

## Determinants of the intra-organisational communication process

Dorota Balcerzyk<sup>1\*</sup> , Marek Oślizło<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces, Wrocław, Poland,  
e-mail: dbalcerzyk@interia.pl

<sup>2</sup> Maj. Gen. Stefan Rowecki "Grot" 4th Zielona Góra Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Poland,  
e-mail: marekdamianoslizlo@gmail.com

### INFORMATION

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this publication is to present the results of research into selected determinants of the communication process in organisations. The first part of the article presents the theoretical background of intra-organisational communication as a basis for empirical research. The next part of the publication presents the research methodology and describes the research sample. This is followed by a review of the results of the authors' own research. As the main method in the research, a diagnostic survey method using a questionnaire was used. A survey questionnaire was used to obtain respondents' opinions. The research sample consisted of employees of a metalworking company. The article ends with conclusions and recommendations. A significant role in shaping efficient communication in an organisation is played by managers and their competences. Among the important determinants of the communication process in an organisation one should mention the choice of communication style, the appropriate form of communication and its direction. The selection of appropriate methods of conducting meetings and their frequency also deserve attention in terms of efficient communication in the organisation. The implications drawn from the research will help to fill the gap in terms of recommending the appropriate use of the communication process in an organisation with specific characteristics.

### KEYWORDS

communication process, intra-organisational communication, interpersonal communication management, managerial competences, communication competences

\* Corresponding author



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## **Introduction**

Communication is a universal process that has accompanied humanity since the dawn of time, from birth to death. A greater awareness of how information can be communicated allows people to communicate more effectively with others both at work and in their personal lives. In turn, a deficit of skills in the area of communication hinders both success in the professional and personal life (Wódz, Wódz, 2003).

Bearing in mind the ubiquitous nature of this process, it is worth examining it more closely in the context of how it is used in an organisation. It should be emphasised that the process of communication is linked to the basic functions of management: planning, organising, motivating and controlling (Stankiewicz, 1999). On the other hand, according to Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1997), the following are proposed among the purposes of communication: developing plans, organising tasks, conducting motivational policies and implementing teamwork through the continuous exchange of information. In the literature on management science, the importance of communication is described as fundamental. Its ineffectiveness, on the other hand, is estimated by Drucker (2011) to be the source of approximately 60% of organisational management problems. The aforementioned statement is also confirmed by Griffin (2000), who points out that managers are forced to communicate with their subordinates and spend most of their time on this very process. In turn, problems in the area of information exchange can be the cause of a company's reduced effectiveness and also its downfall (Zimmiewicz, 2001).

This publication aims to present the results of a study that takes a closer look at the determinants of the communication process in an organisation. The research undertaken aims to fill another gap in terms of recommending the optimal use of intra-organisational communication in a company with specific characteristics.

### **1. The communication process in an organisation**

Establishing a definition of communication in a comprehensive way is a difficult task. One definition of communicating describes it as a process of communication between both individuals and teams. It is distinguished by its focus on the exchange of information, thoughts and ideas, while the means and levels used in it produce a variety of effects (Wilsz, 2009).

One should note that communication in organisations is linked to the basic functions of management, which managers carry out to a large extent using precisely the communication process. According to Stankiewicz (1999), in order to carry out the planning function, communication skills are crucial during forecasting and during programming, the result of which should be the definition of objectives, the organisation's undertakings and the directions, methods and means of their application.

Organising, on the other hand, is based on shaping employees in a way that enables them to perform their tasks effectively. The essence of organising is the development and implementation of rules and principles concerning the division of labour, the coordination of activities, the issuing of orders, and the bearing of responsibility (Balcerzyk, R., 2017). Managers should assign subordinates to tasks appropriate to their skills and potential. The manager must demonstrate the ability to recognise their competence and aptitude, which necessitates having the necessary knowledge of observation and interview methods (Stankiewicz, 1999).

Effective employee motivation requires managers to be empathetic, i.e. to empathise with the subordinate's perspective and understand their emotions and needs. This is closely related to the ability to listen, exchange information, create the right conversational atmosphere and persuade subordinates to communicate their intentions, ambitions as well as objections (Stankiewicz, 1999).

Control also requires the manager to possess both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. In order to be highly effective in this area, it is important to create informational feedback (Quirke, 2011). It is essential to pay attention to the way it is communicated and the nature of the communication, which should be characterised by objectivity and equal treatment of each employee. Furthermore, it is important to inform the team of the recommendations and guidelines to be evaluated during the audit.

Organisations use different types of communication: vertical communication and horizontal communication. Vertical communication is either "top-down" or "bottom-up". In the first case, the purpose of the communication is to provide subordinates with guidance on the company's policies, as well as the expectations placed on them. In addition, "top-down" communication allows for the evaluation of the effectiveness of their performance. This type of vertical communication is also used to inspire and motivate employees and to provide guidance and feedback. On the other hand, "bottom-up" communication makes it possible to inform the supervisor about the performance of tasks, problems encountered, as well

as allowing the supervisor to ask questions and present his or her own conclusions and ideas (Stoner et al., 1997; Balcerzyk, D., 2017; Balcerzyk, Oślizło, 2023).

