

When High Performers Fail

A qualitative study on how talents engage in failure sharing

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Abstract

This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of how talents engage in failure sharing. This was investigated by adopting a qualitative research strategy and conducting 27 semi-structured interviews with 11 non-trainees and 16 trainees, who in this study are considered talents. In relation to the decision to share failures, the findings of this thesis are both in line with and contribute to the literature on situation assessment. Regarding emotional reactions, the authors found that talents to a higher extent feel shame in relation to failures, contributing to sharing less. Additionally, this study found that talents feel relief connected to successful efforts, going beyond the four suggested emotions accompanying failures in previous research. Concerning cost-benefit evaluation, the sole cost found was the one of damage to personal image, while all benefits, that are self-concept benefits, individual learning benefits, and group and organizational learning benefits were present. Further, additional benefits were found named well-being benefits and group and organizational motivational benefits. Lastly concerning sharing behaviors, it was found that talents consider unsuccessful work outcomes and failed communication to be failures, more often than not share the entire experiences of the failure, as well as mostly share with their manager and in formal settings, suggesting a less voluntarily and broad sharing. In sum, this thesis suggests that having an elite identity has implications for failure sharing in regards to making it more challenging.

Keywords: Failure Sharing, Talents, Situation Assessment, Elite Identity

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Karl & Ida

Definitions

Term	Definition
Failure	“a personal experience of not having achieved a desired goal or result related to the own action or behavior” (Dahl and Werr, 2018, p. 183). ¹
Success	“a personal experience that it went beyond the expectation or that the set target was exceeded” (Dahl and Werr, 2018, p. 183). ²
Failure sharing	An individual’s intentional behavior of disclosing one’s failure although it is not demanded in the company (Boey, 2019).
Situation assessment	Prior to failure sharing the situation assessment, consisting of the evaluation of the costs and benefits together with emotional reactions to a failure, occurs (Zhao and Olivera, 2006) ³ .
Cost-benefit evaluation	An individual cautiously considers both possible costs and benefits of engaging in failure sharing to reach a decision (Zhao and Olivera, 2006).
Emotional reactions	The presumption that negative emotions experienced by individuals in relation to failure impact the thinking around failure sharing (Zhao and Olivera, 2006).
Talent	Individuals with great potential at the beginning of their careers who have been thoroughly selected to possess leadership positions in the future (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022) ⁴ .
Elite identity	Professionals whose identity revolves around being the best (Alvesson and Robertson, 2006).

¹ This definition was directly translated from Swedish using the translator service DeepL: <https://www.deepl.com/translator> and will be used throughout the thesis.

² This definition was directly translated from Swedish using the translator service DeepL: <https://www.deepl.com/translator> and will be used throughout the thesis.

³ In Zhao and Olivera (2006) the term error reporting is used.

⁴ The study by Kamoche and Leigh (2022) is conducted on management trainees.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose

In organizations, individuals are frequently in situations of failures (Boey, 2019; Dahlin et al., 2018) and particularly when performing intricate professional tasks (Grohnert et al., 2019). Although failures can cause negative consequences in terms of high economic costs for the organization and reputational damage to the individual (Boey, 2019; Dahlin et al., 2018), there are also opportunities. From a practical perspective, most managers and organizations realize the value of learning from failures to maintain their competitive position as well as continuously develop. However, many are too preoccupied with success and therefore miss out on the advantages of failures (Gino and Staats, 2015). Researchers have simultaneously acknowledged how failures are highly valuable for learning (Boey, 2019; Dahl and Werr, 2020, 2018; Dahlin et al., 2018; Zhao, 2011)⁵ that can improve individual and organizational performance (Boey, 2019; Dahlin et al., 2018; Grohnert et al., 2019). For this thesis, the adopted definition of failure is “a personal experience of not having achieved a desired goal or result related to the own action or behavior” (Dahl and Werr, 2018, p. 183).

It is further recognized how individuals who share their failures with others learn more from making them (Boey, 2019). From a practical perspective, failures contain value, and sharing these compels employees to reflect on their learnings, such as better understanding of markets, areas for development, new information, and reap the benefits of the experience (Birkinshaw and Haas, 2016). Considering that failure sharing is defined in this thesis as an individual’s intentional behavior of disclosing one’s failure although it is not demanded in the company (Boey, 2019), it can be understood that failure sharing depends on the individual’s inclination to do so. This sharing behavior at work has earlier been assumed to exist in research (Boey, 2019), but proposed by others to be questioned (Dahl and Werr, 2018). Underlying this is that individuals do not always decide to share their failures or engage in learning from failures (Dahl and Werr, 2020).

Despite extensive interest in failures and failure sharing from both a theoretical and practical perspective, few have, to the authors' knowledge, addressed how different professionals deal with failures differently. There are reasons to believe that failure sharing for talents is possibly more challenging than for others in the organization. Talents are in this thesis defined as

⁵ In Zhao (2011) the term error is used.

individuals with great potential at the beginning of their careers who have been thoroughly selected to possess leadership positions in the future (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022). It is common for these talents to experience great pressure of performance and success, especially originating from themselves and by comparing to other talented people in their surroundings (Argyris, 1991). While these talents have had many successes to date, especially in their school years, these individuals have not gone through as many failures. Consequently, they are not as familiar with the emotions involved and how they gain learnings from them. These reasons contribute to talents being afraid of failures and for that reason, avoiding them at every cost (Argyris, 1991)⁶. This is further complicated by them being “relatively inexperienced employees who are still grappling with important questions about who they are” (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022, p. 818). Also, as they have nearly no performances or achievements so far, they almost solely have the potential that is assumed by others to lay back on (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022).

Although it is known that there are unique characteristics of and challenges for talents being new in organizations, as well as them having a difficult relation to failures, the understanding of how talents engage in failure sharing is to date a less explored area, to the knowledge of the authors. This is worth addressing, as organizations and individuals lose out on valuable learning opportunities and knowledge generation from talents who have a fear of failure. Considering this, the authors see the value in studying these.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of how talents engage in failure sharing.

1.2 Research Question

The following research questions have been formulated to address the purpose of this thesis.

- *What aspects (emotions, costs, and benefits) influence talents decision to share their failures?*
- *How do these aspects influence talents sharing behavior (who, where, and what)?*

⁶ The study by Argyris (1991) is conducted on management consultants.

1.3 Delimitations

Firstly, this thesis takes the level of the individual, therefore not extensively looking into the group and organizational level. Additionally, like Zhao and Olivera (2006), this study is limited to addressing failures made by an individual, therefore not considering those made by a group or an organization. Next, this study focuses on talents, excluding a large part of the workforce because of our interest in this specific group of employees. Lastly, the delimitation to one firm (i.e. large manufacturing) and one industry is apparent in this study, although failure sharing most probably is different in other industries in terms of for instance the impact of failure that is greater in contexts with high risk as healthcare (e.g. Lee et al., 2016)⁷.

1.4 Expected Contribution

Theoretically, the authors wish to contribute to existing research on failure sharing, by solely focusing on talents failure sharing, where to the author's knowledge, less research has been conducted. Especially, this thesis aims to heighten the understanding of talent decision-making and sharing behaviors related to failure sharing. Moreover, by conducting the study at a large industrial firm, the authors go beyond the contexts where failure sharing has traditionally been studied, especially high-risk contexts such as healthcare (e.g. Lee et al., 2016; Russo et al., 2015) and professional service firms such as in consulting (e.g. Dahl and Werr, 2021, 2018). Practically, the authors desire that a heightened understanding of talents failure sharing can contribute to organizations' and managers' ability to encourage failure sharing and subsequent learning.

1.5 Research Outline

This thesis is structured as follows; following the introduction, an overview of the failure sharing literature is given, accompanied by the theoretical perspective of rational decision-making underlying this literature, succeeded by literature on situation assessment, and lastly giving the reader a better understanding of talents. After the theory section, the choices of methodology are presented. The empirical findings section commences with a description of the empirical context and is continued by communicating the findings, first for non-trainees and then for trainees, and ends with a summary of the findings. Next, in the section on analysis, the findings are discussed in relation to the literature by focusing on the trainees and contrasting them with the non-trainees. Succeeding this, the findings are summarized, research questions

⁷ In Lee et al. (2016) the term incident reporting is used.

are answered, and theoretical contributions are stated in the section of conclusion and discussion. Lastly, practical implications, limitations, and future research are presented.

2. Theory

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Failure Sharing Literature Overview

To better understand how talents engage in failure sharing, firstly an overview of the failure sharing literature is provided to the reader.

Failure sharing is part of the research area of error management, where the aim is to handle made errors to decrease the negative ramifications and increase positive ones, including new ideas and learning (Dyck et al., 2005; Frese and Keith, 2015). This field derives from high-risk environments, including health care (Dahl and Werr, 2021) where adverse events are vital problems and the importance of individuals telling their errors is highlighted to be able to investigate what happened and make changes for it to not happen again (Lee et al., 2016). Subsequently, the context has been broadened to also encompass business contexts, for instance consulting (Dahl and Werr, 2021).

Researchers in the field distinguish between the terms error and failure (Boey, 2019; Dahl and Werr, 2018; Zhao, 2011). In short, an error can be defined as a wrongly performed routine or task (Dahlin et al., 2018). The adopted definition of failure is as mentioned “a personal experience of not having achieved a desired goal or result related to the own action or behavior” (Dahl and Werr, 2018, p. 183). Boey further states that “Failure can be the result of an error, and it can lead to further errors. However, an error does not necessarily lead to failure.” (2019, p. 4). When comparing the two concepts, the term error can be described as more objective than failure as it can be asserted if the individual made an error for instance by misinterpreting certain information (Dahl and Werr, 2018; Zhao, 2011). In this thesis, the focus is on the term failure to involve a broad range of situations where whether something is considered a failure is influenced by the individual’s perception. By adopting the definition of failure by Dahl and Werr (2018) the authors of this thesis, like Boey (2019), choose to include a negative outcome dimension in that things do not turn out as wanted, and therefore opt out of situations with positive outcomes and errors. An overlap has simultaneously been recognized between the terms error and failure, stating that the underlying functions and scholarly findings are similar (Dahlin et al., 2018). Therefore, considering the literature on both errors and failures is valuable in building an understanding of the field, and going forward the term failure is used.

Moreover, researchers distinguish between the terms reporting and sharing (Boey, 2019). Reporting is about communicating to others about doings and is frequently a required activity and part of policy (Boey, 2019). This researcher further states how it differs between organizations whether reporting particular concerns is compulsory or not. This thesis rather focuses on sharing, using the definition of failure sharing being an individual's intentional behavior of disclosing one's failure although it is not demanded in the company (Boey, 2019). The rationale behind this is that the authors are not merely interested in the required disclosing but instead all forms of sharing in the organization. Although the authors concentrate on failure sharing, they still explore the literature on reporting and sharing to delve into the field, taking the same approach as to errors and failures.

2.1.1.1 Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective underlying the literature on failure sharing comes from the psychological field (Pfeiffer et al., 2010)⁸ and is the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). TRA takes as a starting point in voluntary behaviors, meaning behaviors that individuals can decide to execute, to comprehend the psychology behind them (Ajzen, 1985). The theory concerns how behaviors of individuals are anticipated by the intention and subsequently defined by personal attitude and subjective norms of the behavior (Zhang and Fai Ng, 2012)⁹. Personal attitude concerns the perceived consequences of engaging in the behavior including the perceived probability of these happening. Subjective norms, on the other hand, concern other people's expectations of the behavior. This is only the case if the individual takes these into account (Pfeiffer et al., 2010). The distinction of attitude from intention is valuable since attitude does not always lead to the behavior while intention is described as closer to behavior. Therefore, TRA overcomes the disparity between the attitude and the behavior to better anticipate the behavior (Pfeiffer et al., 2010). To conclude, in TRA, a high behavioral intention is more probable to lead to behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

TPB, on the other hand, adds to TRA by considering perceived behavioral control (PBC) (Ajzen, 1991, 1985). Simply put, PBC involves how easy or hard the behavior is to carry out for the individual and can be different in different situations (Ajzen, 1991). More specifically, PBC involves individuals' control of for instance skills, opportunity, and ability to perform the

⁸ In Pfeiffer et al., (2010) incident reporting in the health-care industry was examined.

⁹ In Zhang and Fai Ng, (2012) the behavior examined is engaging in knowledge sharing.

behavior (Ajzen, 1985). In this theory, intentions and PBC are told to explain much of the variation of behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

This rational decision-making related to this theoretical perspective, is often associated with the cost-benefit evaluation in the situation assessment.

2.1.2 Situation Assessment

According to Zhao and Olivera (2006), prior to failure sharing the situation assessment, consisting of an individual evaluation of the costs and benefits together with emotional reactions to a failure, occurs. Although situation assessments already have been part of research on failure sharing (e.g. Dahl and Werr, 2021; Zhao and Olivera, 2006)¹⁰ and especially the cost-benefit evaluation that is commonly encountered in the context (Zhang et al., 2024)¹¹, the authors see the value in including these in this study because there might be a distinct assessment for talents than in other empirical contexts.

2.1.2.1 Cost-benefit Evaluation

An individual cautiously considers both possible costs and benefits of engaging in failure sharing to reach a decision (Zhao and Olivera, 2006). The researchers further explain how “Through this evaluation, individuals attempt to resolve the tension between the reasons to report and not to report, and to decide on a specific path of action that is consistent with this assessment.” (Zhao and Olivera, 2006, p. 1019). Further, the researchers make a distinction between costs and benefits connected to the individual alternatively the organization and group.

Three categories of costs relating to the individual, meaning the reasoning that speaks for not sharing failures, are mentioned by the researchers that are material costs, damage to personal image, and lastly, effort costs (Zhao and Olivera, 2006). Firstly, material costs include consequences such as loss of employment and work tasks, fines, and fewer career progression opportunities (Dahl and Werr, 2021; Zhao and Olivera, 2006). Secondly, individuals can be hesitant to share failures with the reason of wanting to preserve their image, which can be seen as difficult when displaying failures (Zhao and Olivera, 2006). Further, this can involve individuals perceiving that engaging in failure sharing or seeking assistance involves a risk of

¹⁰ In Dahl and Werr (2021) the term error sharing is used.

¹¹ In Zhang et al. (2024) the term error sharing is used.

being seen as incompetent and in turn damaging their image (Edmondson, 1999). Additionally, this cost can concern an apprehension of losing out on career prospects and harm to the individual's reputation (Zhao and Olivera, 2006). Lastly, effort costs in terms of energy and time to engage in failure sharing is a potential cost to be considered (Dahl and Werr, 2021; Zhao and Olivera, 2006).

