

Psychological Safety in Hybrid Meetings: How Employees Decide to Speak Up

Author: Sina Bohlmann
University of Twente
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede
The Netherlands

ABSTRACT,

Hybrid meetings have been part of everyday life in many companies for a long time and create new challenges for interpersonal communication. Employees now face an invisible challenge, as they have to decide whether it is safe to speak up or if they prefer to remain silent. This bachelor thesis investigates the basis of this decision and shows, through qualitative interviews, that psychological safety in hybrid meetings is not a constant characteristic but a subjective and situation-dependent experience. Employees only speak when they feel respected, recognised and included. Structural factors such as technical equipment or leadership both contribute to this, but are not necessarily decisive. The study highlights that hybrid communication reshapes conditions of trust, visibility and belonging and that psychological safety cannot be prescribed, but must be actively shaped. This thesis contributes to the further development of psychological safety in the digital work context and provides practical insights for designing open and inclusive meeting cultures.

Graduation Committee members:

Dr. S.D. Schafheitle

Mr. M.J.A. Knieriem

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT in order to generate ideas, refine the text and to translate the transcriptions of the German interviews. After using this tool, the author has reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the work. The author also used Deepl for more sophisticated language and unfamiliar words, and Grammarly for spelling and grammar.

Keywords

Psychological safety, hybrid meetings, employee voice and silence, recognition theory, interpersonal trust, communication in hybrid teams

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter first introduces the topic and the empirical phenomenon that the study is based on. In addition, it briefly outlines the theoretical framework, highlights the knowledge problem and problem statement. It also presents the research objective and question as well as the academic and practical relevance.

The world of work has undergone a significant transformation in recent years because of the digitalization, technological developments, social changes and the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, new working models are emerging that create new demands and challenges for team communication, collaboration and the social dynamics within organisations (Waizenegger et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). A central result of this transformation is the increasing spread of hybrid working models, where employees work both in the office and remotely, for example from home (Choudhury et al., 2020). Hybrid work has several advantages, such as more flexibility in terms of time and location, which allows employees to organize their schedule more autonomously (Allen et al., 2015). Another advantage is an improved work-life balance (Choudhury et al., 2020). At the same time, hybrid teams often face difficulties in coordination, relationship management and effective communication across physical and digital boundaries, within the team (Waizenegger et al., 2020; Krajčák et al., 2023).

These challenges are particularly evident in hybrid meetings, where the differences in physical presence can influence the participation, interaction and inclusion between employees. Hybrid work can create unequal opportunities for participation which are important for team dynamics and interpersonal interactions. Another challenge is the limited non-verbal communication, such as body language, facial expressions or eye contact, which are important for the evaluation of reactions (Choudhury et al., 2020; Kirkman & Mathieu, 2005; Olson & Olson, 2000; Waizenegger et al., 2020). In addition, spontaneous feedback is often delayed or non-existent, which can lead to uncertainty and a feeling of fragmentation or second-class status in meetings (O'Leary & Mortensen, 2009; Wang et al., 2020). The result is a changed perception of the opportunities for participation and social inclusion within hybrid meetings. Employees are unsure whether and how their contributions are perceived, especially when it comes to critical questions, differing points of view or the introduction of new ideas. As a result, even experienced and committed team members are often uncertain and therefore hesitant or even silent, not out of disinterest but out of uncertainty (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 1999). This is because the risk of possible negative consequences is often perceived to be higher in hybrid contexts. The research indicates that communication behaviour in hybrid meetings differs significantly from the ones in fully face-to-face and purely virtual meetings.

The concept of psychological safety is the basis of this study. It describes the shared understanding of the team that interpersonal risks such as questions, criticism or uncertainties can be voiced without negative consequences (A. Edmondson, 1999; A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is crucial for learning behaviour, innovation and team leadership, as well as for collaboration and openness in uncertain or conflict situations (Frazier et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020). The willingness to speak up is an essential aspect of psychological safety. This is why it is particularly important in hybrid contexts, as there is often no or only limited reassurance through facial expressions and gestures, positions in the room are often unclear and the threshold for saying something can be higher (Choudhury et al., 2020; Kirkman &

Mathieu, 2005; Olson & Olson, 2000; Waizenegger et al., 2020). Psychological safety provides a valuable analytical framework for better understanding decision-making processes in hybrid meetings and identifying the conditions under which employees feel safe to speak up.

Although the concept of psychological safety is well-established in organisational theory, its interaction in hybrid work contexts has received little empirical attention. Existing research primarily focuses on classic presence teams or only virtual teams, while hybrid meetings with their complex social system and specific dynamics remain unexplored (A. Edmondson, 1999; Kirkman & Mathieu, 2005; Newman et al., 2017). Especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid work has become increasingly common in companies and is therefore still relatively new and quite unexplored as an independent social system (Choudhury et al., 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Most existing studies are quantitative with a strong focus on measurement, while little attention has been paid to the subjective perspective of psychological safety for employees in hybrid teams (A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2016). To address this research problem, it is necessary to conduct a qualitative study to better understand how employees decide whether to speak up or stay silent and what factors influence their decisions in hybrid communication situations.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how employees in hybrid meetings decide whether to speak up or not. The research question is:

'How do employees decide whether it is safe to speak openly in hybrid meetings?'

To answer this question, qualitative interviews with employees who regularly work in hybrid models are conducted. The interviews and the related study intend to determine how employees assess their communication situation, and which relevant factors influence the decision-making process (e.g. technical, social, organisational and personal). In addition, the study will examine how psychological safety affects this environment and gain insights into subjective experiences and assessments that have often been ignored in previous studies.

Psychological safety has a proven impact on individual and team outcomes, like innovation, learning behaviour, participation and commitment (Edmondson, 1999; Frazier et al., 2016). Conversely, the absence can lead to silence, rejection and demotivation, which in turn affects the organisational performance (Frazier et al., 2016). For this reason, psychological safety is particularly important in hybrid working models, as physical distance and limited informal interaction can undermine trust and openness. Hybrid work is not a temporary trend, it will play a long-term role in work environments. Companies must find ways to foster a climate of openness, safety, and trust from a distance (Waizenegger et al., 2020). This study provides practical insights for managers, HR departments and teams to understand what conditions are necessary for employees to feel safe to speak up. In addition, it is also relevant to academics as it contributes to the development of human centred work designs and team theories that are related to new working models. It also extends established frameworks (Edmondson, 1999) and builds on related constructs such as trust (Rousseau et al., 1998).

In the following chapters, the theoretical background, with psychological safety and its importance in hybrid work environments are explained, followed by the methodological approach and the results of the qualitative interviews. The results are then discussed in relation to the existing theory. The study then concludes with implications, limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The concept of psychological safety forms the basis of this study in order to better understand how employees perceive communication in hybrid meetings. The following section first provides an overview of the development and definition of the concept, before explaining the key influencing factors and empirical effects. Afterwards, the relationship between psychological safety and voice and silence behaviour of employees is examined. In the end, hybrid work as a context is defined in more detail and then linked to the concept of psychological safety.

2.1 The Definition and Development of Psychological Safety

The concept of psychological safety was first introduced by Amy Edmondson in 1999 and is still used in the majority of the studies. A. Edmondson (1999) defines psychological safety as a “*shared belief within a team that interpersonal risks can be taken without the fear of negative consequences*” (p. 354). In a psychologically safe environment, employees feel that their colleagues will not reject or judge them for being themselves or saying what they think. They also respect each other's competence and individuality, have an interest in each other, a positive attitude, engage in constructive conflict, and it is safe to take risks and to experiment (Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017).

The concept of psychological safety forms the basis for learning, innovation and the constructive handling of mistakes in teams (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). It encourages employees to communicate openly, raise concerns and give constructive feedback, which are behaviours that are associated with interpersonal risks and are critical for team success. Those behaviours are known in the research as “interpersonal risk behaviours” (Pearsall & Ellis, 2010). Several studies have shown that psychological safety influences a range of work outcomes at different levels of analysis, like individual learning, the adaptability and the overall team performance (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Nowadays, the concept of psychological safety has become a central element of teams and organisational research and is not only relevant in practice but is also theoretically grounded, especially by the work of Edmondson (1999) and more recent contributions like Patil et al. (2023).

Although psychological safety has some overlaps with the concept of trust in general, it is important to make a clear distinction between them. Trust focuses on how a person views another and thus refers to a mutual relationship (e.g. whether one trusts a certain person) (Rousseau et al., 1998). While psychological safety is a group construct and describes a team climate (i.e. “how group members perceive a group norm”) (Newman et al., 2017). In this context, psychological safety does not mean that there is no room for criticism or that there are no challenges during the communication, but rather that there is a space for a constructive dialogue where communication takes place without the fear of negative consequences. While psychological safety has been widely studied in the literature, most studies have focused on teams that work face-to-face and have paid less attention to digital and especially hybrid work contexts, even though these create challenges to the experience of psychological safety.

An important study and meta-analysis by Frazier et al. (2016) highlights the positive effects of psychological safety, which can be seen in various ways, for example in the form of employee engagement, innovation behaviour, job satisfaction and team performance. Frazier et al. (2016) also emphasises the important influencing factors supportive leadership, mutual appreciation

and the respectful communication climate, which are briefly addressed in this study.

The article by Carmeli et al. (2008) particularly emphasises the importance of psychological safety in dynamic and uncertain working environments. In other words, in the implementation of change processes, agile forms of work or complex projects, where psychological safety enables learning processes, adjustments and an open risk culture. This is exactly where psychological safety becomes a key factor for successful team behaviour and the result.