Another method of communication in an organisation is horizontal communication, which takes place at the same level in the company. Therefore, it is related to the transfer of content between employees working at corresponding levels. It often takes the form of an exchange of information between the managers of separate departments in the organisation. This type of communication process allows, among other things, for the interaction of separate sections, mutual resolution of problems and disputes between employees or departments in an organisation (Stoner et al., 1997; Balcerzyk, D., 2017; Balcerzyk, Oślizło, 2023).

The transmission of information is mostly carried out in a hierarchical manner, so that “subordinates inform their immediate superiors, who then inform their superiors along the levels of the organisational hierarchy” (Zalewska, 2006, p. 167). Appropriate behaviour of the manager in the communication area allows him or her to influence subordinates, control their behaviour, thus increasing the likelihood of achieving the desired goal. In summary, communication facilitates the initiation of contact with the psyche of the other person, so it can be considered as a tool for influencing others (Frydrychowicz, 2009).

Adequate communication in an organisation occurs when subordinates are appreciated both for their specific function in the team and for their personality and proposals. Proper communication in a company consists of the communication of current, precise and relevant information and mutual trust between managers and lower-level employees (Penc, 1998; Mruk, 2002).

In organisational communication, the manager plays a significant role; it is the manager and his or her competence that determines the choice of code, the interpretation of content, its selection, but also the choice of tools and the way in which information is communicated. Inadequate managerial competence results in the content of the message being received by accidental, unintentional parties. The receiver’s reading of the content of the message is determined by both the communicative competence of the interpreting party – the receiving employee – and the competence of the sender – the manager (Balcerzyk, 2019).

The literature on the issue distinguishes four styles of communication between manager and subordinates. The first of these is the friendly style distinguished by the manager’s attitude to maintaining relations with

employees, constant contact with them, understanding their emotions and attitudes and problems, and encouraging them to express their own opinion. The essence of this type of communication is showing interest, displaying sociability, empathy, sincerity (Stankiewicz, 1999).

The second style of communication is the advisory one, characterised by an orientation towards contact with the organisation's employees, but also by a desire to influence them, active participation and enthusiasm when performing tasks, especially favourites. Using this style is equivalent to showing openness, focusing attention on the other person by listening to their suggestions, but also guiding the conversation towards a specific goal. The advisor is also people-oriented, but in a different way than a friend. He or she prefers to make jokes in public, to put pressure on others, and is distinguished by energy and enthusiasm towards the tasks at hand (Obłój, 1994).

On the other hand, the analytical style of communication is distinguished by a focus on task completion, co-operation and becoming familiar with details, but not feelings. The interlocutor focuses mainly on facts and needs time to think about the problem and how to solve it. In addition, it is characterised by a lack of desire to dominate subordinates and moderate verbal communication and infrequent non-verbal communication (Stankiewicz, 1999).

One might notice a different approach in the leader style of communication, which is characterised by a desire to dominate employees, the use of persuasion, aggression, but also by factuality and conviction in one's methods of action (Stankiewicz, 1999).

When communicating, an important aspect is to pay attention to the employee's interpersonal way of communicating and to choose the style that is closest to the employee. Therefore, the manager's aim is to identify the style used by the member of the organisation, as well as to follow the established rules and avoid behaving in a way that is inappropriate to the other person's style (Stankiewicz, 1999).

## **2. Methodology**

The research was conducted in 2022 at a manufacturing company located in Wrocław. The main profile of the surveyed company is the manufacture of products made from carbon steel, stainless steel and aluminium. In addition, the plant provides such services as joining metal elements

(welding), laser cutting, drilling, threading, turning and other product finishing methods. The company wished to remain anonymous.

The aim of the research undertaken was to identify the determinants of the communication process in the organisation under study. In order to obtain an answer to this issue, the main problem was formulated: what are the determinants of the communication process in the surveyed organisation? To make it more specific, the following research questions were posed:

- Which form of communication is preferred in the selected company?
- Is communication from employee to manager important for the functioning of the company?
- What interpersonal communication styles of the supervisor are desired by the employees?
- How often do meetings take place in the surveyed organisation?
- Are the methods of conducting briefings properly chosen?
- How do managers delegate tasks to their subordinates?
- What form of assignment of responsibilities is used by the supervisor?

In order to answer the research questions, a diagnostic survey was employed. A survey questionnaire was prepared as a tool to provide information on the forms of communication used and the frequency of meetings in the surveyed company. In addition, the opinions of respondents provided an insight into the desired interpersonal communication styles and an assessment of the effectiveness of management briefing methods and the way in which tasks are set for subordinates. The survey questionnaire was addressed to people who are employees at different levels of the organisation: from the lowest to the managerial level. Respondents (employees of the organisation under study) were guaranteed anonymity.