Besides costs attributed to the individual, reputation costs and economic costs for the organization and group might be contemplated (Zhao and Olivera, 2006). Starting with economic costs, the researchers mention how an individual can be afraid of negative monetary consequences for the organization or group because of sharing a failure (Dahl and Werr, 2021; Zhao and Olivera, 2006). Examples are losing out on certain group compensations and effort costs for others at the workplace. On the other hand, reputation costs concern how sharing failures might negatively impact the view of the organization or group (Zhao and Olivera, 2006).

Looking at the benefits associated with sharing failures, that concerns why individuals might feel the motivation to share, self-concept benefits, learning benefits, and finally group or organizational learning are specified by the researchers (Zhao and Olivera, 2006).

The self-concept benefits can involve sharing failures to verify or preserve a picture of oneself, for instance, being altruistic or honest as suggested by the researchers. Next, potential learning for the individual from sharing their failures can play a role in this evaluation (Zhao and Olivera, 2006). The same applies to when individuals recognize that sharing failures can contribute to learnings for the organization or group (Dahl and Werr, 2021). This benefit is often dependent on whether the individual thinks that sharing will result in others looking into what happened and take action if needed (Zhao and Olivera, 2006).

Researchers in the field have further recognized how failures generate emotions (Edmondson, 2011; Zhao, 2011). Recognizing this, the authors build on rational decision-making related to cost-benefit evaluation, to further include the emotional reactions to failures, same as Zhao and Olivera (2006).

2.1.2.2 Emotional Reactions

Therefore, to further understand how talents engage in failure sharing, considering emotions is valuable since researchers acknowledge its role in the decision to share (Dahl and Werr, 2021; Zhao and Olivera, 2006). These emotions both indirectly and directly influence the failure sharing behavior (Dahl and Werr, 2021). This indirect effect is possibly more prevalent and implies that potential costs and benefits might be altered, impacting failure sharing (Dahl and Werr, 2021; Zhao and Olivera, 2006). Also, Zhao and Olivera, (2006) propose that individuals experiencing intense negative emotions when discovering a failure might focus more on the costs over the benefits of sharing the failure. The researchers highlight the negative emotions of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and fear, that often are related to failures. This thesis considers the same four emotions.

Individuals feeling shame because of identifying failures are more likely to think negatively about themselves (Dahl and Werr, 2021; Zhao and Olivera, 2006). This is said to be connected to “a felt discrepancy between a desired and a perceived self” (Dahl and Werr, 2021, p. 513). This emotion can arise when a failure is anticipated to have consequences for their self-esteem, including feeling capable and skilled. As a result, individuals might more likely think about the potential damage to their image, i.e. costs connected to the self (Zhao and Olivera, 2006). Tangney (1995) further elaborates on this, describing the emotion as agonizing and involving feeling small or diminished, as well as useless, exposed, and helpless. Experiencing shame can in addition entail thinking about others’ opinions of them. Lastly, individuals feeling shame usually want to get away from the situation, vanish, and hide (Tangney, 1995).

The distinction between guilt and shame is worth highlighting (Tangney, 1995). In contrast to shame, guilt is less centered around the self as well as the identity and more directed to the action. Additionally, the researcher points out that even though the emotion guilt can be described as agonizing, it is often not as agonizing as shame. Additionally, guilt is often associated with repeatedly revisiting failures in the mind. Individuals often feel regret, and hope that they would have done it in another way as well as were able to rectify the failure (Tangney, 1995). In the article by Tangney et al. (1996) it is also mentioned how guilt can lead to wanting to express being sorry and admitting. Guilt is further suggested to increase the consideration of the potential benefits of sharing a failure, connected to preserving their self-concept (Zhao and Olivera, 2006).

Next, individuals can experience the emotion of embarrassment to sharing their failures with others (Dahl and Werr, 2021). Tangney et al. (1996) found embarrassment to be less strong and agonizing than the two aforementioned emotions. Moreover, the emotion often involves blushed cheeks and fast heartbeats as well as feeling exposed. In addition, the emotion was found to more frequently be experienced when other people were around, especially in groups of more people and with those they do not know well (Tangney et al., 1996). In this context, embarrassment is an emotion that more often is felt relative to shame and that does not to the same extent entail negative judgment of oneself (Zhao and Olivera, 2006). During the situation assessment, an individual experiencing the emotion of embarrassment tends to weigh the failure sharing benefits more. This is especially true when the individual has the impression that others around them find sharing desirable (Dahl and Werr, 2021; Zhao and Olivera, 2006). Further, as the emotion is temporary, individuals who consider failure sharing at a stage not still embarrassed can find themselves in a place where the emotion does not have any effect on the assessment (Zhao and Olivera, 2006).

Lastly, fear can for individuals be associated with risk contributing to thinking that the failure being assessed is dangerous for them. Also, a fear of the perceived costs of sharing to the individual, group, and employer may exist, and that emotion can cause them to focus more on the costs associated with sharing a failure in comparison to the benefits (Zhao and Olivera, 2006).

2.1.3 Talents

To deepen the understanding of how talents engage in failure sharing, it is also of interest to look into what is known about talents. As previously mentioned, talents in this thesis are defined as individuals with great potential at the beginning of their careers who have been thoroughly selected to possess leadership positions in the future (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022). When looking at talents, elite identity has been considered in previous research (e.g. Bolander et al., 2024; Kamoche and Leigh, 2022) and therefore this thesis similarly considers this literature.

2.1.3.1 Elite Identity

Elite identity is explained by Alvesson and Robertson (2006) as professionals whose identity revolves around being the best. Further, in a study performed on management trainees, Kamoche and Leigh (2022) examine how talented individuals are given the identity of being a

privileged corporate elite. This investment is explained to be because of the value these individuals are expected to create for the company. The researchers further describe how both the organization and the individual are part of developing an individual's elite identity. Furthermore, it is acknowledged how talents often take on the elite identity (Bolander et al., 2024). Moreover, it is common for these talents to become a closed group with common beliefs and values (Bonneton et al., 2020).

In research, it is stated how the recognition of being a talent is associated with both advantages and disadvantages (Bolander et al., 2024). Although these employees might feel important and unique (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022), gain confidence (Gill, 2015), and obtain privileges as well as resources including opportunities to network, special treatment, and knowledge not everyone gets access to (Bonneton et al., 2020), this elite identity can likewise be problematic and a burden for the individual. This burden takes the form of, among others, considerable expectations, self-doubt, being fragile, and uncertainty concerning their value to the company (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022). In the context of consulting, elite identity is also explained to contribute to great performance expectations and standards once internalized (Gill, 2015). In addition, the author describes how the talents desire to comply with these expectations by putting up nearly impossible goals for themselves and always performing at the highest possible level.

Furthermore, these talents are highly conscious of how others in the organization perceive them. It is also found that it is important for talents to maintain their identity and they are therefore committed to protecting it (Bolander et al., 2024). Moreover, these individuals may feel anxiety about a possible loss of their elite identity and status (Gill, 2015).

Connected to failures, the fact that these talents have great performance standards and pressure on themselves, compete, and compare with others, and always want to succeed contributes to failures being frightening and negative as well as something to stay away from. Since these employees previously have succeeded in most aspects so far in life, for instance in their school years, they lack experience of failures, the emotions that arise, and how these situations can be handled and learned from. Further, these talents tend to when confronted with failures experience the emotions of guilt and shame (Argyris, 1991).

3. Methodology

3.1 Methodological Fit

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of how talents engage in failure sharing. While failure sharing has been thoroughly examined, studying talents is to the knowledge of the researchers, less examined. Therefore, the literature could be said to be at an intermediate or even nascent level, contributing to an exploratory focus and openness being deemed a more advantageous approach (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). This exploratory position in combination with the ambition to get a deeper understanding of how talents engage in failure sharing, contributes to a qualitative research strategy to be more suitable (Bell et al., 2019).

3.2 Research Design

Building on employing a qualitative research strategy, an abductive approach was taken to utilize the strengths of deductive and inductive research approaches to understand how data and theory are related (Bell et al., 2019). This is apparent by how the authors have gone back and forth between the different sections, by working with theory, initially formulating literature around the phenomenon, and later, after data collection, revisiting to revise and improve to better understand the data (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). Further, this study can be described as having a cross-sectional design, common for qualitative studies with an abductive approach, and the reason can be understood from its advantages. As this study aims to understand how talents engage in failure sharing, finding variation between the trainees and non-trainees to better understand the trainees was advantageous. Therefore the cross sectional-design was deemed a good fit (Bell et al., 2019).

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Data Sample

This study's sampling method was a priori purposive sampling, as the criteria of the interview subjects were set before reaching out to address this study's purpose (Bell et al., 2019; Teddlie and Yu, 2007). These criteria were; 1) part or not part of the trainee program, 2) between one and four years since graduation, 3) educational background in either economics/finance/business or engineering, and 4) current position in either an R&D or finance & controlling department. The criteria for the interviewee sample was set to firstly, achieve somewhat the same numbers of interviewees between trainees and non-trainees, secondly, to

reach variation in the sample, and thirdly to focus on employees in their initial years of employment.

This study has chosen trainees as the interview subjects that serve as talents as they have gone through a rigorous recruitment process, are catered with exclusive opportunities, and are expected to reach leadership position in the future. This description is similar to the adopted definition of talents in this thesis as individuals with great potential at the beginning of their careers who have been thoroughly selected to possess leadership positions in the future (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022). Also, other researchers (e.g. Bolander et al., 2024; Kamoche and Leigh, 2022) have similarly studied trainees on topics related to talents.

In the outreach, the authors reached out to 10 interviewees who met the criteria. After the initial contact with these first interviewees, they further suggested possible interviewees. Therefore, the snowball sampling method was used which led to the number of 25 interviewees, with an additional two interviewees who signed up through a sign-up sheet sent out to others that matched the preset criteria, totaling to 27 interviewees, where 11 are non-trainees and 16 current or former trainees (Bell et al., 2019; Coleman, 1958).

3.3.2 Interview Process

All participants were sent an email a week prior to the interview with information. The interviewees were asked to beforehand reflect on four scenarios; 1) a success they have shared with others in the organization, 2) a success they have not shared with others in the organization, 3) a failure they have shared with others in the organization, and 4) a failure they have not shared with others in the organization. Further, consent forms were attached in the email to give the interviewees the opportunity to review before signing. The authors also brought a physical copy of the consent form, to the interview for the interviewees to sign in case they had not had the time beforehand.

The authors conducted the interviews either psychically or digitally of which 11 interviews were conducted in-person, and 16 in a digital environment using the video-conferencing platform Microsoft Teams. While physical in-person interviews are advantageous in building rapport and understanding body language, digital interviews have been argued by researchers to not be lesser in quality (Bell et al., 2019; Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). As failure was sometimes a difficult topic to discuss, the author's aimed for physical interviews with as much

time as possible allocated. Due to the sometimes limited availability of the interviewees, the authors conducted the interviews digitally.

Most of the interviews lasted for 45 to 60 minutes, with a few shorter interviews around 30 minutes, due to less availability of the interviewees. As noted by Bell et al. (2019) shorter interviews do not necessarily contain less data richness, and great variance in interview length can be expected. Before starting the recording, the authors and interviewee engaged in casual conversation, getting to know each other to build rapport.

3.3.3 Interview Design

As this study had a focus and understanding of the phenomena of interest before interviews began, semi-structured interviews were appropriate, as they allowed the interviewers to address topics of interest more specifically, but at the same time remain flexible to have the option to potentially ask follow-up questions to interesting and surprising findings (Bell et al., 2019).

An interview guide with open-ended questions was prepared by the authors before the interviews, which can be found in Appendix B and C. This interview guide's underlying structure was developed in alignment with the literature of this study. In accordance with Bell et al. (2019), the interview guide was constructed to ensure appropriate flow and enable the authors to acquire valuable information without asking leading questions. As the topic of failures is sometimes uncomfortable and often sparks negative emotions (Rybowiak et al., 1999) the interview guide was structured into four main sections to lower the barriers to share experiences surrounding failure. These were 1) questions about their view of their career and work, 2) experienced successes, 3) experienced failures, and 4) concluding questions about group and organizational factors including opportunities to share experiences.

The choice to include questions surrounding successes, in combination with failures, played a dual role in the interview guide. Firstly, as the interviewees had the opportunity to talk about positive achievements first, the authors believed that subsequently, it would lower the barrier to talk about failures. Secondly, insights into how interviewees engage with successes provide additional information valuable for the research questions.

3.4 Data Analysis

Firstly, all interviews were transcribed within 24 hours after the interview using the transcription software Klang.ai. After this, the authors listened to all recordings from the interviews and made sure that the transcripts were correct. At the same time, the authors highlighted interesting parts to familiarize with the material. In addition, quotes for the findings section were chosen on a continuous basis. Later, selected quotes not in English were translated and checked by both authors to ensure adequate translation. With the initial thoughts at hand, the coding process was initiated.

The coding was conducted in the coding software Atlas TI. The authors conducted coding separately to strengthen academic thoroughness in the process (Barratt et al., 2011). The method used in this study to structure and comprehend the data was drawn from the Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2013). At first, the authors conducted open coding to understand what the interviewees were saying. At this stage, little attempt to categorize or find themes was made, rather laying the groundwork for comprehending what the data was indicating (Gioia et al., 2013) and building an extensive list of concepts, which were merely short key words summarizing the responses. While drawing on the approach described by Gioia et al. (2013), this study extended beyond it, by including this list of concepts before the first-order concepts and displaying the data structure in a consolidated list, found in Appendix D. The reason to include a level of concepts is found in that the codes that emerged in the initial open coding level provide interesting findings that add context to the first-order concepts.

Further, the authors started combining different categories from concepts to first-order concept by finding differences and similarities in the concepts. From thereon utilizing the process described by Gioia et al. (2013), where the authors later combined theory and first-order concepts to generate second order themes and eventually building aggregate dimensions through clustering themes together.

Two examples of this process were: the concepts *learn about themselves and develop* and *learn how to do a better job* are both associated with the first-order concept *individual learning benefits*. Another example was *difficult transitioning from school to work* and *hard on oneself* were both clustered under the same category *challenging being new*.