In summary, psychological safety is a central theoretical construct that explains communication and cooperation behaviour in teams. Especially when it comes to risky situations for the employees, such as expressing criticism or uncertainty. This is even more relevant in hybrid work contexts, where communication barriers are more likely to arise because of the reduced social interaction.

2.2 Factors and Results of Psychological Safety

Psychological safety does not develop automatically, but through social, structural and interpersonal conditions in the work context. There are various influencing factors and effects, such as the actions of leaders, team dynamics and behaviour, and communication structures (A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2016). An open and supportive atmosphere can only develop if employees feel that they can criticise or admit mistakes without negative consequences (Carmeli et al., 2008; A. Edmondson, 1999).

One important factor is leadership behaviour, because supportive leadership, like openness, active listening and inclusive decision making, promotes psychological safety by reducing the fear of judgment and punishment (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2016). Leaders who acknowledge mistakes, encourage input, and remain approachable create a work environment where employees feel comfortable to speak up (Newman et al., 2017). In this context, the organisational structure and the communication structure are also important influencing factors. Because flat hierarchies, open feedback loops and a regular dialog are important for how confident employees feel in speaking openly (Newman et al., 2017).

Another factor is team climate, where interpersonal relationships are crucial. Teams that have a high level of mutual respect, appreciation and trust among each other usually also have a higher level of psychological safety (Carmeli et al., 2008). The diversity within a team is also important because a person's background, experience and their own opinion can strengthen or hinder the feeling of psychological safety. It therefore depends on whether differences between the employees are recognized and integrated inclusively (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

Psychological safety influences whether employees speak openly (voice) or remain silent (silence). The term voice behaviour describes the active expression of ideas, concerns or suggestions with the purpose of improving organisational processes (Morrison, 2011). It is a voluntary form of communication that is associated with a certain risk, for example of being misunderstood, hearing different opinions or even becoming disliked. The opposite of voice is silence, which is the intentional withholding of opinions or information of employees. It often arises from the fear of negative consequences, social tensions or past experiences (Milliken et al., 2003). Silence can have many different forms and does not necessarily mean agreement or passiveness, it can also simply be due to insecurity or mistrust of the environment (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

These behaviours are not only shaped by individual traits but also by broader cultural norms and organisational factors. In cultures with a high-power distance (often in Asian, Eastern European or Latin American countries), employees are less willing to speak openly and question the existing structures (Hofstede, 2001; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). This is because silence is often seen as a sign of respect, while open feedback is considered as disloyal and inappropriate. In organisations where hierarchical structures dominate, mistakes are more likely to be sanctioned and opinions that differ are silenced, which is why psychological safety is less developed, no matter the team and its employees (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Companies with an open and dialog-oriented corporate culture (as is often the case in north-western European countries), voice behaviour is more common.

In addition, the communication channel, for example face-to-face, by telephone, digital or hybrid, can also have an impact on whether employees feel comfortable speaking up. In hybrid work environments where employees are not physically present, is often less direct feedback, non-verbal communication is limited and depending on their role in a meeting, employees may also feel more isolated (Newman et al., 2017; O'Leary & Mortensen, 2009; Waizenegger et al., 2020). This is explained in more detail in section 2.4.

Empirical studies have shown that a high level of psychological safety within a workplace has positive outcomes. One is that the voice behaviour of employees increases, which means that they express suggestions, concerns or ideas more openly (Detert & Burris, 2007). Another one is that employees have an improved learning behaviour, as they are more likely to admit mistakes or take risks (A. Edmondson, 1999). Finally, psychological safety among employees is also linked to an improved team performance, which especially shows in complex and independent tasks (Frazier et al., 2016).

In summary, psychological safety is both the result of conscious social and structural designs and a factor that enables positive team outcomes. It does not develop randomly and must be created and fostered through the right conditions such as the right leadership, inclusive team norms and clear and respectful communication practices. The perception of psychological safety influences whether employees speak up or remain silent and it is shaped by social norms, leadership behaviour and the communication channel.

2.3 Hybrid Meetings as a Distinct Communication Environment

The increased use of hybrid working models has not only enhanced the flexibility in terms of time and location, but also the way meetings are conducted in companies (Allen et al., 2015; Choudhury et al., 2020). The term "hybrid working" describes the combination of both face-to-face and remote work, whereby "hybrid meetings" are communication situations where some employees are physically present in the same room and others are digitally connected. This usually takes place via video conference platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams (Olson & Olson, 2000). The form and intensity of hybrid work varies greatly and depends on how many people are digitally connected or how many people are sitting together in the office. These work environments are therefore not just a mixture of virtual and physical formats, but a complex communicative environment with specific social, technical and spatial challenges.

Hybrid meetings are characterized by unequal participation conditions, because participants who are physically present often dominate the conversations and have an advantage as they also perceive the non-verbal communication (for example, gestures, facial expressions or eye contact) of the other participants. This

means that it is easier for them to enter the conversation and interact in an informal way during and after the meetings. In contrast, employees who are virtually connected often feel less visible because the technology makes them feel excluded or even as second-class participants. (O'Leary & Mortensen, 2009; Waizenegger et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020)

Technical equipment also influences the communication, as an unstable network connection, poorly functioning microphones or poorly adjusted cameras, both for remote and physically present participants, make it difficult for remote participants to contribute. This interferes with the flow of speech, hinders spontaneous participation and weakens the general communication dynamic, which in turn means that important contributions cannot be made (Kirkman & Mathieu, 2005).

As already briefly mentioned, hybrid meetings change the feeling of the shared presence in a team, because even though all employees attend the meeting, the physical separation creates a different group feeling. The ones who participate digitally often report that they feel less involved and have the impression of being on the sidelines. This can have a negative impact on the team spirit and trust between employees, which are important factors in the context of psychological safety (Gilson et al., 2014; Krajčík et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2020).

In summary, hybrid meetings create both opportunities and challenges and are not simply a new way for employees to connect. Instead, they are a complex socio-technological communication environment that places specific demands on technology, structure and group dynamics. These characteristics are crucial for understanding how employees behave in such environments and how they decide when to speak up, so it's important to take a close look at psychological safety in this context.

2.4 Connecting the Concept of Psychological safety with Hybrid Work Contexts

The transition of many companies from face-to-face working models to hybrid and digital working models has changed how psychological safety can be created in teams. As the concept was developed based on traditional face-to-face teams (A. Edmondson, 1999), it is necessary to look at it in a more differentiated approach for hybrid work environments. In traditional face-to-face contexts, you quickly sense whether you feel comfortable and can speak up, which is much more difficult in hybrid contexts.

As already mentioned, hybrid communication in general comes with both several opportunities and challenges that are not covered here again (see section 2.3). In addition to the facts that have already been mentioned, Lechner and Mortlock (2021) highlight that psychological safety in digital environments suffers when the communication is very formal and when there is little room for interpersonal interaction. In the office, on the other hand, are always opportunities, for example during a coffee break, to build trust and to exchange information beyond work. This is why hybrid work requires different rules and structures to ensure the psychological safety of the employees. Since employees who work remotely often do not feel equally involved, there must be a more deliberate communication format, like a clear moderation and the regular involvement of all participants (Wang et al., 2020).

Current studies also show that the traditional models of psychological safety are not necessarily directly transferable to hybrid teams, as they often lack an understanding of how strong technical and spatial conditions affect psychological safety. This also means that leaders or managers for hybrid teams need a broader understanding of the concept of psychological safety,

which should combine technology, location, power relations and the right moderation (Maynard et al., 2012). In hybrid work contexts, situational factors such as the camera perspective, visibility in the digital space or an unstable connection influence the decision of whether employees speak in a particular moment. However, previous research has hardly addressed how these situational factors influence the decision process to speak up.

The specific characteristics of hybrid work environments not only influence the way that psychological safety is created, but also how employees evaluate and express themselves in certain situations. Even if the team climate is open, situational factors (such as poor sound quality or lack of visibility) can affect the subjective perception of safety (Waizenegger et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). The hybrid context, therefore, not only affects the general experience of psychological safety, but has a direct influence on the decision to speak up (Lechner & Mortlock, 2021).

Although psychological safety is theoretically well founded and widely empirically researched, most models and studies come from traditional physically present team (A. Edmondson, 1999; A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Frazier et al., 2016). These traditional models are based on the expectation that team members are physically in the same room and can build trust through informal conversations and non-verbal signals (Gilson et al., 2014; O'Leary & Mortensen, 2009). Hybrid teams work under completely different social and technological conditions that change the way psychological safety is established, perceived and managed. These include physical distance, technical barriers and unequal visibility, which limit the informal contact and make it difficult for employees to create psychological safety in interpersonal interactions (Kirkman & Mathieu, 2005; Wang et al., 2020). Those conditions can change the perception and sense of safety and have a significant influence on the decision to actively speak up (Lechner & Mortlock, 2021; Maynard et al., 2012). Until now, it has been unclear how employees assess concrete risks in hybrid situations and to what extent existing models can still explain these processes. This study fills this knowledge gap by investigating whether and how the perception of psychological safety changes in a hybrid context and which conditions influence the decision to speak.

To summarize, psychological safety in digital and hybrid teams is just as important, if not even more important than in face-to-face contexts, for the team performance, the innovation and the employee satisfaction. At the same time, psychological safety is harder to establish because things that are taken for granted in a face-to-face environment may no longer apply in digital or hybrid contexts. New strategies and a greater awareness of technical, social and structural differences in the hybrid context are therefore required, and a correspondingly active approach to teamwork. This creates a working environment where all employees can voice their opinions freely, regardless of whether they are attending a meeting in the office or in a hybrid context.

