watch a movie together on a chosen topic - A way of creating a shared mindset in a team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduled an online movie session with the team - Have a follow up discussion on insights and reflections
Two truths and a lie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each team member says three statements about themselves, two are true and one is false. The rest of the team members guess which one is false. - A way to loosen things up in a team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheduled online team sessions

Table 4: Social tools