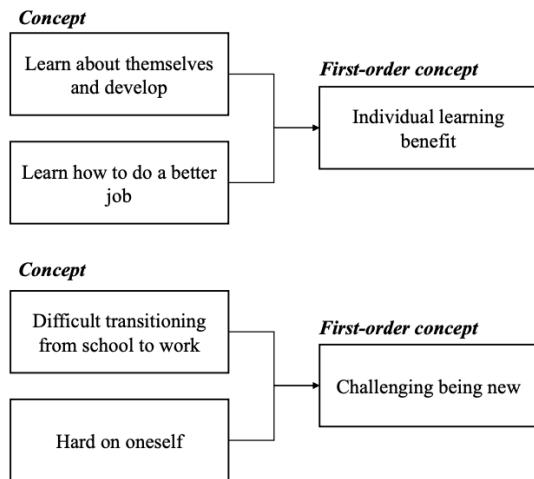


Figure 1 – Example of going from concept to first-order concept

3.5 Quality Considerations

To evaluate this study, the criteria of trustworthiness were used (Bell et al., 2019) and therefore built on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) description that qualitative research strategy should be assessed based on trustworthiness, which is highlighted by Bell et al. (2019) as considering credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.5.1 Credibility

Credibility, like the quantitative internal validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), is concerned with how convincing and authentic the findings of the study are (Bell et al., 2019). Building on the techniques identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the interviewees for this study were recent graduates and were within their first years of employment. Since the authors of this study are soon to be recent graduates with work experience already, there is credible ground for the authors to be able to understand the observed findings in the context in which they are observed. Lastly, the authors engaged with other peers, reading each other's thesis, and discussing the research question and process in a critically examining fashion to test that the authors were fully aware of the study's credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3.5.2 Transferability

As transferability refers to the external validity of the study, there is a limitation to the extent to which a qualitative study can establish transferability since the study can only work from the time and context that it is set, and it is therefore not the author's assignment to provide

transferability. Instead, by providing what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as “thick description”, the authors can provide the data and description that makes transferability possible left to the judgment of those who wish to engage with the findings and transfer it (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; 317).

3.5.3 Dependability

To ensure the quality of the processes and results of the study, enhancing dependability, the authors adopted the inquiry audit technique (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In close collaboration with the supervisor, peers, and professors the process and results were monitored and critically examined to establish dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3.5.4 Confirmability

To enhance the confirmability of the study, the authors were both present at all interviews to ensure that personal beliefs would not tamper with the data. Additionally, the independent review and coding by both authors of the transcripts mitigated that personal values did interfere with the results. Further, the authors kept structured and detailed material of the process as well as a dedication to transparency, described as the audit trail by Lincoln and Guba, (1985), further established conformability. The authors also frequently practiced reflexivity, by advising each other to reflect on the process and potential inherent biases that may affect the study and in turn results (Bell et al., 2019).

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations in research is important to consider, and anonymity is a pivotal concern researchers must consider when conducting interviews (Bell et al., 2019). Therefore, the authors advised the supervisor and faculty at the Stockholm School of Economics and put forward the necessary materials and considerations needed to ensure the privacy of the interviewees. The consent form included the necessary data points needed such as gender, years after graduation, department, and educational background clearly stated. As the interviewees were read their rights before the interview, giving verbal consent to the recording, and the safe storage of transcripts and voice recordings, ethical handling was ensured.

3.7 Methodological Limitations

As this study is qualitative and takes a cross-sectional research design, one limitation is that the study was conducted at a singular point in time and merely relied on qualitative data. Further, the snowball sampling approach used in this study presents a limitation in the extent that it cannot assume representation of talents (Bell et al., 2019). Even though the company where the study was conducted employs tens of thousands of people, conducting this study by interviewing people that work at the same company still poses a limitation. The research of this study was also solely based on interviews as the means of data collection, further triangulation would strengthen accuracy (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As Temple and Young (2004) highlight, it is important to consider the implications of language in qualitative research. The authors aimed to eliminate the issue of language barriers to the greatest extent. Therefore, interviews were conducted in Swedish alternatively English depending on what the interviewee preferred. It is important to highlight that methodological limitation exists in the translation between Swedish and written English.

4. Empirical Findings

In this section, the empirical context is described, followed by the findings for the non-trainees and the trainees and lastly, a summary of the findings. The reason for presenting findings for both groups is to be able to deduce what is distinctive for trainees. Both these are structured according to the aggregate dimensions, namely being new at work, experienced failures and successes, situation assessment, sharing behavior and impact of context.

4.1 Empirical Context

The interviewees in the study work at a multinational industrial company that is based in Sweden. This company employs tens of thousands of people around the world and the industry in which it operates is highly competitive and faces shifts due to various new technological advancements. Being known for its deep expertise, the company has proven itself successful for many years by investing heavily in its employees and product development.

Additionally, the company can be considered a knowledge-intensive one and has adopted a learning strategy that encourages openness regarding failures. Further, the company has for some time facilitated an intake of trainees of recent graduates to maintain its talent pool. This trainee program is known to be selective and in high demand with rigorous recruitment processes and attracts high-performing individuals. The program is between one to two years where the trainees get to try different business units to learn about the company and prepare them for management roles. Further, the program facilitates networks and connections.

4.2 Non-Trainees

4.2.1 Being New at Work

4.2.1.1 Aspirations

At the beginning of their work and career, six out of 11 non-trainees mentioned how learning is of the utmost importance, deriving from a sense of curiosity. Also, the significance of development was brought up based on a wish to understand the industry and explore the organization, role and possibilities for the future.

“Now I don't have an exact plan of what I want to do in the future, but I just want to continue to develop, continue to gain as much experience as possible, learn as much as possible, and

then depending on what you think is interesting, focus more on it simply because that's how you focus your career." – Interviewee 14

Similarly, six described a desire to work with specific knowledge and problem-solving. This was explained as attributed to a wish to explore and find an area of interest, use learnings from their education, work close to the end solution and technology, understand details, and develop, learn, and get experience in a specific area. Two interviewees expressed the opposite and rather wanted to focus on general knowledge.

"I like the design job (...) I think it's fun and the problem solving when you discover a really big clash between different components or something, so you have to exchange ideas with other engineers and cross-functional groups, I think that is great fun." – Interviewee 20

Further, four non-trainees described themselves as ambitious, goal-oriented, having pressure on themselves along with wanting to perform and show their best side.

"I am very goal-oriented and very interested in doing a good job, that what I do should hold high quality, it is a very important pillar for me" – Interviewee 17

4.2.1.2 Vulnerabilities

With regards to entering a large organization, eight non-trainees explained how it was a lot to get into in terms of industry, culture, structure of the company, department, and group, as well as processes, tasks, and new information. Many pointed out how it is important for them, yet challenging to find their place, understand how they can contribute, and prove themselves to others. Some mentioned how this difficulty is heightened as many in the company have worked for a long time and are highly competent. Also, some explained how this lack of experience becomes overwhelming as even the smallest things, such as who to contact for help, is uncertain.

"Being involved within a team that is quite big, and finding how I can make a difference (...) in a company as big as Company X and being surrounded with intelligent people. Also, finding my way around, because there's also so many things when you come, and you get bombarded by knowledge and information, I was lost, what is important, what can I do, and which way should I go? For me, it was really hard" – Interviewee 9

Also connected to being considerably new, seven mentioned being hard on themselves, doubting their capacity, questioning themselves, feeling pressure from themselves, and insecurity around speaking up among others. This was described to be especially true in situations of failure, asking themselves why they did not perform better, acted in another way, and did not do more.

"I can feel that it has been challenging to trust myself that I can do this good enough to be allowed to do it [the task]." – Interviewee 4

Similarly, seven brought up the transition from being a student to having their first full-time job as a prominent challenge. Reasons mentioned were an experienced discrepancy between school learnings and knowledge used at work, grade system and less frequent feedback in the workplace, clear deadlines in school and sometimes less clear expectations at work, responsibility for more than themselves while working, and not seeing their impact as clearly in a large organization.

"I don't know if it sticks with you from school, (...) it was very clear that you get this grade, you were this good, and it was something you can feel early in your working life and miss, that you don't get constant feedback on what you do." – Interviewee 4

Moving forward, six non-trainees expressed wanting others' confirmation, for instance, their mentors and managers, to feel good about their work. They explained not having enough self-esteem, experience, and being too hard on themselves to be certain that their work is enough. One mentioned feedback as important, to know whether they perform according to more experienced employee's expectations.

"It's when you get confirmation of it, you can think yourself that you're doing something great but then to hear it too and especially maybe from those you don't often hear it from, like your boss is really good at giving feedback, they are like a coach, you maybe expect a little bit of that but to maybe hear it from someone in the group that you look up to or someone that you work with a lot, that you simply get a confirmation for it, that someone else says it too". - Interviewee 11

While some explained wanting validation, four expressed being able to feel it themselves. One mentioned this being possible when having clear plans, goals, and results. Two expressed how their own validation should preferably be followed by external validation. Further, four expressed how they can feel good about their work when they get asked questions, their work is of value, and help others.

"Yes, one for sure is when your colleagues take you as a reference and ask you questions and start coming back to you for help and support, that happened today and I felt good about it because I'm quite new, but someone came and asked me a question and I could help."

Interviewee 2

4.2.2 Experienced Failures and Successes

4.2.2.1 Experienced Failures

The non-trainees brought up failures shared and seven exemplified being dissatisfied with work outcome, for instance failing to complete a task, not feeling that they performed well, forgetting to perform a task, not fully being able to implement a project, delivering a task with errors in it, not meeting a deadline and getting constructive feedback about one's task performance. Two non-trainees mentioned communication and took sharing information not supposed to be shared and having a less good conversation with their manager as examples. Finally, two mentioned miscalculation as a failure, where one example was entering wrong data in a system.

Six expressed being dissatisfied with work outcomes as a failure not shared, expressing contributing to a failure that could have been stopped, deliverables not turning out as they wanted, and getting questions or feedback indicating a lack of performance. In addition, two brought up being late with a task and communicating this delay too late.

4.2.2.2 Experienced Successes

When discussing successes shared, four gave examples surrounding a promotion. One interviewee mentioned that it felt like a success because it was tangible and measurable through salary.

“I would say the biggest success was when I went from being junior to having a permanent finance role, it shows that what you have done is appreciated and that people believe in you, and of course you share it.” – Interviewee 14

Some non-trainees elaborated on successes not shared, where successful project outcomes were mentioned by three. One expressed thinking that the success spoke for itself, therefore not sharing it to a high extent. Another pointed out not being able to bring a project to the finish line, as it was handed over to someone else.

“Now I did a good presentation, now I did a good analysis, or now I performed well in a meeting (...) I take it as a personal success, develop myself based on it, I am proud of myself, but it is nothing that I go around bragging or talk about.” – Interviewee 14

4.2.3 Situation Assessment

4.2.3.1 Emotional Reactions

4.2.3.1.1 Shame

Three non-trainees described feeling very bad about the failure, having to put their emotions aside to be able to talk about it to others, and wishing others could forget about it as soon as possible. Of these three, two did not share the failure, while one shared.

*“It was one of those cases where you actually felt that you failed at something so much that you would rather not disclose it. (...) blaming myself, why did it happen? So, it was a feeling of guilt around myself.”*¹² – Interviewee 11

“I would be worried about the perceptions, of course, like making others think that I'm not able to accomplish my job well.” – Interviewee 24

4.2.3.1.2 Guilt

Further, four expressed feeling that they did not go all the way, delivered too late, wasted time, caused themselves and others more work, and asked themselves: how can this be so hard? Further some elaborated that they should have stopped the failure, asked for help, given it more

¹² Although the interviewee said guilt, it can be understood as shame in accordance with emotion literature (e.g. Tangney, 1995)

time, and done more and better. One non-trainee highlighted how that person would act differently in the future. Of these four, three shared their failures, and one did not share.

“It felt frustrating because I felt that here I should have done more, should I have spent more time? Should I have taken help from other colleagues?” – Interviewee 4

“I blame myself a little bit, like you could have done this better, and I just feel kind of shameful for myself. (...) it's probably a very small comment or feedback from that manager, but it sort of pointed it out to me and made me feel like, oh, I didn't do my work good enough.”¹³ – Interviewee 24

4.2.3.1.3 Embarrassment

Additionally, three non-trainees felt embarrassed about their performance, were disappointed and felt like their failure was caused by carelessness. However, they mentioned that the failure did not feel that bad in hindsight. Of these three, two shared their failure, while one did not.

“I sent over a project design, and it had small errors in it (...) and it was embarrassing, because it was my fault (...) I had just forgot to double check it.” – Interviewee 12

4.2.3.1.4 Fear

Similarly, three non-trainees described a feeling of hopelessness surrounding failures, that the opportunity was lost, as well as worrying about the consequences for themselves, others, and the company. Of these three, two did not share their failures, while one shared to their manager.

“Before I had told the boss (...) oh hell, it wasn't fun. I don't know how to explain it, but it was really my life flashed before my eyes (...) oh my God, I felt that I have to solve this in one way or another.” Interviewee 19

¹³ Although the interviewee said shame, it can be understood as guilt in accordance with the emotion literature (e.g. Tangney, 1995)

4.2.3.1.5 Happiness

Surrounding success, nine highlighted positive emotions, mentioning cheerfulness, enjoyment, and a sense of pride. One non-trainee mentioned still feeling happy today reflecting on the success.

“It felt so great, it was really fun, and it feels like you have worked hard and reached your goal.” – Interviewee 20

4.2.3.2 Cost-Benefit Evaluation

4.2.3.2.1 Costs

4.2.3.2.1.1 Damage to Personal Image Costs

Nine non-trainees described that unless the experience is relevant, an interest exists, has a purpose, and provides additional value to others, they will not share. One reason mentioned was not to bother others. Additionally, some expressed that in the event of smaller failures, they would keep the experience to themselves.

“Because we have department meetings where you announce career steps and this particular career step that I got, it is considered a bit lower (...) for me it was very big because I’m new, but it’s not considered so big in the department, so I think that’s why I didn’t say anything.” – Interviewee 11

Related to sharing, seven expressed it being important how others perceive them, and therefore want to show their best sides. Many further described not wanting to advertise a negative image of themselves connected to sharing failures. Some mentioned wanting to avoid others thinking less of their ability and a loss of trust towards deliverables.

“Of course the manager said it’s fine and all that, but I’m wondering, is that person being honest now? Or what kind of picture of me do they get from this? I felt, this manager hired me and I’m doing this. I wonder what kind of image that person has of me now.” – Interviewee 19

”I mean, of course I would be worried about the perceptions, like make others think that I’m not able to accomplish my job well.” – Interviewee 24

Further, seven mentioned sometimes refraining from sharing due to a fear of negative reactions from others and uncomfortable situations. Especially related to success, many mentioned being uncertain about other's feelings and that they would compare themselves and get upset.

"I was very nervous beforehand [share success]. I am one of those that have worked the shortest amount of time in my group. I feel that, how will everyone take it? Everyone loves the person that has the position now, it is large shoes to fill. It is why I said, to be a bit withdrawn just to see how they react, then you also don't know if it is anyone else in the group that have wanted the position also, and then you don't want to throw it in someone's face. So, a little more respect and consideration to other's feelings in all of this." – Interviewee 11

Related to maintaining a good image, six described how they refrain from sharing successes to avoid being perceived as a braggart, which they viewed negatively.