2.5 Summary and Analytical Framework

The previous sections showed that psychological safety is a key concept for understanding the communication perception of employees. In hybrid meetings, are often different circumstances than in classic face-to-face meetings, such as the technological barrier, the spatial separation and the unequal visibility, which affect whether employees feel safe to express themselves.

Psychological safety is not only informative in theory, but also well-established in empirical studies, in terms of team performance, learning behaviour and the ability to innovate. The established models for psychological safety were developed for traditional physical teams and cannot be easily transferred to

hybrid meetings. It is therefore important to take a differentiated view that includes the technical, spatial and social aspects.

Psychological safety is used as an analytical frame of reference in this study, as it allows to analyse the subjective perceptions and decision patterns of employees that work in hybrid meetings. This allows to discover when employees perceive a situation as safe to speak up and when not.

As the previous sections showed, the hybrid context creates situational barriers that can affect the experience of psychological safety. The contextual factors have a significant impact on the decision whether employees speak up in hybrid meetings, which cannot be explained by the existing models, therefore this study addresses this knowledge problem.

The study examines whether the assumptions from the traditional models can also be transferred to hybrid settings, by taking the different experiences of employees into account. These situation-specific conditions are thus a central factor in the decision-making process and are considered in the analytical framework of this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

The following chapter describes the methodological approach of the study. The goal is to show transparently how the data was collected and analysed by explaining the research design, the selection of participants, the interview process and the analysis procedure with its limitations.

3.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study is to understand how team members in hybrid meetings decide whether they should speak up or remain silent. Since the subjective perception, experiences, the individual decision-making processes and the experienced team climate are not captured by standardized procedures, a qualitative research approach was chosen.

The study uses an exploratory design, as there is little empirical research on psychological safety in the context of hybrid work. However, the research does not aim to test hypotheses, but rather to gain an understanding of the experience and behaviour of employees in hybrid communication situations. The data collection method are semi-structured interviews, as this form of questioning allows to address specific topics in a targeted manner, but still leaves enough room for spontaneous thoughts, personal experiences and further explanations of the interviewees (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). Therefore, the individual assessment of the interviewees is comprehensive and clear in the individual context.

The interviews are based on the concept of psychological safety, which was introduced in the previous chapter, to provide an analytical framework and to understand the conditions under which employees decide to speak up or remain silent in hybrid meetings (A. Edmondson, 1999).

3.2 Sampling and Participant Selection

To investigate how employees in hybrid meetings decide whether or not to speak up, purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling is ideal for qualitative studies and enables the targeted selection of relevant perspectives (Flick, 2007). This means that only employees who have actual experience with hybrid forms of work and participate on a regular basis are interviewed. Regular participation means that employees have at least one hybrid meeting per week, to ensure that they have sufficient experience, regardless of how long they work in the hybrid setting.

In total, eight interviewees were recruited through personal networks, and interested persons received an information sheet about the study. In addition, they also received the consent form, which includes information on the anonymity, data protection and the voluntary participation. Four interviews were conducted with men and four with women between the ages of 25 and 50. In addition, various professional backgrounds were included (mechanical engineering, financial services, public sector, NGO, retail, transport logistics, public health sector and consulting) in order to capture as many different perspectives on hybrid communication as possible. Pseudonyms were used in the analysis section to protect the anonymity of the participants.

The aim of the qualitative research is not to make a statistically representative statement with a large number of participants, but more to understand the topic in depth. Which is why the interviews are conducted until the participants' statements are repeated and it is possible to move from the individual to the general (from specific statements by the interviewees to general patterns or theories) (Guest et al., 2005). This procedure is also known as data saturation.

3.3 Interview Procedure

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to collect data as this method allows central topics to be addressed while it still leaves the interviewees freedom for their experiences, opinions and spontaneous stories. The aim of the interviews is to capture the subjective experience of employees in hybrid meetings as casually and naturally as possible, which is why the interviews are conducted on a first-name basis (in German this is called "Duzen").

The interview guide was developed based on the theoretical framework of psychological safety (A. Edmondson, 1999) and is divided into these different topics:

- General experiences with hybrid meetings
- Perception of openness and safety in hybrid communication situations
- Decision-making processes to speak (voice) or remain silent (silence)
- The influencing factors in this decision-making process
- Specific situations and personal examples
- The influence of the industry and the company itself

Furthermore, the participants were asked to reflect on typical topics where they are particularly outspoken or reserved, especially in terms of criticism, feedback or uncertainty within teams. A personal assessment of the corporate culture and observations in the industry context were also discussed. The complete interview questions in both German and English can be found in the Appendices 9.1 and 9.2.

The interviews were conducted in the 19th and 20th week of the calendar year 2025. All interviews were conducted in German to enable the interviewees to express themselves better and to create a basis of trust. Interviews were conducted both in person and online via Microsoft Teams, which suits the study and the hybrid environment. The interviews lasted 15 to 20 minutes, in some cases even more or less. Before the start of the interviews, the participants were informed about the study procedure and the information sheet and consent form, that had been handed out beforehand was collected. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and later manually transcribed with Atlas.ti (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2025).

During the entire interview, a respectful and open atmosphere was ensured to strengthen the participants' trust and reduce as many obstacles as possible. The aim was to obtain as much honest information as possible and of course to answer the research question.

3.4 Data Analysis

The interviews were evaluated with a thematic analysis. This method is ideal because it identifies recurring patterns and meanings from the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim is to find central patterns that describe how employees in hybrid meetings decide whether to speak up or remain silent. The thematic analysis includes the following steps:

1. Familiarisation with the data, means that the already transcribed interviews are repeatedly read to develop an understanding of the content and contexts.
2. Initial coding, where relevant text passages are marked and assigned to codes. These are based on the existing knowledge about psychological safety but also address new aspects and reoccurring patterns.
3. Searching for themes, whereby similar codes are assigned to certain topic clusters, which form a consistent picture.
4. Reviewing themes, in other words, if the content is consistent and if it is relevant to the research question. Otherwise, this must be adjusted again.
5. Defining and naming themes, this is where the themes are finalized and defined as well as their meaning is presented in a comprehensible way.
6. Producing the report, means verifying the central themes with quotes from the interviews and relating them to the theoretical basis.

The analysis is carried out with the help of Atlas.ti (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2025) in order to systematically organize the codes and the thematic structuring. The evaluation process is mostly inductive but is nevertheless based on the existing concepts that have already been explained in the theoretical framework.

3.5 Research Quality

To ensure the quality of this scientific study, the central quality criteria of the social research are applied: Credibility, transferability, reliability and confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017).

Credibility is guaranteed by the transparent documentation of the entire research process. In addition, all interviews are fully transcribed, evaluated with the thematic analysis and the central statements are documented with the original quotes (in this case the translated versions) from the interviews, which makes their interpretation transparent.

The transferability is supported by the description of the research context, the theoretical background and the interview procedure itself. Although the results cannot be compared in a statistical sense, they still provide deeper insights that are important for psychological safety in hybrid work forms.

The reliability was strengthened by the constant application of the codes, the analysis procedures and was also critically discussed with fellow bachelor students and the supervisor during the research process.

The confirmability and theoretical neutrality of the analysis was ensured by the continuous reflection of the researcher's actions and a conscious separation between the description and interpretation.

4. RESULTS

Based on the thematic analysis of the interview data, various codes, that describe the key factors that influence the speaking behaviour of employees in hybrid meetings, were identified. These codes were grouped into thematic clusters, which are presented in the following section and analysed in more detail.

4.1 Overview of Identified Themes

The thematic analysis of the interviews identified different codes, which were then grouped into five overall themes or thematic clusters that represent the central factors that influence the speaking behaviour of employees in hybrid meetings. These topics are based on the theory and reflect the interactions of the individual, as well as social, structural and psychological aspects in hybrid communication environments.

The first thematic cluster is ‘Communication Dynamics in Hybrid Meetings’, which summarises specific characteristics and challenges of hybrid communication. These include aspects such as the loss of informal conversations, reduced spontaneity, restricted non-verbal communication as well as the reduced trust between the participants.

The second thematic cluster is ‘Social and Cultural Aspects’ which include personal and organisational factors that influence the communication behaviour. These factors include the differences in industries, the personality types, the team climate, the leadership behaviour and the general experiences with hybrid working models. These factors influence both the perception of the communication situation and the role of employees in it.

The third thematic cluster focuses on the ‘Structural and Technological Context’, which refers to the general conditions in the company, the technical equipment and formal rules in hybrid meetings. These include for example the unequal access to information, camera technology and the digital exhaustion.

The fourth thematic cluster is ‘Psychological Safety and Decision to Speak’, which summarises the subjective evaluations of employees, which means whether a situation is perceived as safe or not and which factors influence this decision. The aspects are for example the emotional feeling of safety, the relevance or sensitivity of topics, as well as the feeling of being seen and valued as a team member.

In connection with the previous thematic cluster, the fifth thematic cluster is ‘Topic Dependencies’, which focuses on criticism and feedback in the hybrid context.

These five themes are the basis for the following presentation of results and provide an overview of how employees experience hybrid meetings and how their decision to speak up or not is influenced. The following sections present quotes from the interview participants (IP) and the individual codes in detail. The codes can be found in Appendix 9.4 (Table 2) which provides information on the distribution of the individual codes and their thematic classification. The numbers behind the codes correspond to the numbers in in Appendix 9.4 (Table 2). Quotations from the interviews can be found in the Appendix 9.5 (Table 3.).