4.2.3.2.2 Benefits

4.2.3.2.2.1 Self-Concept Benefits

Also, six non-trainees mentioned sharing their experiences because it felt natural. A few expressed that they did not put much thought process behind their reasoning and did not hesitate much before sharing.

Further, four highlighted that not sharing made them feel worse, causing doubt and carrying it with them for weeks and months, and that they see advantages to sharing. Surrounding success, some wished that they would have shared more to get recognition and others mentioned how it felt wrong not to be transparent.

"Sometimes it made me feel disconnected from people because it was like the biggest thing going on in my life and I can't mention it to you" - Interviewee 2

4.2.3.2.2.2 Individual Learning Benefits

Nine raised learning from their experiences of failure and success, for example, being better prepared for meetings, leading meetings, planning for future deadlines, using the right data, and prioritizing more appropriately.

Further, five highlighted that they shared to seek advice and help. For example, many mentioned it being valuable with feedback, and to get guidance on how to proceed.

“[Share] to the group mainly to get some ideas and some brainstorming on how I should solve this, because it was something I had never experienced before.” – Interviewee 20

Further, in relation to sharing, four mentioned personal development, highlighting how they improved, learned about themselves, and grew in confidence from the experience. Also, one non-trainee brought up sharing failures to get perspectives on how to improve career-wise and develop professionally.

“I have developed so much socially at the company, to get confidence to talk in meetings, to ask questions, ask the stupid questions.” – Interviewee 12

Four out of the 11 non-trainees brought up how the failure they shared was not as bad as they had pictured it. Some elaborated that they will consider this lesson in the future.

Lastly, three pointed out that they should share their experiences more, both their own and the teams’ successes. A few mentioned wanting to share failures more to benefit others. Also, one expressed feeling somewhat stupid for not sharing in retrospect.

“I regret it a bit, I think I should have shared what I achieved, even though I did not bring it to the finish line, I still created a new framework of how we should work in the future, maybe this conversation with you guys motivates me to do it?” – Interviewee 17

4.2.3.2.2.3 Well-Being Benefits

A few, four, mentioned that they experienced fewer negative emotions after sharing their failures. One non-trainee expressed learning that the failure was not that bad. Another one pointed to getting support and learned that the failure was solvable.

“Good I would say [share failure], it’s almost like you lighten the heart, you get it out and then you move on.” – Interviewee 11

4.2.3.2.2.4 Group and Organizational Learning Benefits

Four non-trainees expressed sharing to contribute to others not making the same failure and be more prepared when the failure happens. Others also expressed sharing because they possessed the knowledge on how to fix it. Related to success, three non-trainees explained that they want to share to benefit others so others could reap the same rewards and take the same opportunities. One brought up sharing because it would benefit the group, and therefore the company in the long run.

4.2.3.2.2.5 Group and Organizational Motivational Benefits

Five non-trainees indicated that they find it valuable to share their experiences to motivate others in their groups and organization, for instance to achieve their goals.

“It feels like it can motivate others, maybe if they are a bit behind in their development or haven’t reached their goals, then it can motivate a lot, like if this person can do it then so can I.” – Interviewee 20

4.2.4 Sharing Behaviors

4.2.4.1 Who They Share With

When discussing who the non-trainees share with, nine brought up sharing with their group. This was explained to be mostly in group meetings but also at times in more informal situations. Many indicated that it was given for them to share with their group, and how this sometimes was the first ones sharing to, and for a few the only ones.

“It is a given to share it with the group I work with, of course I am going to show them, they have heard about when I have had my ups and downs with this [project], so then you want to share it.” – Interviewee 11

Further, seven expressed sharing with their manager. Also, some described starting sharing to their manager, with one reason being that the manager is responsible and therefore should be informed about situations impacting work.

“Yes, but of course it always feels better to share with the manager first, especially if it's something that affects your work, this is what happened, so you're aware of it, because it's clear

that you can turn to colleagues for support, but in the end, it's the manager who is responsible for that task or what you do.” – Interviewee 14

A few, three, described sharing with their mentor, especially at regular check-ins. This exchange was explained to be mostly about coaching and getting feedback. One non-trainee expressed it being easier to share with the mentor than the manager because of the manager's role in evaluating their performance and impacting their salary.

Most non-trainees, seven, expressed that they often share experiences with their family and friends outside of work. Some of them did this in addition to sharing with people in the organization, while others solely shared with these. They further explained how sharing with people at and outside work can differ, often sharing more with those outside and doing it less professionally.

Some, five out of eleven, brought up sharing with close colleagues, also considered friends. One mentioned being closer to other less experienced employees in the group and how it can be easier to share with them. This same non-trainee mentioned a reason being to avoid certain opinions of more experienced employees.

“It is about the relationship, if it is a close relation, then you can be open about anything, and if not, then you keep some things to yourself.” - Interviewee 14

4.2.4.2 Where They Share

Four mentioned more informal sharing at work, for example, Teams messages, where one mentioned that if they want to discuss failures, they prefer to do it outside formal group meetings out of respect.

Three non-trainees pointed out sharing mostly in formal settings including group meetings discussing successes and failures, regular project meetings, a day dedicated to feedback, and weekly meetings to bring up successes. One non-trainee expressed appreciation for these formal opportunities with an agenda, while another explained that the focus is often on success rather than failures. Despite expressing having many opportunities to share experiences, many indicated not fully using these to share themselves, and another one said that they have to take the initiative themselves.

4.2.4.3 What They Share

Six expressed sharing the entire experience and not leaving anything out because feeling that it is important to be transparent and not hide information. Two mentioned not sharing the entire success or failure.

“I would say that I went into detail, I leave nothing out, I try to share everything as much as possible (...) I have no intention in embellishing or aggravating the truth.” – Interviewee 19

4.2.5 Impact of Context

4.2.5.1 Group and Organizational Impact on Individual Behavior

Further, nine mentioned perceiving the group cultures open, honest, and psychologically safe. A few also expressed feeling fortunate to have an open group, as they perceive that this is not always the case in other companies.

“It is important that I always feel that I am comfortable in my group that I have the possibility to make mistakes and learn from them.” – Interviewee 12

Many non-trainees, eight out of 11, mentioned that the company culture is open and transparent, has good values and how it is possible to criticize each other and even managers. Further, three emphasized that the less hierarchical organizational structure allows for more sharing of experiences.

“Since I started a year and a half ago, everyone has been very positive that you should bring up things if you have any questions or thoughts or if there is something you do not know, like asking, can someone explain this, or I want to know more about this because I don't feel 100% comfortable with how we do things.” – Interviewee 20

Further, eight mentioned that they generally receive positive reactions to sharing, for instance related to failures, receiving supporting, encouraging, helping, and understanding responses.

Additionally, seven explained attributing a good group culture to their manager and sometimes a specific colleague as well.

“It's also about how secure you feel with your colleagues and managers. I feel very secure, so for me there are no problems at all, no matter what it is. My boss is always there for me, and we solve it together but if someone is not so secure with their boss or their colleagues then you might choose to keep it inside.” – Interviewee 14

4.3 Trainees

4.3.1 Being New at Work

4.3.1.1 Aspirations

Eight out of 16 trainees described themselves as performance-oriented, ambitious, driven, and having perfectionist tendencies. Further, many explain how it is highly important for them to do a good job, and how they have high expectations of themselves. One trainee expressed always wanting to perform more than demanded. Another explained perceiving that others likewise have performance expectations based on them having a certain education and job.

“Yes, I am fundamentally performance-oriented and when I get a setback like that, it's very unfortunate of course.” - Interviewee 1

“I tend to be a bit of a perfectionist (...) that you want to deliver everything perfectly and even if someone else might be satisfied, you might not be satisfied, and even if it is a success for someone else, it is a failure for yourself” - Interviewee 25

A few elaborated and stated how being a trainee involves a certain amount of internal competition, and how this differs from the rest of the organization.

“That is probably how it is when you put a group of high-performers in the same room, I guess it is natural that there will be some competition behavior.” - Interviewee 22

When discussing work and career, six mentioned having leadership responsibilities, in contrast to three out of eleven non-trainees. The reasons mentioned were wanting responsibility, taking a more holistic perspective, having the challenge of managing people, monetary benefit, being supportive towards others, and being able to impact. Additionally, six mentioned climbing the corporate ladder and thinking more strategically as an aspiration, in comparison to two non-trainees.

“I want to be the CEO of Company X” – Interviewee 22

Also, seven out of 16 trainees expressed the importance of feeling that they work with something interesting and fun, that creates value and is centered around a current topic. Some explained that this interest must exist for them to be able to perform like they want and to feel motivated.

“Then also something that is interesting and that you are passionate about, intellectually, that I am challenged in some way and that it is an interesting subject. Right now, I work with the development of X, which is super fun, you are working on the cutting edge of technology and we’re actually making a difference in the world.” – Interviewee 21

Further, five expressed having the opportunity to constantly learn and develop as important. For instance, a few mentioned that being somewhere in the organization where they can learn a lot is a prerequisite to feeling good about work.

“Another challenge that I’ve thought about is that after you have been in a position for a very long time and you have learned most of it, I feel an itch in my fingers. You want to try something new and find new ways to challenge yourself.” – Interviewee 21

Building on this, five explained that it is important for them to continuously feel challenged and stimulated in their work and try new and different things, while among the non-trainees this was mentioned by one out of eleven.

“Something that I think is very important is that I feel challenged, that it doesn’t feel like a hamster wheel (...) maybe it’s a fairly common thing for graduates that you’re used to always having at least an annual cycle, you move up one class after a year or you change course after eight weeks, (...) I’m doing this now and then the next challenges is this, there’s always been a next step and I think it’s important now that there’s a plan ahead, that I can constantly see how the challenges are coming towards me.” – Interviewee 10

Four expressed working with specific knowledge as an aspiration and described being highly interested in technology and wanting to understand their role properly. In contrast, two brought up general knowledge.

“I want partly to build a very solid base. I am a generalist, not a specialist so I want to be able to know everything and also very little about very much, even other disciplines than just R&D, even though this is kind of my home discipline if we say so. And then I’ll be completely honest, I want to climb the managerial ladder.” - Interviewee 1

“I have been a trainee, where you are trained to be the future leaders of the company, (...) but now it’s a bit thinking: is this the right thing for me? (...) I really miss the technology and working with design myself.” – Interviewee 21

4.3.1.2 Vulnerabilities

Out of 16 trainees, 14 brought up difficulties connected to entering a large company. The reasons mentioned were understanding how work is done as well as the culture, structures, departments, functions, processes, available roles, technique, code of conduct, and more. Like the non-trainees, these challenges are enlarged by other employee’s extensive experience and expertise in contrast to the trainees feeling new and like they do not know anything, thus not daring to question others. Some explained how this inexperience contributed to them having difficulties understanding the scope of a task or project, and one trainee described taking on too much as a consequence.

Further, ten expressed being very hard on themselves, feeling insecure when doing things for the first time, doubting their capacity and ability, being self-critical, having high demands on themselves, and rarely being happy about their performance.

“Firstly, people are extremely competent. It’s kind of like when I come here as a graduate that I don’t get it that I can almost end up here one fine day.” - Interviewee 1

These elaborated and stated how they after failures felt that they should have been able to perform better. One expressed how the failure negatively impacted that person’s self-image of being able to perform such a task. Another trainee mentioned thinking negatively in their head and being hard on themselves.

“I felt incompetent [Failure], and I was unsure of what I am even doing here as a trainee (...) I think it was about that you had just started as a trainee. There is a lot of talk at the beginning

of your onboarding that you are a bit chosen, that many have applied, and you have gone through a pretty thorough process, and then you come to a workplace and just feel like you don't know anything.” – Interviewee 13

Seven expressed how it has been challenging to go from school to work, since these differ in terms of school having a clearer structure and progression, more individual perspective, and focusing on one task at a time in contrast to work. One mentioned how they sometimes feel like they should know certain things from having studied a long time.

Further, five mentioned challenges associated with moving around in different departments while trainees, never fully getting comfortable with work. One brought up that they would have shared more experiences if it was a more permanent role, but as it was short-term, the person decided to avoid those potential conflicts or questionings.

“I have jumped around so much, it's challenging that you always should learn something new, and then you come in, I am very new, don't know a lot from the start, feel like everyone else knows more, is it me that is stupid? That is something that you get very good at when you have been a trainee (...) you become an expert at being the worst.” – Interviewee 21

Building on this, four described how they at times have been afraid to ask questions or for help which could be perceived as stupid. This was explained to be the case even though they mentioned how they, in the beginning, needed others' support. Also, one explained how the fear of seeming stupid was connected to thinking that they are expected to understand instructions. Another mentioned this fear being connected to wanting to be able to perform themselves. This was further explained to sometimes contribute to failures that otherwise could have been prevented.

“In the beginning I doubted a lot of my own ability, sat in meetings and did not dare to ask anything, because I don't understand anything, why it's going so fast, I can't keep up, (...) so I did not dare to question what was presented, because I thought that I don't really know why it's this way, so then its maybe unreasonable to ask this question because it's already then the case that you have gone through this a long time ago and then I slow down the meeting or whatever it could be.” – interviewee 13

Moving forward, 11 trainees expressed wanting validation from others to feel good about their work with reasons as not having enough self-esteem and knowledge to know themselves. This validation was explained to preferably come from their manager, team, or client or someone else with experience. One trainee expressed that a more senior manager is more satisfying.

“I would say, absolutely, that in the beginning you have no idea if you are delivering anything at all that is of value (...) in the beginning you need more of this external stuff, you really need someone to say that this was good, because otherwise you have no idea.” – Interviewee 25

Ten further described the opposite that they can feel that they did a good job without anyone confirming it. Some expressed that this feeling could occur when they felt that they had done their best, were extensively prepared, or when the tasks and results were clear. Four said that even though they can determine the quality of their task themselves, they also want external validation. A few mentioned comparing their performance to others to feel content about their work.

”So I think I'm pretty hard on myself in general and have very high demands on myself but at the same time, I still think I have a pretty strong inner compass that when I've done something good, I know about it (...) somewhere I feel it myself.” – Interviewee 15

Lastly, six mentioned feeling good about their work when getting questions, helping others, and when their work is used and of value to others or the company.

4.3.2 Experienced Failures and Successes

4.3.2.1 Experienced Failures

In relation to failures shared, seven brought up not being happy with a work outcome, including performing a task too late, imperfect results, and not feeling that they performed or created value. Further, six explained failures connected to communication, including situations where bad communication contributed to misconceptions, being perceived as less knowledgeable, and getting lowered trust. Others mentioned not speaking up when not able to perform well or work does not feel good, not checking uncertainties with others, or not communicating enough. Lastly, three brought up miscalculations.