4.2 Interpersonal Dynamics Shaping the Communication in Hybrid Meetings

One of the central themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews are the ‘Communication dynamics in hybrid meetings’. In almost all the interviews, participants said that communication in hybrid contexts usually differs from classic face-to-face meetings in the office, particularly in terms of technical aspects and social and interpersonal conditions. The following quotes illustrate the different dimensions of this theme:

“I’m more open with colleagues I trust.” (IP7)

“If I don’t know the people, that’s a barrier.” (IP5)

These quotes show that personal relationships have a direct influence on the communication dynamics in hybrid meetings. The interviewees emphasized that conversations in hybrid meetings are much more relaxed if they know the participants well and if this personal connection is missing, conversations are often more reserved and formal. The code ‘Communication based on relationships (1)’ shows that psychological safety is strongly related to the level of familiarity and the social connection. If there are no personal relationships, conversations tend to be more formal and reserved. This also shows how psychological safety can be closely associated with familiarity among colleagues and the perceived risk of speaking up.

“There are often overlaps in speaking time, especially as the number of participants increases” (IP8)

“It’s really hard to manage questions, make sure everyone hears them, and balance chat versus spoken input.” (IP7)

These statements from the interviewees emphasise the coordination challenges in hybrid contexts. The code ‘Coordination difficulties in hybrid meetings (2)’ shows that the lack of physical presence makes conversation more difficult, which can lead to overlapping conversations, deviations from the topic, people feeling less heard, or sometimes confusion about who speaks next. Such challenges can create frustration and uncertainties, which can reduce employee participation.

“The group size matters too, I’d be more likely to speak in a small group than in a large one.” (IP6)

This sentence emphasises how group size can influence the individual's communication behaviour. The code ‘Small vs. large groups (3)’ indicates that respondents feel safer in smaller groups and are more willing to say something, while in larger groups and especially when people are digitally connected, the willingness to say something decreases. This indicates that here is a barrier that is influenced not only by the size of the group, but also by the type of communication.

“If we had all been in the same room, I might have said something. But sitting at home, I couldn’t read the room or gauge reactions. That made it harder.” (IP7)

“The distance helped me stay composed and less affected by others’ facial expressions or body language.” (IP6)

These two quotes show two perspectives on the code ‘Lack of non-verbal communication (4)’. On the one hand, the lack of non-verbal communication (such as facial expressions, gestures and small interpersonal signals) complicates the assessment of how contributions were received, which leads to uncertainty, and therefore employees often remain silent. On the other hand, the participants also said that the virtual distance they had through the hybrid context made it easier for them to say something, as they were less influenced by the emotional and physical reactions. This contrast clearly shows how digital distance can hinder and facilitate psychological safety, and that it is a matter of personal preference.

“In hybrid meetings, it starts at ten, you log in at ten, and there’s no small talk.” (IP4)

This observation by a participant illustrates the code ‘Loss of informal interaction and spontaneity (5)’. The structure of hybrid meetings often leaves less room for interpersonal exchanges, as these are often strictly planned. As a result, they lack the small talk, personal questions or spontaneous contributions that are important for building trust and psychological safety.

"In general, I hold back unless I'm the moderator. If I organized the meeting, it's my job to manage time and structure." (IP8)

This sentence refers to the code 'Moderation by participants themselves (6)'. Interviewees reported that they do not speak up in hybrid meetings because there is often no clear management of the discussion, which is why meetings are chaotic and individual conversations or voices are not heard. This inhibits participation, especially among more hesitant team members.

4.3 The Impact of Social Belonging and Cultural Norms in Hybrid Contexts

Another theme that emerged from the interviews is 'Social and cultural aspects' in hybrid meetings. These include organisational differences, industry differences and individual factors such as personality, role within a group and the experiences of employees, which all influence the communication behaviour and perception of psychological safety. This includes the following quotes and codes:

"I'd say the sense of team spirit has declined. The feeling of 'we're in this together' is fading, and people are becoming more like lone warriors. I've been in this field for a long time, so I know a lot of people. But for newcomers, it's really tough to connect with others and to get to know people." (IP4)

The statement makes outlines that the feeling of solidarity decreases in hybrid working environments. It is especially difficult for new employees to socialise and build relationships because of less interactions in the office, and the hybrid contexts lead to people feeling less connected. The code 'Decline of team spirit (7)' describes the loss of social cohesion and the resulting challenges for the development of psychological safety.

"I think in other companies or industries, hybrid work is far more natural and normalized than in our company or the financial sector in general." (IP2)

This shows that how hybrid work is handled depends very much on the industry. The code 'Industry-specific hybrid work attitudes (8)', relates to the differences between industries. Interviewees mentioned that in more digitalised industries, where hybrid work is more established and accepted, it is easier to speak up as there is less reluctance in general. This mindset has an impact on expectations and comfort in the hybrid context, which in turn influences speaking behaviour.

"The support from leadership is really important because it affects how comfortable employees feel and how openly they can speak in general." (IP2)

This statement emphasises the importance of leadership and corporate culture for the perceived safety in meetings. The code 'Organisational communication norms and leadership (9)' emphasises that companies with a flat hierarchy, a participative management style and an open feedback culture foster a stronger sense of safety in hybrid contexts. While hierarchical structures or a lack of moderation hinders this. This shows that organisational leadership factors have a direct influence on the creation of psychological safety in hybrid meetings.

"I think it depends a lot on who's sitting across from me, whether they're introverted or extroverted." (IP2)

This quote shows that personal characteristics are also important in the communication behaviour. The code 'Personal characteristics influence communication (10)' describes that characteristics such as introversion or extroversion, and the own role within the team determine whether an employee speaks up or remains silent in hybrid meetings. Introverted people prefer to speak up in hybrid contexts because they feel less observed,

while others find it difficult to express themselves without direct eye contact and spontaneous reactions. This suggests that hybrid environments interact with personality and influence the perception of safety in complex ways.

4.4 Organisational Structures and Technologies that Influence Communication Behaviour

Even if the technical and structural framework conditions do not directly determine psychological safety, they can still indirectly influence the communication behaviour. This is because technical obstacles such as sound quality, a delayed connection or the absence of a camera can have a negative impact on communication dynamics and thus can create uncertainty. The thematic group 'Structural and theoretical context' includes these quotes:

"For short daily calls, no one needs to turn on their camera. But in larger meetings with important topics, I always have mine on and dress as if I were in the office." (IP8)

"Even if I have my camera on, there's no camera that shows the whole meeting room." (IP1)

The statements show the code 'Organisational technical equipment and rules (11)'. It shows that technical settings and company-specific rules, such as the mandatory use of cameras or the requirement to use certain software tools, can provide guidance, but at the same time increase the pressure and thus are perceived as an additional challenge. It is particularly problematic when technical equipment (for example, a lack of cameras or poorly positioned cameras in the room) reduces the visibility and therefore the equality in meetings.

"I think when the tech and timing are off and you constantly have to ask people to repeat themselves, you eventually just stop." (IP2)

This quote shows the code 'Technical limitations in hybrid meetings (12)'. Technical hurdles such as an unstable internet connection, poor audio quality or, again, the poor use of cameras by people who are connected individually, make spontaneous contributions more difficult and can also lead to participants holding back. Because if you have to keep asking questions or don't understand the others correctly, you lose the confidence in the communicative structure in hybrid environments over time. This illustrates how technical problems can undermine participation and reduce psychological safety.

4.5 Psychological Safety and the Decision to Speak in Hybrid Meetings

The decision to be active or remain silent in hybrid meetings is closely linked to the concept of psychological safety. The interviews show that this decision is influenced by various structural, emotional and personal factors. The interviews have resulted in a clear thematic group 'Psychological Safety and the Decision to Speak', which includes the following quotes and codes:

"The focus is on the room, not on you as the remote participant. And I didn't want to say 'Hello?' four or five times. I just waited for things to calm down." (IP5)

This quote shows the code 'Decisions to speak is influenced by the different structure of the hybrid meeting (13)'. The structure of hybrid meetings allows less spontaneous contributions, and unlike face-to-face meetings, there is often no opportunity to make themselves heard in a non-verbal way or to find a suitable opportunity to speak, especially for those who are digitally connected. This clearly shows how hybrid structures can exclude

participants who are digitally connected and prevent active participation.

"Among the colleagues I know well, most people behave the same way whether online or in-person, they're outspoken, they argue, they complain." (IP3)

This statement shows that the hybrid context is not relevant for every employee. The code 'Decision to speak up remains unchanged in the hybrid context (14)' suggests that some participants reported that their communication behaviour was not different in the hybrid context and that their decision depends on other factors, such as the situation and the topic of the conversation. This suggests that a stable interpersonal dynamic can overcome the contextual barriers to speaking up in hybrid contexts.

"If you have five people physically sitting in a room and I'm just dialled in via TV or the internet, you do feel a bit left out." (IP5)

"There have definitely been moments where I held back, because the person in question wasn't physically in the room." (IP2)

These quotes refer to the code 'Influence of digital distance on willingness to speak (15)', which addresses the physical absence and the digital distance as a limiting factor for speaking up. This means that people who are not in the same room might feel less included and are more hesitant to speak up, especially when it comes to critical and sensitive topics. This shows that physical presence can affect the perceived inclusion and sense of psychological safety.