“I did a miscalculation last week which I shared to everyone, and it was a big mistake (...) I got the assignment and asked for input and put it together and then presented it to several people (...) and it turned out that what I was presenting was the opposite to the truth.” – Interviewee 22

Further, four expressed being unhappy with work outcomes as a failure not shared, including a situation of not creating a lot of value, a small failure in Excel, incomplete projects, or carrying out a faulty transaction. One mentioned being late with a deliverable as they always want to perform perfectly, while another brought up taking on too many responsibilities, due to not fully knowing the entire scope and time needed.

4.3.2.2 Experienced Successes

When the trainees described successes shared, nine mentioned successful presentations. Some elaborated that it felt especially good when presenting to larger crowds and more experienced people. Other trainees, seven, highlighted successful project outcomes, for instance, helping improve business operations, or when they spent a lot of time on it and the result was better than expected. One mentioned promotion as a success shared.

“I built like 11 or 12 reports, and this is actually something that I shared (...) what makes it a good success is that I know that it is still being used, there is nothing worse than spending time on something and then no one uses it (...) but then I presented this to the board and I got standing ovations, and it was amazing, it was so fun.” – Interviewee 8

Six mentioned not sharing successes that were characterized as positive feedback and praise. One reason mentioned was not wanting to brag. Some elaborated on liking to share successes surrounding the project itself or feedback around concrete deliverables, but not personal feedback. Further, four pointed out that they did not share a successful project outcome, where a few elaborated that it was because it was part of their regular work tasks.

4.3.3 Situation Assessment

4.3.3.1 Emotional Reactions

4.3.3.1.1 Shame

Eight trainees described that surrounding failure, they felt anxiety and talked negatively about themselves. Some elaborated that they felt very bad that they did not live up to their self-image of being able to perform such a task, did not give others a one hundred percent performance, and did not live up to expectations. Others questioned themselves and their capability, and worried others would think less of them. Further, five did not share their failure, two shared with a limited number of people such as their mentors, and one shared solely with other trainees.

“You think about it, you think what went wrong, you feel a little bit stupid, maybe you even think, is the corporate world something for me? I think a lot of different things go into your mind when you make a mistake but also, afterwards you're also more careful in how to not make the same mistake again.” – Interviewee 7

“It was very tough [Failure]. You have quite high expectations on yourself and on life when you graduate and then you have been accepted to be a trainee and are excited to get started. We had (...) onboarding and very exciting, interesting lectures and visits, so it was tough that I doubted my ability and competence, why am I here?” – Interviewee 13

4.3.3.1.2 Guilt

Six described feeling negative feelings surrounding failure, asking themselves why they did it, and wishing they had acted differently. Some elaborated on feeling like they did not produce much value, did not do a good job, and were annoyed at themselves for not asking for help and causing themselves more work. A few mentioned that they did not feel like it was a big failure, and could let it go rather quickly. Further, of these six, five shared their failures while one shared solely with the manager.

“This hindsight that comes when you ask yourself all the wise questions, why did I not do this and that? The anxiety when it is such a simple mistake and when you backtrack, I could have so easily not let this happen.” – Interviewee 5

“You get a little bit insecure if you do have to do something for the first time and you think, okay, I didn't do a good job, why didn't I do a good job? I wasn't prepared enough, why was I not prepared enough?” – Interviewee 7

“It was one of those cases where you actually felt that you failed at something so much that you would rather not disclose it. (...) blaming myself, why did it happen? So, it was a feeling of guilt around myself.”- Interviewee 11

4.3.3.1.3 Embarrassment

Five also mentioned feeling embarrassed and frustrated accompanying failures that were caused by neglect and carelessness. Three of these trainees shared their failure, while two did not.

“It was very embarrassing because it was so clearly wrong too and also like, how am I going to solve this until the next presentation for the manager? How should I sit in front of the manager and the management team and explain this?” – Interviewee 23

4.3.3.1.4 Fear

Two mentioned feeling fear around their failure and raised that they saw the consequence of their failure clearly and that it induced a sense of panic. Both these shared their failure.

4.3.3.1.5 Happiness

When experiencing success, 15 expressed happiness, which was mainly attributed to them getting attention, confirmation, and praise for successful work.

“It is what I live for, to get praise for a good job, honestly it is the best thing I know.” – Interviewee 1

4.3.3.1.6 Relief

Further, six trainees mentioned feeling relief. Mostly centered around successes, they mentioned feeling relieved that their efforts went well. One interviewee expressed being nervous before delivering work and feeling relief afterward. Even surrounding failure, one interviewee explained that they were relieved it surfaced before the failure became a bigger issue.

“It was late nights, a lot of work, so it felt like a relief to finish something completely (...) it felt great to get that weight off your shoulders.” – Interviewee 8

4.3.3.2 Cost-Benefit Evaluation

4.3.3.2.1 Costs

4.3.3.2.1.1 Damage to Personal Image Costs

Among the trainees, 11 out of 16 pointed out that if they do not see any relevance, interest, purpose, or concrete value, they refrain from sharing. A few highlighted that sharing successes without someone being interested or finding the topic relevant risks them being perceived as braggarts. Relating to success, some mentioned that they would not share if they found that others had already achieved the same success.

Also, ten mentioned that it is of high importance that others perceive them as competent, capable, and good at their jobs, therefore being careful in sharing things that could signal less competency and negatively impact their image. Some elaborated on it being especially important that managers do not think less of them, which would deteriorate their reputation.

“It is also one of those things that you have to consider, maybe you should not share certain things that will change your image for the worse if it doesn’t have a really good effect on someone or give something to someone.” – Interviewee 18

Further, ten pointed towards bragging as a reason to not share but rather want to be perceived as humble.

“Fundamentally it’s the recipient’s perception of me and that is very important of course and I don’t want to be perceived as a braggart person.” – Interviewee 1

Further, seven mentioned not sharing when thinking others would not see the experience as something noteworthy, especially surrounding success. Regarding failures, they did not share at times to not take unnecessary attention and time from others.

“If people don’t get much out of it, I feel like why should I waste their time? I want them to listen to the things that are important so then you shouldn’t say every little success you have.”

– Interviewee 26

Six further expressed that possible negative reactions from others impact their sharing. One example discussed was that others would compare themselves to them, and therefore possibly react negatively.

4.3.3.2.2 Benefits

4.3.3.2.2.1 Self-Concept Benefits

Six described feeling negative emotions when not sharing failures, for instance feeling stupid, ashamed, dishonest, and embarrassed. One reason mentioned was that the failure could likely happen to someone else. Another trainee mentioned almost wishing to get caught to get rid of it. Finally, another interviewee mentioned not feeling like themselves when not sharing.

“Yes then it felt like a really big thing, even though it was a small thing, I felt very ashamed, and it almost gets even worse when you do not share it, you make it bigger in your head.” –

Interviewee 23

In addition, four expressed sharing because it felt natural. A few mentioned that when sharing with their closest managers, the sharing felt natural, and would not be perceived as bragging.

4.3.3.2.2.2 Well-Being Benefits

Eight trainees raised feeling fewer negative emotions after hearing that someone else had a similar experience. The mentioned reasons were feeling comfort, that the failure was less serious as well as not feeling alone in the negative emotions, like anxiety and doubt.

“I usually share if I’m insecure about something, I think that’s completely normal and then to talk to other people maybe makes you less insecure because some people have a similar situation that they tell to you to make you feel better.” – Interviewee 7

4.3.3.2.2.3 Individual Learning Benefits

In addition, ten mentioned sharing their experiences to get support and advice. Regarding success, many mentioned that they shared to get feedback, exchange ideas, and get a second opinion and guidance on how to proceed. Surrounding failures, some mentioned wanting support to hear that it would work out and to be able to process their failure more easily.

Further, ten out of 16 raised that they learned about themselves from the experiences. One realized that because they were impressed by their own performance, it did not mean that they were new, as that person thought initially. Others mentioned learning how to disclose that they will not make certain deadlines or that speaking in front of large crowds is not as scary as they thought.

“I got to know myself better by how hard I actually took the failure.” – Interviewee 3

Further, nine elaborated on learning that they could improve their sharing. Some mentioned wanting to share more actively, and others mentioned wanting to share more because others might feel the same surrounding an experience. One mentioned wanting to be better at acknowledging others’ successes.

Eight trainees described gaining learnings on how to do a better job from their experiences. Some mentioned improving technical skills in financial modeling, learning to double-check their work with others, how to be more productive, keeping track of tasks as well as asking for help when they need it. Further, one mentioned learning about what falls under their responsibility or not, explained as being difficult to understand when new.

4.3.3.2.2.4 Group and Organizational Learning Benefits

Further, six mentioned sharing to help others avoid making the same failure again and in order for others to have a better experience than they did. Four added to sharing for the benefit of others, for example, sharing a successful solution that others can use or sharing new and valuable information. One mentioned that sharing is perceived beneficial to help others to be able to talk about experiences, to themselves to feel a sense of recognition, and to build trust.

Additionally, three said wanting to help the newer employees by sharing. These trainees mentioned remembering how easy it was to commit failures, the negative emotions felt surrounding it, and not wanting others to experience the same, but rather get a better experience.

4.3.3.2.2.5 Group and Organizational Motivational Benefits

Six mentioned that their experiences and sharing motivate themselves and others. For instance, they shared to motivate their team and others not involved with the project. Related to failures, they explained feeling motivated to get better, correct it, and get the negativity out of the way.

“I very much believe that motivation is created by sharing things, all small wins contribute to a big win in the end and if you are then constantly reminded of what you do and that you do good things, I do believe that it affects the motivation both for me and for the team that we actually see that we do things that contribute.” – Interviewee 10

4.3.4 Sharing Behaviors

4.3.4.1 Who They Share With

Most of the trainees, 13 out of 16, explained sharing with their closest manager, how it is almost obvious to do so, and that this is where sharing mostly or even extensively occurs. Some mentioned regular check-ins, while others mentioned run-ins as a common sharing situation. One expressed often informing the manager informally about experiences and how it is expected to solve the problems themselves, as the manager has limited time.

In addition, nine communicated sharing with their team. This was explained to be the case both to those involved but also those not involved, with one trainee explaining sharing for the reason of knowledge-sharing. A few also mentioned sharing with colleagues, other involved, interested employees, or a mentor.

“I am more comfortable in a team than I would be with my manager (...) you can have a friendly relationship with your manager, but a manager is not there to look after you, they are there to manage you as a resource and negotiate your salary.” – Interviewee 21

Further, eight expressed sharing with other trainees. One described these as the closest colleagues at the company and another explained how these are both colleagues and friends.

“I really feel that with my trainee colleagues, we are very open about what goes well and what goes bad, and it is nice to get support and comfort there.” – Interviewee 15

Additionally, seven brought up how it is a given to share experiences with friends and family outside of work, and sometimes solely to these. Seven mentioned sharing with close colleagues who have turned into friends. One further brought up how closeness is important when sharing successes to not appear braggart. Other trainees explained that it might be easier to share with fewer people. Some also expressed how it is easier to share with those who are new, the same age, or at the same level in the hierarchy, in comparison to those having worked a longer time. A few took their mentors as examples that were trainees a few years ago.

“I think I shared it with the team because we’re quite close I would say, my small team, at least, we are maybe seven people, it’s also good to share this, I think, to talk about it, how it went, you know, what I can do better or how they can support me during the next time.” – Interviewee 7

4.3.4.2 Where They Share

When discussing opportunities to share experiences, nine mentioned sharing their experiences in formal settings, for example, short daily meetings, regular meetings talking about experiences of the past weeks, and group meetings raising successes and failures to learn. Further, a few mentioned how successes are often shared, while failures are not shared to the same extent, and that experiences shared are often from a group perspective, not individual experiences. One described having regular meetings with a manager where sharing happens.

“We have a thing in my group that we at our weekly meetings share successes and failures that have happened, because, partly to celebrate small successes but also to learn from each other and understand that everyone makes mistakes, that’s how it is, and the important thing is that you learn from them.” – Interviewee 10

In contrast, another trainee mentioned how there are not many formal settings to share in but rather share with closer ones informally. Further, one mentioned how sharing is possible, but the initiative needs to be taken themselves. Some also mentioned sharing in smaller groups with closer colleagues. One exemplified sharing casually in the office as that person’s most common sharing.

Lastly, one described how the trainees communicate in a group chat and share everything from work-related failures and successes to more non-work-related thoughts.

4.3.4.3 What They Share

Eight trainees described sharing everything surrounding their successes and failures, because they felt it being important to do so and that they should.

Four trainees, in contrast said that they did not share the entire experiences. Some mentioned only sharing in general terms and others communicated that they only shared the parts that they did well. One described filtering certain parts out of the experience when talking to managers and another said that they did not share everything because they thought others would not understand due to the complexity behind it.

“I shared a version of it, because there are people who work there and really like their jobs, so I cannot just go in there and say this is boring, because it is someone’s everyday life.” – Interviewee 8

4.3.5 Impact of Context

4.3.5.1 Group and Organizational Impact on Individual Behavior

Most trainees, 13 out of 16, described the company culture as open, transparent, and family-like. They elaborated on feeling comfortable sharing experiences, especially failures, and that the culture encourages them to share. Many also mentioned that their managers are very open to failure, as long as they learn from it. Further, a few mentioned that the culture is high-performing and ambitious, but still view sharing failures as positive.

“I think the [company] culture itself is very important for whether you dare to talk about failure or not” - Interviewee 3

Further, 13 mentioned receiving positive and reassuring reactions when sharing their successes including others being genuinely happy for them. Related to failure, the trainees mentioned still receiving positive reactions, as some mentioned comfort, understanding that people make failures, support, and compassion. Further, some mentioned this to be the case if they had a plan to solve it.

“The most important thing is that you have some sort of plan B or suggestion, I think that If you raise an issue and have no idea what to do next, then that would not get a very positive response.” – Interviewee 25

Additionally, 12 mentioned perceiving their group’s culture as open to sharing experiences, especially with close ones. Some elaborated on it being vital to have a group they feel comfortable in, that is social, and has a trusting atmosphere and how they refrain from sharing if this was not the case. One mentioned being thankful to their good group when failures happen. Another trainee pointed to that it is important to have a culture that allows them to ask questions surrounding failure.

“I didn’t have a lot of anxiety about sharing because thankfully, I have a good group and the psychological safety felt high, so I didn’t really feel like I’m going to be faced with any shame that I’ve failed with that, rather it was okay to tell.” – Interviewee 5

Further, nine highlighted the high importance of having supportive, trusting, and understanding managers. Many mentioned that if they do not have this support, they will refrain from sharing and not be as engaged in their work. Some mentioned scenarios where they had not received support from their managers, and one mentioned that they would think twice before sharing when that was the case.

“I have become quite comfortable in my role and this group and it has made me feel that I can take more ownership of problems, for example, in my previous group, I did not like my manager or my colleagues and that was the reason why I changed (...) if I made mistakes there, I didn’t feel that I had the same support.” – Interviewee 23

Many trainees, eight, pointed to that the company was viewed as less hierarchical and flat, which enabled them to share experiences more easily. A few mentioned that they would feel comfortable talking to the CEO about their failures. One highlighted that the ease to talk to managers and executives stems from them being a trainee, which has given them a free pass in the organization.

“It is hard in some way that you have free rein, so it is hard to set limits (...) you can go where you want, you can contact who you want, test what you want, and in a way it’s hard with a

company that employs tens of thousands of people, it is like, where do I start? It is a bit of a luxury problem.” – Interviewee 18

4.4 Summary of Findings

The following table gives the reader an overview of the findings structured according to the second-order themes and concepts. All present concepts in the table have at least been mentioned by a third in each group, meaning four of the 11 non-trainees, and six of the 16 trainees. All concepts are sorted according to the number of mentions. The concepts that are bolded are dominant for the trainees and differ from the non-trainees, and in some cases the concept is bolded as it differs in content, while still present in both groups. These are the ones the subsequent analysis section will focus on.

Second-order Themes	Non-Trainee Concepts	Trainee Concepts
Aspirations	• Learn and develop • Specific knowledge and problem-solving	• High ambition and want to perform • Leadership responsibilities and climbing the corporate ladder • Work with something interesting and meaningful
Vulnerability	• Overwhelming entering a large organization • Hard on oneself • Difficult transitioning from school to work • Need validation of work from others	• Overwhelming entering a large organization • Hard on oneself • Difficult transitioning from school to work • Need validation of work from others • Feel themselves that did a good job • Feel good about work when help others
Experienced failures	• Shared failures: work outcome • Not shared failures: work outcome	• Shared failures: work outcome • Shared failures: communication
Experienced successes	• Shared successes: promotion • Not shared successes: project outcome	• Shared successes: presentation • Shared successes: project outcome • Not shared successes: positive feedback
Emotional reactions	• Negative: guilt • Positive: happiness	• Negative: shame • Negative: guilt • Positive: happiness • Positive: relief
Costs	Damage to personal image costs: • Relevance and interest exist • Important how others perceive you • Negative reactions from others • Not appear braggart	Damage to personal image costs: • Relevance and interest exist • Important how others perceive you • Not appear braggart • Others perceive the experience too small • Negative reactions from others

Benefits	Individual learning benefits: • Learn to do a better job • Seek help and advice • Learn about themselves and develop • Learned that failure was not as big as thought Self-concept benefits: • Feels natural to share • Negative emotions to not sharing Group and organizational motivational benefits: • Motivate themselves and others Well-being benefits: • Less negative emotions after sharing Group and organizational learning benefits: • Others do not make the same mistake	Individual learning benefits: • Seek help and advice • Learn about themselves and develop • Can improve sharing • Learn to do a better job Well-being benefits: • Less negative emotions hearing someone else experience the same failure Self-concept benefits: • Negative emotions to not sharing Group and organizational learning benefits: • Others do not make the same mistake Group and organizational motivational benefits: • Motivate themselves and others
Who they share with	• Group • Manager • Friends and family outside work • Close colleagues that are now close friends	• Manager • Group • Other trainees • Friends and family outside work
Where they share	• Informal settings	• Formal settings
What they share	• Share entire experience	• Share entire experience
Group and organizational impact on individual behavior	• Perceived open group culture • Perceived open company culture • Positive reactions to sharing • Impact of colleagues	• Perceived open company culture • Positive reaction to sharing • Perceived open group culture • Impact of managers • Perceived less hierarchical organization

Table 1 - Summary of Empirics

5. Analysis

The following section will focus on the trainees to better understand how they engage in failure sharing and contrast with the non-trainees to understand the differences between the groups.

5.1 Being New at Work

5.1.1 Aspirations

The findings suggest that the ones who currently are or have been trainees can be described as having an elite identity compared to those not presently or previously trainees. In line with the definition of elite identity about being the best (Alvesson and Robertson, 2006), the trainees of this study are highly performance-oriented, compete with each other, and have high ambitions in terms of leadership responsibilities and climbing in the organization.

Additionally, how Kamoche and Leigh (2022) explain that both the organization and the individual contribute to building an elite identity also seems to be the case according to the findings. The trainees get to hear from the very beginning how they are special in that they have been accepted to the trainee program among many applicants and how they are expected to have leadership positions in the company in the future. Similarly, the trainees seem to adopt this identity, as Bolander et al. (2024) bring up, by feeling that they can reach out to almost anyone they want to because of being trainees.

In line with previous research (Bolander et al., 2024) this elite identity appears to come with both advantages and disadvantages. While the trainees, because of being part of this program, get to participate in lectures and meet interesting people, they simultaneously struggle with their own and others' performance expectations, compete with the other trainees, and question themselves and why they got the opportunity in the first place. These difficulties are like what previous research (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022) refers to as the burden of having an elite identity.

5.1.2 Vulnerabilities

Overall, looking at the findings, it can be deduced that both groups are hard on themselves and especially in situations of failure. This seems to be particularly prominent for the trainees as these emphasize this to a higher degree. This indicated that trainees' performance-orientation contribute to failures being even more difficult.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that these trainees need external validation more than non-trainees, while at the same time being better at feeling that they did a good job themselves. These somewhat contradictory findings could be firstly attributed to the trainee's perfectionist tendencies, always wanting to perform more than expected, and rarely being happy about their performance, apparent from the findings. Possibly, these characteristics contribute to trainees to a higher extent needing other's confirmation. On the other hand, these findings could be explained by the trainees perceiving themselves as highly driven and ambitious, related to how talents might feel unique (Kamoche and Leigh, 2022) and confident (Gill, 2015). Because of this, the trainees possibly believe that they generally do good work and therefore do not need others telling them so. Also, in contrast to non-trainees, the findings suggest how trainees put their performances in relation to others to be able to comprehend whether it is good or not, like how Argyris (1991) explains talents recurrently comparing against others.

5.2 Experienced Failures and Successes

5.2.1 Experienced Failures

With respect to failures, both shared and not shared, the trainees and non-trainees brought up similar examples, of which most expressed those connected to not being satisfied with the work performed. While both trainees and non-trainees show a high willingness to perform by exemplifying failures where they did not manage to do so, the findings suggest a higher emphasis among trainees, noticeable from wanting to reach perfection in the work and a tendency to take on an increasable amount of work. In prior research (Gill, 2015) this behavior of overachieving is described as connected to wanting to live up to the expectations surrounding having an elite identity. The trainees further raised communication-related failures, including considering certain communication a failure as it contributed to others trusting that person less and negatively impacted their image of being knowledgeable. This consciousness of other's perceptions is in line with previous talent research (Bolander et al., 2024).

5.2.2 Experienced Successes

When it comes to shared successes, the groups differ, where the non-trainees specified promotion while the trainees provided examples of presentations and project outcomes. Also, the trainees suggested how these successes are even more valuable when more experienced employees are present, indicating an interest in that these have a positive view of them. In relation to successes not shared, the trainees exemplified positive feedback attributed to the self,

with one reason to avoid bragging. This is distinguishable between the two groups as the non-trainees instead share promotions. This could likewise be related to trainees being especially considerate of their image.

5.3 Situation Assessment

5.3.1 Emotional Reactions

The findings further indicate how shame is commonly felt by trainees concerning failures, in contrast to guilt, embarrassment, and fear as well as to non-trainees of which only a few exhibited this emotion. In alignment with previous research on shame (Dahl and Werr, 2021; Tangney, 1995; Zhao and Olivera, 2006) failures of the trainees in this study involved thinking self-critically, questioning themselves and their place, and reevaluating their self-image about performance. This inclination to feel shame among trainees could be explained by talents' high standards and pressure of performance (Argyris, 1991) as well as expectations on themselves to perform (Gill, 2015) which are not met in situations of failure. This seems to contribute to questioning their identity, rather than their behaviors, and feeling shame rather than guilt. (Tangney, 1995). Also, consistent with prior research (Tangney, 1995; Zhao and Olivera, 2006) feeling shame induces trainees, and the few non-trainees experiencing the emotion, to be more conscious about their image and opinions of others. This can be deduced from the findings of which both groups worry about others' view of them in relation to the failure.

Among the trainees, the emotion of guilt was the second most referred to. The fact that the trainees mostly feel shame as well as guilt accompanying failures is further conforming to Argyris's (1991) assertion of these being common emotions for talents surrounding failures. Considering that shame in research (Tangney, 1995; Tangney et al., 1996) is described as a more powerful emotion compared to guilt and embarrassment, the empirics points toward trainees reacting heavily to failures. Rather, among the non-trainees the emotions shame, guilt, embarrassment, and fear were to a similar extent mentioned, except for guilt that was mentioned by one more.

In affiliation with successes, most of the trainees and non-trainees expressed feeling happiness. Although they similarly experienced this positive feeling, it seems to be reflected in different ways. While the non-trainees especially explained feeling happy and proud about their hard work, the trainees rather put emphasis on the positive confirmation from others they got in

relation to their success. Further, the emotion of relief, an emotion that arises in situations where individuals contrast the actual outcome to what the outcome could have been (Graham et al., 2023), seems to be present for trainees in contrast to non-trainees. This relief might be a consequence of the talent's past of mostly succeeding rather than failing and therefore being frightened by failures (Argyris, 1991). Because of this, they might feel relief to a higher extent when their efforts contribute to good results, rather than failures.

5.3.2 Costs

In the decision to share failures, the only considered cost by both the trainees and non-trainees seems to be what Zhao and Olivera (2006) refer to as damage to personal image. This is in contrast to Zhao and Olivera (2006) also suggesting material costs and effort costs. In regard to this cost, the groups exhibit similar considerations, thinking about whether their experiences are relevant enough for others, how sharing would impact others' perception of them, if anyone would react negatively to hearing about it, and lastly if they would be perceived as a braggart. In agreement with what Edmondson (1999) points out, both these groups are highly considerate to not appear unskilled in relation to failures. This consciousness of other's perceptions is also in line with previous talent research (Bolander et al., 2024).

Connected to the cost of damage to personal image, both trainees and non-trainees are concerned with whether others perceive their successes as good or prominent enough. However, trainees seem to rather consider their successes in relation to other employee's successes, and whether the experiences are impressive enough in the decision to share. This behavior of comparing could be attributed to Gill (2015) explaining how talents want to perform at the highest level and Argyris (1991) bringing up how talents frequently compare and compete with one another. Therefore, when they do not feel that their achievements align with this ambition, it could possibly be perceived as negative to their image, and therefore result in not sharing.

Also, the trainees appear to pay even more attention to how they are perceived by more experienced people, compared to non-trainees. One possible explanation could be their career aspirations, including being part of top management, contributing to wanting to have a good reputation among those that might have an impact.

Altogether, these findings suggest that trainees to a somewhat higher extent put emphasis on this cost than non-trainees, although, as shown, these also consider it. This consideration of

image in relation to the decision to share failures could be connected to findings in prior research (Bolander et al., 2024; Gill, 2015) suggesting that talents want to preserve their talent identity and conceivably feel anxiety surrounding losing it. This could further be associated with the previously mentioned advantages of possessing a talent identity, that they possibly would like to retain also in the future.

5.3.3 Benefits

Also related to the decision to share failures, the trainees to a larger extent than non-trainees, feel negative emotions about not disclosing failures, including feeling dishonest and not like themselves. Further, the findings suggest that the trainees as well as others in the organization value an open environment where sharing is present. Considering this, they might feel that they are not acting in line with this. This could be connected to what Zhao and Olivera (2006) describe as the self-concept benefit, which entails protecting one's self-concept, that can contribute to the decision to share.

In addition, the trainees and non-trainees value different reasons to share where the trainees seek help, advice, validation, guidance, and support which aligns with what Zhao and Olivera, (2006) refer to as learning benefits. This indicates that trainees might feel uncertainty surrounding work and recognize the benefit of sharing to lower this. Simultaneously, the findings suggest that trainees sometimes are afraid of being perceived as incompetent, for instance when asking for help. It could therefore be the case, that the benefit of sharing to get help could be assessed against the cost of negatively impacting their image.

Furthermore, regarding what Zhao and Olivera (2006) call group and organizational learning, the trainees and non-trainees do not seem to differ significantly. Concerning group and organizational motivational benefits, a benefit that was found in addition to the ones suggested by Zhao and Olivera (2006), the groups do not differ to a high extent, except for trainees not only motivate others with sharing but also themselves, and not only get motivated from success but also failures. Getting motivated by failures could be explained by the trainee's performance orientation, contributing to wanting to perform better next time.

Additionally, the trainees experienced self-development connected to sharing experiences, including learning about themselves as professionals and individuals, in contrast to the non-trainees whose main learnings surround their job, in terms of becoming better at it. A possible

explanation for this discrepancy can be found in the arguments made by Argyris (1991) that talents have not been through many failures in life before, and therefore do not possess the experience to handle them. Because of this, they gain many learnings about themselves when confronted with it.

The trainees also seem to differ from non-trainees surrounding feeling fewer negative emotions when they hear that others have experienced similar failures, recognized in this study as well-being benefit, another benefit found in addition to the ones proposed by Zhao and Olivera (2006). As trainees to a large extent experience shame related to failures, which centers around the self (Tangney, 1995), the trainees might feel that the failure is attributed to something being wrong with them. Therefore, hearing that the failure has happened to others can be important for them to alleviate the burden of this emotion.

Both the well-being benefit and learning about themselves in relation to failures and sharing were acknowledged by the groups after the experience or sharing took place as positive outcomes. Therefore, these could be described as benefits that might be part of future assessments in relation to sharing experiences.

5.4 Sharing Behaviors

5.4.1 Who They Share With

Related to sharing behaviors, the findings suggest that trainees share more directly with their managers, while the non-trainees rather share with their group. This could be connected to trainees feeling more comfortable with managers since they in the early parts of the program get to meet many and make connections. It could also relate to the fact that the trainees want to be viewed positively by more experienced employees, as previously mentioned, therefore their inclination towards sharing with managers rather than their colleagues, since the findings point towards that most in the organization appreciate sharing of experiences.