"It means that I can express myself freely on any topic and that my input is fundamentally received with appreciation." (IP6)

This statement suggests that the perceived emotional safety, which corresponds to the code 'Perceived emotional safety (16)', is a key factor for active participation. If employees feel understood, respected and perceived as equals, regardless of their location, they are more willing to speak up and express their opinion. This shows that emotional safety has a strong influence on the decision whether people speak up and not only the physical presence matters.

"People in the room tend to form a group, and those online are somewhat disconnected." (IP7)

A respondent made this statement in context with the code 'Perceived unfairness in hybrid contexts (17)'. It highlights how participants feel less considered or do not have an equal access to the conversations, which creates a sense of unfairness and in turn does not promote a feeling of psychological safety. In general, it becomes clear how the perceived unfairness of access and visibility in hybrid meetings can influence the speaking behaviour.

"If I feel I can contribute something valuable that benefits everyone, I'll speak up." (IP4)

Another factor that participants used to determine whether they would speak up is 'Topic relevance and personal values (18)'. The decision to speak up depends for many on whether the topic is in line with their own values if they had real expertise on a topic. However, it is not only the topic relevance that is important, but also the feeling of being able to contribute. The intrinsic motivation and the value alignment promote the participation of the employees even in difficult situations, such as hybrid meetings.

4.6 Sensitive Topics and the Threshold to Speak

In the previous part, it was briefly mentioned whether employees speak up or remain silent in hybrid meetings often depends on the topic, especially when it comes to sensitive or potentially controversial topics such as criticism or feedback this will be explained in more detail below. The following quotes and their codes are part of the thematic cluster 'Topic dependencies':

"I prefer giving criticism in person, it's easier to gauge the other person's reaction." (IP3)

"I also have my own opinion. If I disagree with someone, I say so. That's what these meetings are for, in my opinion." (IP4)

These two quotes show two different perspectives on the code 'Expression of criticism (19)'. Several interviewees reported that they avoid criticism in a hybrid context or express it in a limited form, because it is difficult for them to correctly assess the reaction of others due to the distance. They do not know if the criticism will be received constructively. In addition, there is often no opportunity to ask questions directly or to have short, clarifying conversations because there is a lack of spontaneity, which in turn increases uncertainty. There are only some who say that they do not hold back on these topics.

"I'll wait to give feedback until we're both back in the office." (IP1)

"Feedback belongs in a personal setting." (IP8)

These statements refer to the code 'Expression of feedback (20)'. While positive feedback is usually expressed easily in hybrid meetings, most people are hesitant to give critical or corrective feedback and prefer to express it in a smaller circle and face-to-face, as this gives them more control over the situation. This shows that hybrid settings limit the constructive dialogue.

4.7 Summary of Key Findings

The five thematic clusters represent how hybrid work environments shape the communication behaviour through interpersonal, organisational, technical and psychological factors.

Although this is a qualitative study and therefore no quantitative analysis of the responses is intended. The relative distribution of the thematic clusters and codes can provide a useful orientation.

Figure 1. serves as a visual representation to illustrate which topics come up most frequently in the interviews, with 'Psychological Safety and the Decision to Speak' emerging most frequently, followed by 'Communication Dynamics in Hybrid Meetings' and 'Social and Cultural Aspects'. These should not be seen as statistically significant, but they show which aspects were particularly important in the interviews.

Figure 2. shows the frequency of the individual codes, not to measure importance but to get a structured overview. The differences between industries as well as the relevance of the topic and personal values have a significant influence on the speaking behaviour.

In summary, the speaking behaviour in hybrid meetings is not only determined by structural barriers but also by emotional, social and contextual factors, which is central to the research question.

Figure 1. Total Quotations per Thematic Group

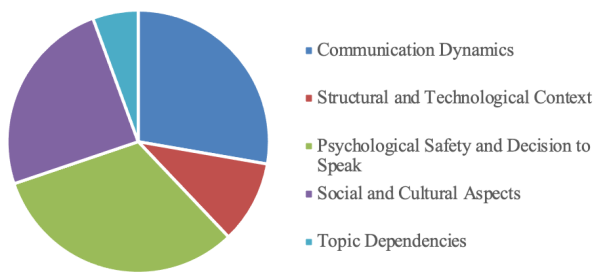
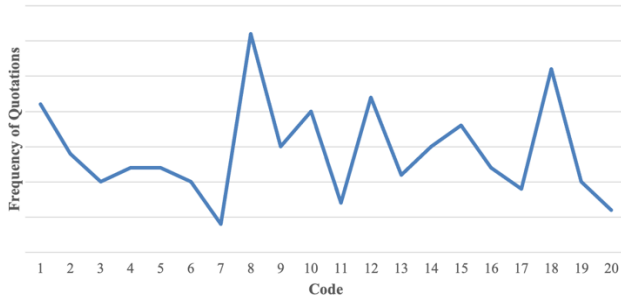


Figure 2. Quotations per Code



5. DISCUSSION

Figure 1. shows the five key themes that were identified in the analysis of the interviews. The objective of this work was to investigate how employees decide whether or not to speak up in hybrid meetings. In the process, it became clear that this decision strongly depends on the individual perception of psychological safety, but also on a variety of social, structural and technical factors.

The central findings are analysed below in relation to the existing literature and discussed regarding their theoretical and practical relevance. The focus here is on two overarching aspects, first on how psychological safety develops under the specific conditions in hybrid contexts and second on the structural, interpersonal and cultural conditions that influence the decision to speak or remain silent.

5.1 Psychological Safety as a Subjective Experience: Individual Perceptions and Motivations

The analysis of the interviews has shown that psychological safety is a central criterion for whether employees speak up in hybrid meetings or not, as the literature already indicated (Detert & Burris, 2007; A. Edmondson, 1999). Unlike in completely remote or in office contexts, it is not hierarchies or leadership alone that influence the speaking behaviour, but more a complex interplay of emotional, social and technical factors that can both promote and limit the perceived safety in the hybrid context. This section explains how various factors, influence the perception of safety and the willingness to actively participate.

5.1.1 Digital Distance and Perceived Inequality as Barriers to Participation

A central finding of this study is that digital distance is perceived by many employees as a barrier to spontaneous participation and even when all participants are technically connected, those who are not physically in the room often feel less visible and less included. This can lead to a perception of inequality that is not necessarily due to technical barriers, but rather to the spatial separation in the hybrid context, which affects their willingness

to speak up. This illustrates how the differences in the presence can reinforce structural imbalances and thus weaken the conditions for psychological safety.

This perception is in line with A. Edmondson's (1999) concept of psychological safety, as it is based on the perception that contributions are seen as valuable and accepted. If employees feel digitally distanced, less visible or approachable, their expectation of them being heard and taken seriously is weakened, which in turn directly undermines their sense of safety and makes them less likely to speak up.

At the same time, this study showed that digital distance can have contradictory effects, as some of the interviewees said that they felt safer expressing themselves in hybrid contexts, as direct eye contact, body language and spontaneous reactions were not that tangible. In fact, the emotional distance is even perceived as a relief and employees are more comfortable expressing themselves openly. It is therefore not possible to say that digital distance in general is negatively or positively perceived and that it has a uniform effect on whether employees speak up.

These differences indicate that psychological safety in the hybrid space is not a static condition, but it rather depends on the individual's perception, their previous experiences and largely also on the personality. This is where Honneth's (1994) theory of recognition becomes relevant, which states that the decision to speak strongly depends on whether a person feels like a respected part of the dialogue.

The hybrid work context thus creates a new ambiguity, on the one hand it can hinder participation, but on the other hand it can also enable it, depending on how employees interpret their role and visibility within the group. Psychological safety in hybrid meetings is not an automatically given result of structural conditions, it is rather created in a situational way through social recognition, the individual perception and the integration into the communication. This contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of psychological safety, as it shows how strongly it is characterised by the subjective perception.

5.1.2 Individual Motivation and Value Alignment Shape Participation

In addition to the structural conditions, the study emphasises the central role of the individual factors in the decision as to whether employees express themselves in hybrid meetings. The relevance of the topics is also important, as several interviewees stated that they express themselves if they think that they can contribute something, or the topic relates to their personal values. This emphasises that psychological safety is not only influenced by social or technical aspects, but also by the feeling of making a meaningful contribution.

The findings align with the research on voice behaviour, which suggests that employees only express their knowledge, criticism or ideas if they see a meaning in it and feel recognised in their role and expertise (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2011). The decision to speak up depends not only on the absence of the fear of the consequences, but also on the presence of individual motivation, self-confidence and alignment with the own values. This is especially important in hybrid contexts, as the reactions are often minimal, and the perception of the own impact is limited.

Furthermore, the results show that personality traits and personal experiences also have an influence on the perception of safety and thus also on the decision to speak up. Some interviewees described that they tend to be reserved and conflict-shy (introverted) in general, regardless of the communication situation, while others say that they speak up even under more difficult conditions (extroverted).

This suggests that the individual characteristics such as self-esteem, value orientation or the willingness to take risks have an influence on whether employees speak up or not. This has only been touched in the previous literature on psychological safety and has hardly been investigated in hybrid contexts (A. C. Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

Overall, these insights provide a better understanding of psychological safety by showing that it is not only created by external structures or organisational norms, but that it is strongly influenced by the employees own subjective assessment. Whether employees speak up in hybrid meetings depends on the perceived relevance of the contributions, their legitimacy and their compatibility with their own values.