Moreover, the fact that trainees share less with their group compared to non-trainees could be connected to trainees having access to a network of other trainees with whom they frequently share. Adding to this, as Bonneton et al., (2020) described talents usually form close groups, the trainees could feel that they are safer and more comfortable sharing their failures with other trainees, as they feel more confident that the negative impact on their image would not leave

the group. This reasoning around it being lower risks to share among trainees could likewise be the case in sharing with friends and family outside of work, close colleagues, and less experienced employees, that both groups do.

5.4.2 Where They Share

Further, the findings suggest that trainees mostly share their experiences in formal settings such as group meetings, while non-trainees seem to share mostly in informal settings, although the difference is slight. The findings for both groups are similar in relation to formal settings, where it is apparent for both groups that successes are more often shared than failures, indicating that it can be challenging to share failures in for instance meetings, especially those they have made themselves.

5.4.3 What They Share

Reflecting on what they shared, the trainees, like the non-trainees, mostly shared their entire experiences and did not leave anything out as they felt like it is the right thing to do. However, a few in both groups did not share the full experience, with one reason for the trainees being leaving some things out for experienced employees. This could be, as previously mentioned, related to upholding an advantageous image. Further, as aforesaid, guilt was experienced by both groups to a quite large extent. Following previous research (Tangney, 1995; Zhao and Olivera, 2006) that indicates how feeling guilt can involve sharing or seeing the benefit of sharing failures, both groups similarly for the most part shared their failures when experiencing guilt.

Elaborating on what trainees did not share, many of the trainees who expressed feeling shame in relation to failures did not end up sharing the failure or decided to share it with few. This is also in accordance with previous research (Tangney, 1995), where shame often involves a wish to hide and remove oneself from the situation, which seems to be applicable also to failures. Possibly, this sharing behavior of failures among trainees can be explained by wanting as few people as possible to take part in their failures, related to wanting to preserve a certain image.

Looking at sharing behaviors, it could be inferred that the trainees share more with their managers as well in formal settings than their non-trainee counterparts. This further raises

attention to that the sharing made by trainees could be assumed to be less voluntary and therefore suggests that they do not share that broadly in the organization.

5.5 Impact of Context

Regarding context, the trainees and non-trainees seem to for the most part have a similar perception concerning the group and organizational culture being open, and how others around them generally react positively to their sharing, contributing to the sharing of failures being less challenging.

This positive perception of the culture could possibly explain why the only cost considered is damage to personal image and why, for instance, the cost of material costs does not seem to be present in the assessment. As this particular cost is associated with potential demotions, termination of employment, or economic fines, (Dahl and Werr, 2021; Zhao and Olivera, 2006) one could expect it to be present for trainees as these, as previously mentioned, might be anxious about losing their elite identity (e.g. Gill, 2015). However, for both of the groups, this was not the case, indicating that the culture is safe enough, and a fear of negative consequences does not exist.

However, other findings on culture differ. Although both groups generally recognize getting positive reactions, for the trainees, this is sometimes only the case when they have a plan for a solution. Also, while the culture is generally described as open, some also alleged that the environment likewise is ambitious and high-performing. This could be related to talents, according to the findings, having certain expectations from others regarding performance.

Also, while both groups acknowledge how managers and members of their group are important in making sharing feel acceptable, trainees to a higher extent put emphasis on the managers. This could be explained by, as previously mentioned, trainees being highly considerate of how more experienced employees perceive them, for instance, connected to their high career aspirations. Therefore, if these managers contribute to it being acceptable to share or alternatively encourage sharing, that might influence the trainees to a high extent.

Lastly, it is found in this study how the trainees to a larger extent than the non-trainees perceive the company as being not highly hierarchical. This could be explained by many of the trainees pointing out, that being trainees gives them access to reach out to anyone they want, such as

high-level executives, and the freedom to try different roles and departments, connected to the advantages of having an elite identity.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

In this section, a summary of the findings is given together with the answers to the research questions of this study along with theoretical contributions.

Firstly, in relation to Research Question 1, it is found in this study that talents are more prone to experience the emotion shame in connection to their failures, compared to those not part of the trainee program. This finding contributes to the field of failure sharing as it shows how one of the four emotions, namely shame, guilt, embarrassment, and fear, highlighted by Zhao and Olivera (2006), is more prominent for talents. In addition, this contributes to the understanding of talents taking failures harshly. Further, this study expands previous research by discovering that talent experience, in addition to the four mentioned emotions in failure sharing literature, relief surrounding their successes. Further, it is found that the cost of damage to personal image is the sole cost considered by both the talents and those not part of the trainee program, unlike previous research also suggesting material costs and effort costs (Zhao and Olivera, 2006). This study indicated that this cost is more salient for talents and suggested to be related to wanting to preserve their elite identity. This study's findings suggest that the reason for material costs not being present for either groups lies in the culture being favorable for failure sharing. Regarding benefits, this study identifies the self-concept benefits, individual learning benefits, and group and organizational learning benefits proposed by Zhao and Olivera (2006) and recognizes that the self-concept benefit is more apparent for talents. This study contributes to the field by acknowledging two additional benefits present in both groups' assessments, the first being the group and organizational motivational benefits and the second being the well-being benefits.

Secondly, regarding Research Question 2, this study found that talents mostly share their experiences with their manager and in formal settings, suggesting a less voluntary and broad sharing. Concerning what the talents share, they consider especially unsuccessful work outcomes and failed communication as failures, and to a higher extent share the entire experience than not. Further, this study has shown that talents experiencing shame do not share their failures alternatively share with very few.

Collectively, this study suggests that being a talent and having an elite identity have implications for failure sharing in terms of making it more challenging.

In addition to the aforementioned theoretical contributions, this study contributes to the understanding of how talents engage in failure sharing, which to the authors' knowledge is a less studied field. Therefore, addressing this research gap is a theoretical contribution in itself to the field of failure sharing. Moreover, this study was conducted in a context, that at the writing moment to the author's knowledge, is less researched while investigating the phenomenon of failure sharing, therefore bringing additional findings to the field.

7. Practical Implications

This study has implications for managers and other professionals responsible for talents since a deeper understanding of how talents engage in failure sharing can contribute to being able to better encourage the behavior and provide value for the organization. Firstly, it is valuable for practitioners to be aware of the implications for talents having an elite identity, for instance, how it can be a burden for the individual to be able to mitigate the negative consequences and avoid negatively affecting failure sharing. Secondly, it is found in this study that talents sometimes share less for instance due to their tendency to experience shame and consider the damage to personal image costs. Managers could attempt to encourage conversations surrounding failure on a general level in the company and group to allow for more sharing, and not lose out on valuable knowledge.

8. Limitations

This study's limitation can firstly be found in that the interviewees all work at the same company. While part of this limitation is countered by the variation from interviewees working in various departments, having worked different number of years, in combination with the size of the company, the findings of this study are still representative of the interviewees that participated. Therefore, the findings and conclusion should not be viewed as representative of talents as a whole. The findings are also, in turn, restricted to one trainee program, however, as most trainee programs have a similar structure, some representation, but not to a full extent, can be drawn from these findings. It is further worth pointing out that the authors are aware of the limitation that due to the uncomfortable nature of failures, the interviewees might not have been fully honest in their responses and not disclosed all emotions felt.

9. Future Research

As talents have, to the author's knowledge, previously not been studied to a large extent connected to failure sharing, future research would benefit from doing so to enhance the field. Further, to better understand how talents engage in failure sharing, a longitudinal study could shed light on the topic. Insights into how talent's possible elite identity and its relationship to failure sharing evolve from the talent's initial career years to when they are more mature professionals could provide additional perspectives to the topic, as suggested by Bolander et al. (2024) in a talent program setting. Researchers who wish to further investigate talents failure sharing could examine this group using a survey study on a larger sample in different talent programs to bring more representation to the findings presented in this study. In addition to

having a larger sample, this study suggests that context can impact failure sharing, and considering a different setting in future research could further provide new insights on the topic.

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11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix A: Interviewees

Interviewee	Educational field	Years since graduation	Department	Gender	Date	Interview format	Interview language	Interview duration	If previous or presently a trainee
1	Mechanical Engineering	1	R&D	Male	27/2-24	In-person	Swedish	39 min	Yes
2	Corporate Finance	1	Finance & controlling	Male	27/2-24	In-person	English	55 min	No
3	Engineering Mechatronics	1	R&D	Male	27/2-24	In-person	Swedish	54 min	Yes
4	Business Administration	4	Finance & controlling	Female	27/2-24	In-person	Swedish	51 min	No
5	Business & Economics	2	Finance & controlling	Male	27/2-24	In-person	Swedish	60 min	Yes
6	Finance	3	Finance & controlling	Male	28/2-24	In-person	Swedish	50 min	Yes
7	Finance	3	Finance & controlling	Male	28/2-24	Microsoft Teams	English	43 min	Yes
8	Economics	4	Finance & controlling	Male	28/2-24	In-person	Swedish	40 min	Yes
9	Computer Science	3	R&D	Female	28/2-24	Microsoft Teams	English	43 min	No
10	Mechanical Engineering	3	R&D	Female	1/3-24	Microsoft Teams	Swedish	45 min	Yes
11	Computational Engineering	2	R&D	Female	1/3-24	Microsoft Teams	Swedish	44 min	No
12	Electrical Engineering	2	R&D	Male	1/3-24	Microsoft Teams	Swedish	46 min	No
13	Mechanical Engineering	1	R&D	Female	1/3-24	In-person	Swedish	58 min	Yes
14	Business & Economics	3	Finance & controlling	Male	4/3-24	Microsoft Teams	Swedish	50 min	No
15	Finance	1	Finance & controlling	Female	4/3-24	In-person	Swedish	46 min	Yes
16	Mechanical Engineering	4	R&D	Male	5/3-24	Microsoft Teams	Swedish	28 min	Yes

17	Vehicle Engineering	4	R&D	Male	5/3-24	In-person	Swedish	48 min	No
18	Industrial Engineering and Business & Economics	2	Finance & controlling	Male	5/3-24	In-Person	Swedish	50 min	Yes
19	Aerospace Engineering	4	R&D	Female	7/3-24	Microsoft-Teams	Swedish	57 min	No
20	Mechanical Engineering	2	R&D	Female	7/3-24	Microsoft-Teams	Swedish	34 min	No
21	Mechanical Engineering	3	R&D	Male	7/3-24	Microsoft-Teams	Swedish	39 min	Yes
22	Business & Economics	3	Finance & controlling	Male	7/3-24	Microsoft-Teams	Swedish	45 min	Yes
23	Business & Economics	4	Finance & controlling	Female	11/3-24	Microsoft-Teams	Swedish	43 min	Yes
24	Business Administration	2	Finance & controlling	Female	14/3-24	Microsoft-Teams	English	59 min	No
25	Mechanical Engineering	3	R&D	Female	14/3-24	Microsoft-Teams	Swedish	47 min	Yes
26	Accounting & Finance	3	Finance & controlling	Female	15/3-24	Microsoft-Teams	English	53 min	Yes
27	Automotive Engineering	1	R&D	Male	15/3-24	Microsoft-Teams	English	32 min	No

11.2 Appendix B: Interview Guide in Swedish

Bakgrund

- Hur har dina första år på företaget varit?
- Vad tycker du har varit mest intressant? Vad har varit roligt?
- Vad upplever du har varit utmanande? Vad har varit svårt?
- Vad är viktigt för dig i ditt arbete och din karriär?
- Hur ser du på utvecklingen av din karriär?
- Hur vet du att du gjort ett bra jobb? När känner du att du har gjort ett bra jobb?
- Vad är dina viktigaste lärdomar från denna tid? Hur har du fått dem?

Delning av framgångar och misslyckanden

Framgångar

Berätta om en framgång som du delade med andra.

- Vilka delade du framgången med? Varför dessa? Om du delade med vissa, varför inte andra?
- Vad valde du att dela med dig av? Varför?
- Varför valde du att dela denna framgång? Hur gick dina tankar? Vad övervägde du i beslutet? Vilka överväganden var extra viktiga i beslutet?
- Hur kände du när denna framgång inträffade?
- Hur kändes det att dela med sig av framgången?
- Hur bemöttes du när du delade denna framgång?
- Om du tittar tillbaka, lärde du dig något av denna framgång och delandet?
- Upplever du att ditt delande med andra har förändrat hur andra tänker och agerar?

Berätta om en framgång som du inte delade med andra.

- Varför valde du att inte dela denna framgång? Hur gick dina tankar? Vad övervägde du i beslutet? Vilka överväganden var extra viktiga i beslutet?
- Hur kände du när denna framgång inträffade?
- Hur kändes det att inte dela med sig av framgången?
- Om du tittar tillbaka, lärde du dig något av denna framgång?

Misslyckanden

Berätta om ett misslyckande som du delade med andra.

- Vilka delade du misslyckande med? Varför dessa? Om du delade med vissa, varför inte andra?

- Vad valde du att dela med dig av? Varför?
- Varför valde du att dela detta misslyckande? Hur gick dina tankar? Vad övervägde du i beslutet? Vilka överväganden var extra viktiga i beslutet?
- Hur kände du när detta misslyckande inträffade?
- Hur kändes det att dela med sig av misslyckandet?
- Hur bemöttes du när du delade detta misslyckande?
- Om du tittar tillbaka, lärde du dig något av detta misslyckande och delandet?
- Upplever du att ditt delande med andra har förändrat hur andra tänker och agerar?

Berätta om ett misslyckande som du inte delade med andra.

- Varför valde du att inte dela detta misslyckande? Hur gick dina tankar? Vad övervägde du i beslutet? Vilka överväganden var extra viktiga i beslutet?
- Hur kände du när detta misslyckande inträffade?
- Hur kändes det att inte dela med sig av misslyckandet?
- Om du tittar tillbaka, lärde du dig något av detta misslyckande?

Avslutande fråga

- Finns det några tillfällen där det finns möjlighet för er att prata om framgångar och misslyckanden?
- Hur upplever du att företagets kultur och värderingar påverkar möjligheten att prata om det som går mer eller mindre bra?
- Hur upplever du att företagets struktur påverkar möjligheten att prata om det som går mer eller mindre bra?
- Är det något du vill lägga till?

11.3 Appendix C: Interview Guide in English

Background

- How have your first years at the company been?
- What has been the most interesting? What has been fun?
- What do you feel has been challenging? What has been difficult?
- What is important for you in your work and career?
- How do you see the development of your career?
- How do you know if you have done a good job? When do you feel that you have done a good job?
- What have been the most important learnings from this time at the company? How did you get those learnings?

Sharing of successes and failures

Success

Tell us about a success you shared with others.

- Who did you share this success with? Why these individuals? If you only shared with some, why not others?
- What did you choose to share? Why?
- Why did you choose to share this success? How did your thoughts go? What did you consider in the decision to share? What considerations were more important in the decision?
- How did you feel when this success occurred?
- How did you feel when sharing this success?
- How did others react when you shared this success?
- Looking back, did you learn anything from this success, and that you shared it with others?
- Do you feel that your sharing with others has changed how others think and act?

Tell us about a success you did not share with others.

- Why did you choose not to share this success? How did your thoughts go? What did you consider in the decision not to share? What considerations were more important in the decision?
- How did you feel when this success occurred?
- How did it feel not sharing this success?
- Looking back, did you learn anything from this success?

Failure

Tell us about a failure that you shared with others.

- Who did you share the failure with? Why these individuals? if you only shared with some, why not others?
- What did you choose to share? Why?
- Why did you choose to share this failure? How did your thoughts go? What did you consider in the decision to share? What considerations were more important in the decision?
- How did you feel when this failure occurred?
- How did you feel when you shared this failure?
- How did others react when you shared this failure?
- Looking back, did you learn anything from this failure, and that you shared it with others?
- Do you feel that your sharing with others has changed how others think and act?

Tell us about a failure you did not share with others.

- Why did you choose not to share this failure? How did your thoughts go? What did you consider in the decision not to share? What considerations were more important in the decision?
- How did you feel when this failure occurred?
- How did it feel not sharing this failure?
- Looking back, did you learn anything from this failure?

Final questions

- Are there any occasions where there is an opportunity to talk about successes and failures?
- How do you perceive the company culture and values affecting the possibility of talking about things that go well or less well?
- How do you perceive the company structure affecting the possibility of talking about things that go well or less well?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

11.4 Appendix D: Full list of Concepts and Data Structure¹⁴

Concepts	First-order concepts	Second-order concepts	Aggregate dimensions
Learn and develop	Aspirations	Aspirations	Being new at work
Work with something interesting and meaningful			
Specific knowledge and problem-solving			
General knowledge			
High ambition and want to perform			
Leadership responsibilities and climb the corporate ladder			
Feel challenged			
Difficult transitioning from school to work	Challenging being new	Vulnerabilities	
Overwhelming entering a large organization			
Hard on oneself			
Afraid to ask questions			
Trainees moving between different departments			
Need validation of work from others	Feel good about work		
Feel good about work when help others			
Feel themselves that did a good job			
Work outcome	Experienced failures shared	Experienced failures	Experienced failures and successes
Communication			
Miscalculation			
Work outcome	Experienced failures not shared		
Work task delay			
Promotion	Experienced successes shared	Experienced successes	
Presentation			
Project outcome			
Work outcome	Experienced successes not shared		
Positive feedback			
Shame	Negative emotions	Emotional reactions	Situation assessment
Guilt			
Embarrassment			
Fear			
Happiness	Positive emotions		

¹⁴ If requested, the authors have the possibility to provide more material from the coding.

Relief				
Relevance and interest exists	Damage to personal image costs	Costs		
Important how others perceive you				
Negative reactions from others				
Not appear braggart				
Others perceive the experience too small				
Feels natural to share	Self-concept benefits	Benefits		
Negative emotions to not sharing				
Learn how to do a better job	Individual learning benefits			
Seek help or advice				
Learn about themselves and develop				
Learn that failure was not as big as thought				
Can improve sharing				
Less negative emotions after sharing	Well-being benefits			
Less negative emotions hearing someone else experienced the same failure				
Others do not make the same mistake	Group and organizational learning benefits			
So others can use the same opportunity				
Share to benefit others				
Let others contributions show				
Help newer employees				
To motivate others in the group and organizations	Group and organizational motivational benefits			
Group	Who they share with	Who they share with	Sharing behaviors	
Manager				
Mentor				
Family and friends outside work				Close ones
Close colleagues that are now close freinds				
Other trainees				
Informal settings	Informal settings	Where they share		
Trainee specific channels				
Formal settings	Formal settings			
Share entire experience	Share entire experience	What they share		
Did not share entire experience	Did not share entire experience			
Perceived open group culture			Impact of context	
Perceived open company culture				

Positive reactions to sharing	Group and organizations impact on individual sharing behavior	Group and organizations impact on individual sharing behavior	
Impact of colleagues and managers			
Impact of managers			
Perceived less hierarchical organization			

11.5 Appendix E: Additional Quotes¹⁵

First order concept	Quotes
Aspirations	
Aspirations	<i>“Most important is having broader knowledge of the company, I don’t want to go very deep into one subject and become a specialist at that, that’s not my approach.” – Interviewee 2</i> <i>“Because as a trainee (...) I got to learn a lot, but you got quite a lot of the basic knowledge, a lot at the top of the T, and not so much on the bottom of the T, so then I really looked forward to staying in one place and learn slowly and understand the basics and the processes properly”.</i> – Interviewee 10
Vulnerability	
Challenging being new	<i>“In the beginning, it was difficult because you didn't understand anything, I come straight from school, never worked in this industry, never worked with financial issues in that way, so of course it was challenging to get into it, but that's the case in all jobs.” – Interviewee 14</i> <i>“It’s about finding your place in the company (...) you are new, as in my case, I had been here a while before I got my current position, but you are still new at the company, new to the groups, and you want to understand the culture here and how it works, while if you are more experienced, you dare to take up more space and you know how the culture works.” – Interviewee 17</i>
Feel good about work	<i>“Right now it is very important for me to somewhat get an indication from the group and their opinions because they have experience of the work and then it is reassuring for me to hear from someone who has experience if it is good or bad so that it is an easy way for me to somewhat confirm for my own sake whether I am doing right or wrong.” – Interviewee 5</i>

¹⁵ If requested, the authors have the possibility to provide more quotes.

	<i>“It was very fun when more people started using the program, or when they had questions about the software, they came to me, so that was great.” – Interviewee 8</i>
Experienced failures and success	
Experienced failures shared	<i>“It was a project that relied on me that I did not get implemented and instead I handed it over to someone to do that instead, so I would not say it is the biggest failure, but it was a delay in a project and, yeah, that is on me, so I did share that with my team.” – Interviewee 2</i> <i>“It was one of my designated tasks, it did not fit me well, and I was bad at communicating that, and I just went with it anyway (...) and I felt that I did not perform to the level that I am capable of.” – Interviewee 8</i>
Experienced failures not shared	<i>“It could be in a meeting if a question comes up that you can't answer (...) or if you can't provide what is expected of you, such failures, so it's not something you go and share. It doesn't concern anyone else but me, so I take it myself, realize that shit, it didn't go as I expected, it didn't go as I wanted.” – Interviewee 14</i> <i>“I have this bad trade-off mindset in my work still, that I would always choose to spend more time on it and deliver it as perfect as it can be (...) so, yeah, I would still prefer to deliver it when it at least feels perfect for me so, now it's, like, not even close to perfect in my opinion, so I'm not going to share it.” – Interviewee 24</i>
Experienced successes shared	<i>“I would say as soon as the promotion was announced [shared], I got the email with the salary increase, and it felt like a success, I got literally measure it.” – Interviewee 2</i> <i>“I presented for everyone who was there during that day, and I got to present that I had created this framework. It was a success for me, partly because I got to present it, and partly because it was appreciated by others, and I thought it was great to share it.” – Interviewee 5</i>

Experienced successes not shared	<i>“They said you did a good job but this is not what we want to hear, so even though it was something that you thought you did a good job and you can even get the confirmation, you don't want to share this with others because the outcome was not good so I think that is also something maybe why people wouldn't share their successes, because even though it's a success, the outcome is not great.” – Interviewee 7</i> <i>“When I have received positive feedback, not for a specific performance or similar, but more in general, then I am not so good at sharing it with others.” – Interviewee 23</i>
Emotional reactions	
Negative emotions	<i>“Yes sometimes, I do not know if it feels embarrassing or not, but sometimes close to that feeling, that you feel that, this I should have done better.” – Interviewee 16</i> <i>“I would rather others forget about it as early as possible because it's just really, it embarrasses me thinking about it.” – Interviewee 24</i>
Positive emotions	<i>So I would say that I was very happy with that. And then once again, you get the confirmation that you did a good job and that your work actually helped to improve, since it was talking about a lot of money” – Interviewee 7</i> <i>“Oh it was such a relief, because it is like, does it even count as a success because it was more or less expected of me that this turns out good.” – Interviewee 4</i>
Costs	
Damage to personal image costs	<i>“Because I think in the workplace advertising your failures is not helping you immediately, I would say, it could help you indirectly if someone spots a failure that you did maybe someone has the answer how to do that correctly or they can just give you some advice so that could be productive.” – Interviewee 2</i>

	<i>"You don't want to stand out from the crowd in a negative way. You don't want to appear a braggart for example." – Interviewee 3</i>
Benefits	
Self-concept benefits	<i>"I did not put too much thought on it, I felt that it was natural to share, if there has been a mistake, then they have to know." – Interviewee 12</i> <i>"[failure not shared] In a way, I thought it felt a bit bad, like I was not being completely sincere and honest, especially with someone that maybe is your manager, and I have never really been in that situation a lot either, what do you share with your manager?" – Interviewee 13</i>
Individual learning benefits	<i>"What I learned was that it is not that bad [failure], as long as you share it, and if you need help fixing it you just have to ask." – Interviewee 12</i> <i>"Some things that you try or will be faced with will not be fun (...) but one of the most important lessons I learned was that if you still listen and try to keep up and try to be engaged, it opens up a lot of doors to knowledge because it became much more fun just by trying to be involved. Those trying to explain it to you are usually specialist or similar, when they really get to talk about something, it becomes so much better because they genuinely want to spread their knowledge to someone who actually listens and cares." – Interviewee 18</i>
Well-being benefits	<i>"Like being told that it's not that bad, that happens sometimes, like not having to feel alone in it." – Interviewee 5</i> <i>"I think you always perceive it as a failure but if, of course many teams didn't meet the deadline, then it means that the deadline was probably too tight, so it was not feasible, maybe, and yeah, of course, it feels way, let's say, way less worse." – Interviewee 27</i>
Group and organizational learning benefits	<i>"It is more that you think that others might have done the same mistake or that it might be easy for others to miss, it could be something that is good for the group to know." – Interviewee 20</i>

	<i>“To help others, I would also say, or that people should be more aware that this kind of thing has gone through earlier through various reviews so that we get a better product from our side, from the group's side, so it will be better for Company X in the end.” - Interviewee 20</i>
Group and organizational motivational benefits	<i>“I think it makes you feel better, of course. Confirmation and share positive things with others. So I think that makes you happy and maybe a little bit more motivated to work or do a good job in future projects” – Interviewee 7</i> <i>“I can absolutely say I got motivated, because it was also that I got a task that I can manage (...) and you know it feels like I have a bit more control.” – Interviewee 13</i>
Who they share with	
Who they share with	<i>“Partly with the team, both the part of the team that was involved in the work, but also the part of the team that was not involved.” – Interviewee 10</i> <i>“I shared it with my manager, I have always had a very open dialogue about everything with that person.” – Interviewee 18</i>
Close ones	<i>“Confirmation from my family and friends outside work, that’s different – I usually mention to my family; Oh I got this promotion today when I get home, but not with work colleagues.” – Interviewee 2</i> <i>“You make a few friends from the group itself or around it, but it is usually people with whom I have a more friendly relationship that you feel you dare to do something like that [share].” Interviewee 21</i>
Where they share	
Formal settings	<i>“From my experience, it is in the more formal group meetings (...) that the structured meetings with an agenda and we have some 10 minutes to share successes and failures, so that’s where it happens, not outside that.” – Interviewee 2</i>

	<i>"I would say our group forum, that we have once a week for one hour, I would say that's the best one [to share]." – Interviewee 20</i>
Informal settings	<i>"If you share [failure] in a group, I think it is the wrong thing to do, it is never right to criticize someone openly, it happens mostly informally." – Interviewee 19</i> <i>"Then we're in the office a few days a week, so it is pretty easy to catch someone in the corridor, it is also quite easy to throw out a Teams message [to share]." – Interviewee 20</i>
What they share	
Entire experience	<i>"To the ones I share to, I share everything, I might as well do it, if I am going to share it, I will share everything." – Interviewee 23</i> <i>"I am sure I shared everyting, I want to be transparent, why should I keep something to myself?" – Interviewee 24</i>
Did not share entire experience	<i>"But to your manager, it is more a of a filtered version in some way." – Interview 8</i> <i>"I shared it in a smaller version, because it is hard to talk about it in detail, it is just simpler to explain it that way." – Interviewee 18</i>
Group and organizations impact on individual sharing behavior	
Group and organizational impact on individual sharing behavior	<i>"For us, it feels like we have exactly the same importance as anyone else, so if we say something that needs to be taken higher, our manager can pass that on, if there would be such things, so it [hierarchy] does not feel like a problem in any case" – Interviewee 20</i> <i>"The manager has a great responsibility in shaping the group's work environment and culture so I think that the manager has a very big responsibility in this and that it goes further up in the organization" – Interviewee 17</i>

11.6 Appendix F: Use of AI

11.6.1 Klang.AI

The transcription software Klang.AI was used in this thesis, which creates more coherent and readable transcripts with the help of Artificial Intelligence. The tool has given the authors the ability to shorten the time needed to transcribe recordings. Further, the quality of the transcripts was enhanced, which allowed for a more thorough coding process and more correct quotations. This time saved was instead invested in coding and data structuring, which in the author's opinion, increased the quality of the thesis. The insight from using this tool is that it was valuable for the study.

The potential risks associated with using an AI tool in transcribing interviews could surround the safekeeping of data. The measures to mitigate this risk were the authors conduct a thorough examination of the data security information of the software, which ensured encryption and GDPR compliance. Further, the authors reviewed the GDPR guidelines provided by the Stockholm School of Economics to ensure that data handling was followed. Another potential risk of using this AI tool is that it sometimes can generate incorrect results, which the authors were aware of. Therefore, the authors still listened through the recordings while reading the transcripts to ensure that there were no errors.

11.6.2 Grammarly

In addition, the authors used the Grammarly Free Version plug-in extension to enhance spelling and grammar in this thesis. It is worth noting that the authors did not use an AI model that required prompts (Grammarly, 2024). However, the program is built on AI models, and therefore appropriate measures to mitigate risks were taken. For example, as previously mentioned AI tools can produce incorrect output, and therefore the authors have double-checked the spelling and grammar suggestions and collectively decided whether the suggestion from Grammarly should be accepted or not.

11.6.3 References

Grammarly (2024) *Grammarly Trust Center*. Available at: <https://www.grammarly.com/trust>
(Accessed: 10 May 2024)

Klang.ai (2024) Klang.ai Security. Available at: <https://klang.ai/security/> (Accessed: 10 May 2024)