5.2 Psychological Safety as a Shared Climate: Social, Structural and Organisational Influences

Although the perception of psychological safety by individuals is important, the interviews also showed that interpersonal, cultural and structural factors determine whether employees decide to speak up in hybrid meetings. These factors are closely interlinked and have an impact at both the individual and the organisational level and are discussed in the following sections.

5.2.1 Trust Creates the Space for Speaking Up

Interpersonal dynamics such as trust, familiarity between colleagues and group structure proved to be important influencing factors. The results show that employees are more willing to speak up when they are in an environment of trust, where the group size is also important. The smaller the groups are, the more are employees willing to speak up.

This observation supports A. C. Edmondson and Lei's (2014) understanding of psychological safety as a relational phenomenon which is characterised by group norms and interpersonal relations. Trust not only reduces the perceived risk of speaking up, it also creates the conditions for employees to experience the social environment as supportive and not judgemental one. Rousseau et al. (1998) describes trust as the willingness to show vulnerability, which is based on the positive behaviour expectations of others. This expectation is questionable in hybrid meetings, as informal signals are often missing.

The lack of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions or gestures influences the feeling of safety and was described by the interviewees as a limiting factor in hybrid settings. These signals normally provide safety in communications and if they are missing the sense of connection and spontaneity is reduced. This shows that the hybrid context changes the relational structures on which psychological safety is normally based. So, when small signals of attention or approval are missing, it is more difficult for employees to interpret the conversation as safe, even if there is no actual reason for them not to speak up.

At the same time, the interviewees experienced the physical and emotional distance as a relief, especially when it involved sensitive topics. The hybrid setting was perceived as a safe space and the participants were more comfortable expressing themselves. This realisation expands the theory, for example from Morrison (2011) and Newman et al. (2017), by showing that psychological safety does not necessarily require closeness but can also be created through a certain distance.

These insights contribute to a differentiated understanding of psychological safety and show that it is not a stable characteristic in a group, instead it develops in a situation and depends on the level of trust between employees, context and available communicative signals.

5.2.2 Structure and Leadership Can Create or Undermine Psychological Safety

Corporate and cultural norms have a strong influence on the speaking behaviour. On the one hand, interviewees describe that flat hierarchies, an open communication culture and a participative management style reinforce the feeling of equality and recognition and thus contribute to active participation. On the other hand, an authoritarian leadership style or unclear responsibilities in hybrid meetings weakens the psychological safety.

This dynamic aligns with Honneth's (1994) recognition theory, which states that social esteem and respect among others are the crucial conditions for self-confidence and thus also have an influence on the open expression of ideas. In contexts with participative leadership and a culture of open communication, employees are more likely to experience their contributions as legitimate and wanted. Conversely, authoritative behaviour signals that different opinions are unwelcome, which in turn has a direct effect on the psychological feeling of safety.

A. C. Edmondson and Lei (2014) also emphasises that psychological safety is supported by consistent leadership and clear structures. Especially in hybrid meetings, where the informal communication is difficult to interpret, clear leadership and a transparent organisation are essential. The statements of the interviewees clearly show that the uncertainty about responsibilities and roles is a barrier to open communication.

The structural framework conditions include the technical equipment and the established regulations in companies, which vary and may pose barriers. Even though these factors are not directly related to psychological safety, they can influence it directly, for example by a poor sound quality, an unclear moderation or trough camera regulations. This is because they can cause uncertainty for the participants, which can lead to digital exhaustion and thus influence the participants ability to communicate openly.

Because hybrid forms of working are not yet everywhere standardised, technical deficits or a lack of rules in the implementation can cause irritation, which has a negative impact on the perception of safety of employees. It is therefore clear that even conditions that are usually seen as 'normal', such as technology or moderation rules, can have a psychological effect and thus either promote trust or cause uncertainty.

5.2.3 Hybrid Experience and Social Roles Determine Participation

In addition, the different industries also have an influence on psychological safety. In more digitalised industries, hybrid work is more natural, which in turn has a positive effect on the voicing of an opinion. Especially in industries where hybrid work has been practised for a long time, employees are more comfortable to speak because they have more experience. These differences then also influence the expectations of hybrid meetings.

This underlines the fact that psychological safety cannot be viewed in isolation from organisational experience. Teams or industries that have already been working in a hybrid environment for some time are not only more familiar with the technical processes, but they also have clearer communication structures, which reduces the uncertainty and increases the confidence in hybrid working. In less experienced environments, on the other hand, hybrid communication often remains uncertain, which in turn can lead to hesitation. These dynamics highlight the importance of the organisational learning process in creating a sense of safety. This is in line with A. Edmondson (1999) and A. C. Edmondson and Lei (2014) conceptualisation

of psychological safety as a climate which is shaped by the experience and shared learning, rather than a static state.

At the same time, the position of an employee within the team influences whether they feel authorised to speak up. Employees who consider themselves to be less important in the team are more likely to be cautious, especially if their expertise is not clearly recognised or if managers do not explicitly invite them to speak up. As a result, the perceived legitimacy and visibility within the team are important requirements for psychological safety in the hybrid format which align with the findings of Milliken et al. (2003) and Morrison (2011).

5.3 Practical Implications

The analysis of this study has shown that psychological safety does not just arise by itself. In order to feel confident enough to speak up, the work environment must be consciously designed, regardless of the location.

A clear and consistent moderation is crucial, if roles and processes are not clear, it can quickly lead to uncertainty, especially if the digital connected participants already feel less present. So, it helps if everyone involved knows when it is their turn to speak, how their participation is desired and who is responsible for leading the discussion, a clear set of rules is very helpful.

Managers also have an important function as they have to actively listen, value the contributions and create space for different points of view, especially for those who are more reserved. A brief personal check-in, visual feedback or a direct invitation to participate can help to develop a sense of safety, especially when physical closeness is lacking.

In addition, technical and organisational standards that employees can rely on are also important, such as a stable internet connection, good sound quality and clear rules for handling the camera. Because if these basics are not in place, participants can quickly become frustrated or digitally exhausted, which inhibits their willingness to participate. A company should therefore ensure that the right technology is available to its employees both in the office and at home.

The team in general, needs to be sensitised to the fact that not all participants are equally visible in hybrid meetings and that it is still important for everyone to feel heard. Introverts or people who do not feel confident in their role sometimes need extra encouragement to speak up. If you take this into account and, for example, specifically invite more reserved participants or just have smaller hybrid meetings, there is a higher chance that everyone will contribute.

In general, various factors influence the perceived psychological safety in hybrid meetings. It is therefore advisable not to simply take things for granted and to organise hybrid meetings carefully.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the careful methodical implementation, the study has several limitations. Firstly, the sample size of eight interview participants is quite small and was largely recruited via private contacts and the snowball system, which could limit the diversity of perspectives. Therefore, the study is not necessarily representative for all employees who work in hybrid working environments, it rather gives an exemplary impression. Secondly, the study is based on the subjective perceptions of the participants. Even though these perspectives are of central importance for understanding psychological safety, they are always context-dependent and influenced by the individual experiences of the participants. At the same time, this also involves a certain degree of interpretative uncertainty of the researcher, which is typical for qualitative studies. Thirdly, the

theoretical orientation of the work, the focus on psychological safety, may also have influenced the analysis and interpretation of the data. This can never completely be excluded, although attempts were made to minimise this through the continuous reflection and the transparent coding process. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable and differentiated insights into the communication behaviour in hybrid meetings from the perspective of the employees. This shows how differently psychological safety is perceived and underlines once again the complexity of hybrid work.

This work contributes to the theoretical understanding of psychological safety by emphasising the situational and relational structures in hybrid contexts. It shows that psychological safety is strongly influenced by the individual interpretation, social recognition and the interplay of physical and digital presence. Future research should, analyse hybrid communication situations more as social spaces of interpretation and less as purely technical settings. It is clear that in hybrid contexts, tension between visibility, belonging and legitimacy are a central factor in the experience of psychological safety. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could help to understand how psychological safety in hybrid meetings changes over time and which conditions have an influence. In addition, future studies should include a broader and more diverse sample in order to make better comparisons between industries, hierarchical levels, genders or generations. Quantitative theories could complete this approach by analysing specific influencing factors such as trust and fairness in hybrid contexts in more detail.

6. CONCLUSION

This bachelor's thesis investigated the question "*How do employees decide whether it is safe to speak openly in hybrid meetings?*". Based on the qualitative analysis the short answer to this question is:

Employees make this decision based on their individual perception of the situation.

The decision to speak up or remain silent depends less on fixed structures such as technology or leadership and more on whether the employee feels recognised, respected and included in that moment. Even under the same external conditions, people perceive the situation differently, so that one person may decide to speak up, while another remains silent.

Psychological safety in hybrid meetings is not a general team condition, but more a subjective, situation-dependent experience that is characterised by the personal interpretation, emotional signals, individual experience and the group dynamics. Therefore, hybrid communications must be consciously designed so that they consider different needs and provide all participants with a sense of safety and belonging. This is the only way to ensure that all employees decide to speak up.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To begin with, I would like to thank Simon Schafheitle and Marijn Knieriem for their support and their helpful feedback during the writing of this bachelor thesis, and for trying to get the best out of me and for believing in me. I would also like to thank my fellow students in the bachelor circle for their support, as they always really helped me and made time for me. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support during this very intense and exhausting time.

8. REFERENCES

- Allen, T. D., Golden, T. D., & Shockley, K. M. (2015). How effective is telecommuting? Assessing the status of our scientific findings. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 16(2), 40–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100615593273>
- ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH. (2025, May 6). *ATLAS.TI | the #1 software for qualitative data analysis*. ATLAS.ti. <https://atlasti.com/>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2014). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Carmeli, A., Brueller, D., & Dutton, J. E. (2008). Learning behaviours in the workplace: The role of high-quality interpersonal relationships and psychological safety. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 26(1), 81–98. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.932>
- Choudhury, P., Foroughi, C., & Larson, B. Z. (2020). Work-from-Anywhere: The Productivity Effects of Geographic Flexibility. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2020, 21199. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3251>
- Detert, J. R., & Burris, E. R. (2007). Leadership behavior and employee voice: Is the door really open? *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(4), 869–884. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.26279183>
- Detert, J. R., & Edmondson, A. C. (2011). Implicit voice theories: Taken-for-Granted rules of Self-Censorship at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(3), 461–488. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.61967925>
- Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999>
- Edmondson, A. C., & Lei, Z. (2014). Psychological Safety: the history, renaissance, and future of an interpersonal construct. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 1(1), 23–43. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091305>
- Flick, U. (2007). *Qualitative Sozialforschung: eine Einführung*. Frazier, M. L., Fainshmidt, S., Klinger, R. L., Pezeshkan, A., & Vracheva, V. (2016). Psychological Safety: A Meta-Analytic Review and Extension. *Personnel Psychology*, 70(1), 113–165. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12183>
- Gilson, L. L., Maynard, M. T., Young, N. C. J., Vartiainen, M., & Hakonen, M. (2014). Virtual Teams research. *Journal of Management*, 41(5), 1313–1337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314559946>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2005). How many interviews are enough? *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822x05279903>
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*. SAGE Publications.
- Honneth, A. (1994). *Kampf um Anerkennung: zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte*.
- Kirkman, B. L., & Mathieu, J. E. (2005). The dimensions and antecedents of team virtuality. *Journal of Management*, 31(5), 700–718. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305279113>
- Krajčík, M., Schmidt, D. A., & Baráth, M. (2023). Hybrid Work Model: An approach to Work–Life flexibility in a changing environment. *Administrative Sciences*, 13(6), 150. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13060150>
- Lechner, A., & Mortlock, J. T. (2021). How to create psychological safety in virtual teams. *Organizational Dynamics*, 51(2), 100849. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2021.100849>
- Maynard, M. T., Gilson, L. L., & Mathieu, J. E. (2012). Empowerment—FAD or FAB? A multilevel review of the past two decades of research. *Journal of Management*, 38(4), 1231–1281. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312438773>
- Milliken, F. J., Morrison, E. W., & Hewlin, P. F. (2003). An Exploratory Study of Employee Silence: Issues that Employees Don't Communicate Upward and Why*. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(6), 1453–1476. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00387>
- Morrison, E. W. (2011). Employee Voice Behavior: Integration and directions for future research. *Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1), 373–412. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520.2011.574506>
- Morrison, E. W., & Milliken, F. J. (2000). Organizational silence: a barrier to change and development in a pluralistic world. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(4), 706–725. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2000.3707697>
- Nembhard, I. M., & Edmondson, A. C. (2006). Making it safe: the effects of leader inclusiveness and professional status on psychological safety and improvement efforts in health care teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(7), 941–966. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.413>
- Newman, A., Donohue, R., & Eva, N. (2017). Psychological safety: A systematic review of the literature. *Human Resource Management Review*, 27, 521–535. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.01.001>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- O'Leary, M. B., & Mortensen, M. (2009). Go (Con)figure: Subgroups, Imbalance, and Isolates in Geographically Dispersed Teams. *Organization Science*, 21(1), 115–131. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1090.0434>
- Olson, G. M., & Olson, J. S. (2000). Distance matters. *Human-Computer Interaction*, 15(2–3), 139–178. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327051hci1523_4
- Patil, R., Raheja, D. K., Nair, L., Deshpande, A., & Mittal, A. (2023). The Power of Psychological Safety: Investigating its Impact on Team Learning, Team Efficacy, and Team Productivity. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.2174/18743501-v16-230727-2023-36>
- Pearsall, M. J., & Ellis, A. P. J. (2010). Thick as thieves: The effects of ethical orientation and psychological safety on unethical team behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(2), 401–411. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021503>
- Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: a Cross-Discipline view of trust. *Academy of Management*

Review, 23(3), 393–

404. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.926617>

Tangirala, S., & Ramanujam, R. (2008). EMPLOYEE SILENCE ON CRITICAL WORK ISSUES: THE CROSS LEVEL EFFECTS OF PROCEDURAL JUSTICE CLIMATE. *Personnel Psychology*, 61(1), 37–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2008.00105.x>

Waizenegger, L., McKenna, B., Cai, W., & Bendz, T. (2020). An affordance perspective of team collaboration and enforced working from home during COVID-19. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 29(4), 429–

442. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0960085x.2020.1800417>

Wang, B., Liu, Y., Qian, J., & Parker, S. K. (2020). Achieving effective remote working during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A work design perspective. *Applied Psychology*, 70(1), 16–59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12290>

9. APPENDIX

9.1 Interview Questions in English

"To start off, can you tell me a bit about your current work situation? How long have you been working in a hybrid setup, and what's the usual balance between working remotely and being in the office?"

General Experience and Openness

"How would you describe your general experience with hybrid meetings?"

→ "Would you say you're generally someone who speaks openly and do you feel free to do so in your current work environment?"

→ "Has hybrid work changed that, for you or your colleagues?"

Safety and Decision-Making

"What does it mean to you to feel safe speaking up in a hybrid meeting?"

→ "And how do you usually decide whether to speak or not?"

→ "What factors play into that decision?"

→ "Do you follow any personal rules or strategies when making that decision?"

Concrete Example

"Can you describe a specific time in a hybrid meeting when you decided to speak up or not?"

→ "What influenced your choice?"

→ "Did the hybrid format play a role?"

→ "Looking back, is there anything that could've made it easier or safer for you to speak up?"

Topics and Boundaries

"Are there certain topics that make you hesitate or speak more freely?"

→ "For example, giving feedback, disagreeing, or asking questions?"

Industry Context

"Do you think this kind of behavior is typical in your organization or industry?"

→ "Or is it more specific to your team or role?"

"Is there anything else about hybrid meetings or speaking up that you think is important and we haven't discussed yet?"

"Do you have any questions for me?"

9.2 Interview Questions in German

„Erzähl doch mal kurz, wie deine aktuelle Arbeitssituation aussieht. Wie lange arbeitest du schon hybrid, also teils im Homeoffice, teils im Büro und wie ist da bei dir die Aufteilung?“ (→ Ziel: Kontextualisierung; Branche, Arbeitsform, Relevanz)

Allgemeine Erfahrung und Offenheit

„Wie würdest du deine generellen Erfahrungen mit hybriden Meetings beschreiben?“

→ „Würdest du sagen, dass du generell ein eher offener Mensch bist und fühlst du dich in deinem aktuellen Arbeitsumfeld wohl, dich zu äußern?“

→ „Hat sich das durch hybrides Arbeiten für dich oder deine Kolleg: innen verändert?“

Sicherheit und Entscheidungsfindung

„Was bedeutet es für dich, dich sicher zu fühlen, wenn du in einem Meeting etwas sagen willst?“

→ „Wie entscheidest du normalerweise, ob du etwas sagst oder nicht?“

→ „Welche Faktoren spielen bei dieser Entscheidung eine Rolle (z.B. wer anwesend ist oder um welche Themen es geht)?“

→ „Hast du persönliche Regeln oder Strategien, nach denen du dich dabei richtest?“

Eine konkrete Situation

„Kannst du mir von einer konkreten Situation in einem hybriden Meeting erzählen, in der du dich entschieden hast, etwas zu sagen oder eben nicht?“

→ „Was hat deine Entscheidung in diesem Moment beeinflusst?“

→ „Hat das hybride Arbeiten dabei eine Rolle gespielt?“

→ „Wenn du zurückblickst: Was hätte es dir leichter oder sicherer gemacht, dich zu äußern?“

Themen und Hemmschwellen

„Gibt es bestimmte Themen, bei denen du eher zögerst oder bei denen es dir leichter fällt, dich zu äußern?“

→ „Zum Beispiel bei Kritik, Feedback oder wenn du Fragen hast?“

Unternehmen und Branche

„Hast du das Gefühl, dass dieses Verhalten (also sich zu äußern oder zurückzuhalten) in deiner Organisation oder Branche typisch ist?“

→ „Oder ist das eher etwas, das speziell in deinem Team oder deiner Rolle so ist?“

„Gibt es noch etwas, das dir zum Thema hybride Meetings oder sich äußern wichtig zu erwähnen ist, dass wir noch nicht angesprochen haben?“

„Hast du noch Fragen an mich?“

9.3 Table 1. Total Number of Quotations per Thematic Group

Thematic Group	Quotations
Communication Dynamics	79
Structural and Technological Context	29
Psychological Safety and Decision to Speak	91

Social and Cultural Aspects	70
Topic Dependencies	16

9.4 Table 2. Number of Quotations per Code

Code	Thematic Group	Quotations
1. Communication based on relations	Communication Dynamics	21
2. Coordination difficulties in hybrid meetings	Communication Dynamics	14
3. Small vs. large groups	Communication Dynamics	10
4. Lack of nonverbal communication	Communication Dynamics	12
5. Loss of informal interaction and spontaneity	Communication Dynamics	12
6. Moderation by participants themselves	Communication Dynamics	10
7. Decline of team spirit	Social and Cultural Aspects	4
8. Industry-specific hybrid work attitudes	Social and Cultural Aspects	31
9. Organisational communication norms and leadership	Social and Cultural Aspects	15
10. Personal characteristics influence communication	Social and Cultural Aspects	20
11. Organisational tech setup and rules	Structural and Technological Context	7
12. Technical limitations in hybrid meetings	Structural and Technological Context	22
13. Decisions to speak is influenced by the different structure of the hybrid meeting	Psychological Safety and Decision to Speak	11
14. Decision to speak up remains unchanged in the hybrid context	Psychological Safety and Decision to Speak	15
15. Influence of digital distance on willingness to speak	Psychological Safety and Decision to Speak	18
16. Perceived emotional safety	Psychological Safety and	12

	Decision to Speak	
17. Perceived unfairness in hybrid contexts	Psychological Safety and Decision to Speak	9
18. Topic relevance and personal values	Psychological Safety and Decision to Speak	26
19. Expression of criticism	Topic Dependencies	10
20. Expression of feedback	Topic Dependencies	6

9.5 Table 3. Codes and Their Main Quotations From the Interviews

Code	Quotations from the interviews
1. Communication based on relations	<p>“When you’ve known the participants for a long time, it’s easy to speak up and say things like, ‘That’s a terrible idea.’”</p> <p>“I’m more open with colleagues I trust.”</p> <p>“If I don’t know the people, that’s a barrier.”</p> <p>“But if I don’t know them, managing the people can be harder than managing the topic.”</p>
2. Coordination difficulties in hybrid meetings	<p>“Hybrid meetings are less productive than in-person meetings. There are often overlaps in speaking time, especially as the number of participants increases”</p> <p>“It’s really hard to manage questions, make sure everyone hears them, and balance chat versus spoken input.”</p> <p>“But in hybrid meetings, where some are in the room, it’s hard to be heard.”</p>
3. Small vs. large groups	<p>“It really depends on the group. In larger meetings, whether in-person or online, I’m more reserved. In smaller groups, I feel freer to speak.”</p> <p>“The group size matters too, I’d be more likely to speak in a small group than in a large one.”</p>
4. Lack of non-verbal communication	<p>“If we had all been in the same room, I might have said something. But sitting at home, I couldn’t read the room or gauge reactions. That made it harder.”</p> <p>“Since it was emotionally charged, the distance helped me stay</p>

	composed and less affected by others' facial expressions or body language."
5. Loss of informal interaction and spontaneity	<p>"In hybrid meetings, it starts at ten, you log in at ten, and there's no small talk."</p> <p>"In person, you also tend to have more private conversations. That's something that just doesn't happen in hybrid or video meetings when you're at home."</p> <p>"If I want to say something, I raise my hand. That's the respectful way to do it, and then it's my turn to speak."</p> <p>"In hybrid meetings, sometimes you miss the right moment to jump in."</p>
6. Moderation by participants themselves	<p>"It's hard to moderate because of internet delays, you have to actively manage who's speaking to avoid everyone talking at once."</p> <p>"In general, I hold back unless I'm the moderator. If I organized the meeting, it's my job to manage time and structure."</p> <p>"From a moderator's perspective, hybrid meetings are extremely demanding."</p>
7. Decline of team spirit	<p>"I'd say the sense of team spirit has declined. The feeling of 'we're in this together' is fading, and people are becoming more like lone warriors. I've been in this field for a long time, so I know a lot of people. But for newcomers, it's really tough to connect with others and get to know people."</p> <p>"But I do think 100% home office isn't good for team spirit. Being in the office at least once a week helps build a sense of belonging and allows for informal exchanges—like at the coffee machine or during lunch."</p> <p>"Also, people in the room tend to form a group, and those online are somewhat disconnected."</p>
8. Industry-specific hybrid work attitudes	<p>"I really think it depends on experience, too. But yes, also the industry."</p> <p>"I think in other companies or industries; hybrid work is far more natural and normalized than in our company or the financial sector in general."</p> <p>"I think it's more about habit. In our field, hybrid work isn't that common. If you work five days a week from</p>

	<p>home, you get used to different communication habits."</p> <p>"I'm often dialed in to local meetings, like when I have sales responsibility for Hamburg and the local colleagues are sitting together. I appear on screen. So, among colleagues, this is totally normal."</p> <p>"I think a lot of people in our field are very confident and don't hesitate to speak."</p>
9. Organisational communication norms and leadership	<p>The support from leadership is really important because it affects how comfortable employees feel working remotely and how openly they can speak in general."</p> <p>"In those weekly emotional check-ins, it helps when everyone else, including leadership, is also open. If someone just says, 'I'm fine, all good' without much depth, that can make it harder for me."</p>
10. Personal characteristics influence communication	<p>"I think it depends a lot on who's sitting across from me, whether they're introverted or extroverted."</p> <p>"I work with mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, software developers, and physicists. And honestly, a lot of them are pretty introverted. That's not a bad thing, but in my experience, there's a strong correlation between field of study and personality. In my industry, I think those people are actually more open in hybrid meetings than they are in person."</p>
11. Organisational tech setup and rules	<p>"Even if I have my camera on, there's no camera that shows the whole meeting room."</p> <p>"For short daily calls, no one needs to turn on their camera. But in larger meetings with important topics, I always have mine on and dress as if I were in the office."</p> <p>"In our company, there's also an unspoken rule that you join meetings with your camera on, not just as a still image."</p>
12. Technical limitations in hybrid meetings	<p>"When the camera is off, communication is tough, and it's harder to speak up."</p> <p>"I think when the tech and timing are off and you constantly have to ask people to repeat themselves, you eventually just stop."</p>

	<p>“When the tech doesn’t work well, it definitely discourages people from expressing their opinions freely.”</p> <p>“If there’s even a 3 to 4 second delay, it becomes uncomfortable when trying to interject, and you often have to try several times.”</p> <p>“Some people always have their camera off, and I don’t think that’s okay. If I already have to struggle to be heard, and I can’t even see the person, that’s not acceptable to me.”</p>
13. Decisions to speak is influenced by the different structure of the hybrid meeting	<p>“The focus is in the room, not on you as the remote participant. And I didn’t want to say ‘Hello?’ four or five times. I just waited for things to calm down.”</p> <p>“No, it’s more structured. In video conferences, you have to raise your hand.”</p> <p>“If I want to say something, I raise my hand. That’s the respectful way to do it, and then it’s my turn to speak.”</p>
14. Decision to speak up remains unchanged in the hybrid context	<p>“No, I apply the same standards. If something doesn’t sit right with me, I say something—whether I’m in the office or working remotely.”</p> <p>“As long as it aligns with my values, I express myself the same way in hybrid and in-person settings.”</p> <p>“Among the colleagues I know well, most people behave the same way whether online or in-person, they’re outspoken, they argue, they complain.”</p> <p>“I don’t make a big distinction—it’s more about sticking to my basic principles.”</p> <p>“For me, it’s more about the size of the group, not whether it’s online or in-person.”</p> <p>“If I know what I’m talking about, it doesn’t matter how many people are there or who they are.”</p>
15. Influence of digital distance on willingness to speak	<p>“If you have five people physically sitting in a room and I’m just dialed in via TV or the internet, you do feel a bit left out.”</p> <p>“People in the room tend to form a group, and those online are somewhat disconnected.”</p> <p>“I’m more likely to speak up in in-person meetings.”</p> <p>“There have definitely been moments where I held back, because the person</p>

	<p>in question wasn’t physically in the room.”</p> <p>“I think it would have been different if she had been physically present. Speaking into a camera and seeing her face on a screen just feels different than having her in the room, sitting on a chair, across from me.”</p> <p>“I think it would’ve helped if she had been there in person.”</p>
16. Perceived emotional safety	<p>“I think it means that what you say is taken seriously, without being judged.”</p> <p>“It means that I can express myself freely on any topic and that my input is fundamentally received with appreciation.”</p> <p>“That every team member feels able to speak up and that their contribution is positively received.”</p>
17. Perceived unfairness in hybrid contexts	<p>“If you have five people physically sitting in a room and I’m just dialed in via TV or the internet, you do feel a bit left out.”</p> <p>“People in the room tend to form a group, and those online are somewhat disconnected.”</p> <p>“There’s an inherent power imbalance: one person types, the other speaks. I think hybrid meetings are poorly designed by nature.”</p>
18. Topic relevance and personal values	<p>“If I have something to contribute, I speak up honestly and directly.”</p> <p>“I think about whether something goes against my own values or whether I consider a situation to be unfair or wrong. That’s when I feel the need to speak up.”</p> <p>“If something doesn’t sit right with me, I say something, whether I’m in the office or working remotely.”</p> <p>“As long as it aligns with my values, I express myself the same way in hybrid and in-person settings.”</p> <p>“If I feel I can contribute something valuable that benefits everyone, I’ll speak up.”</p> <p>“I think respectful interaction is really important, no matter what kind of meeting it is.”</p>
19. Expression of criticism	<p>“Giving criticism online is really hard.”</p> <p>“I prefer giving criticism in person, it’s easier to gauge the other person’s reaction.”</p>

	<p>"I believe criticism should always be delivered in person."</p> <p>"I also have my own opinion. If I disagree with someone, I say so. That's what these meetings are for, in my opinion."</p>
20. Expression of feedback	"But for important conversations, especially feedback, I prefer face-to-face."

	<p>"I'll wait to give feedback until we're both back in the office."</p> <p>"Feedback belongs in a personal setting."</p> <p>"For things like feedback, it feels more respectful to be there in person."</p>
--	--