The research sample was characterised by variables such as sex, age, education, length of employment and position held.

Based on the data obtained from the respondents' answers, it can be concluded that the vast majority of the employees surveyed were men – 89%. This may be due to the specific nature of the company. A manufacturing company of this type usually employs men because of their physical suitability and certain competences. In contrast, women are a minority of the respondents (only 11% of the surveyed group).

The largest proportion of respondents, 83%, were employees aged 18-35. Those aged between 18 and 26 accounted for 39% of the respondents. On the other hand, 44% of the surveyed group were employees between the ages of 27 and 35. A much smaller percentage, 17%, was made up

of employees aged under 18 and over 35. Slightly fewer, 11%, were employed over the age of 35. By far the smallest percentage, 6% of the sample, were minors. It should be noted that the above figures indicate the specific nature of the organisation under study, in which the vast majority of employees are young people who are somehow well suited to physical work in shifts.

Focusing on education, workers with vocational (39%) and secondary education (39%) accounted for the largest proportion of respondents. This was followed by those with tertiary education, who accounted for 16% of the sample, while the smallest number of employees had primary education – just 6%.

In the research, respondents were also asked about their length of service with the company. The largest proportion of respondents (44%) were those who had been with the company for between one and five years, followed by employees with five to 10 years of service (28%) and those with less than one year of employment (22%). In contrast, a minority were those already employed for 11 to 16 years (6%). In summary, the vast majority of respondents are those with a length of service with the company of 10 years or less.

In addition, the survey included an indication of the position currently held in the organisation. The data obtained shows that a significant proportion of the respondents, 89%, were lower-level production workers. In contrast, only 11% were those in managerial positions.

In summary, the majority of respondents are young men with secondary and vocational education working in production with up to 10 years of work experience. It is worth noting that their description corresponds to the characteristics of the company and its expectations of the employee.

### **3. Determinants of the communication process in an organisation in authors' own research**

The research results presented in this publication are a fragment of research pursuing their main objective, which is to learn about the process of interpersonal communication in the surveyed organisation. The research material is too extensive; therefore, it was decided to present the selected research results. The results of the research presented below provide an opportunity to analyse the opinions of the organisation's employees on the communication process at the surveyed production facility.

A key aspect of the problem addressed is the identification of methods of communication within the company. Therefore, the respondents were asked the question: what is the preferred form of communication in the organisation? Respondents were given the opportunity to choose one of two answers.

The majority of respondents, as many as 94%, preferred *oral communication*. This may be due to the specific nature of the company, where direct instructions for the manufacture of products are needed. In contrast, only 6% of the surveyed group would prefer communication to take the form of writing. Respondents value direct contact with their supervisor. This is due to the advantages of this mode of communication, as it enables immediate resolution of doubts and problems (Balcerzyk, Oślizło, 2023). In addition, it makes it easier to ask questions, thus eliminating communication barriers that could potentially exist when using written form.

In search of answers to issues of the communication process in the organisation, respondents were asked for their opinion on the importance of communication from employee to manager. The results are presented in Figure 1.

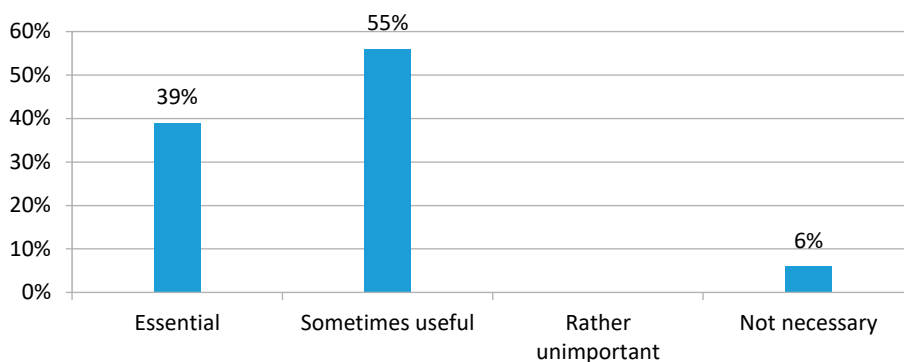


Fig. 1. Importance of communication from employee to manager

Source: own research.

More than half of the respondents (55%) said that “bottom-up” communication, i.e. communication from employee to manager, is sometimes useful. In addition, 39% of respondents confirmed that it is a necessary part of the communication process in the company. Only 6% of respondents answered that this type of communication was not necessary. In summary, for the most part, respondents appreciated the ability to communicate relevant information to their manager. In their view, the use of feedback



proves to be fundamental, allowing the presentation of repeated mistakes and lessons learned visible at lower levels of the organisation, sometimes invisible to managers. As a result, the use of feedback provides managers with the opportunity to optimise selected processes and activities in the company under study.

The communication process between people is multifaceted. When analysing it, many conditions must be taken into account. To this end, respondents were asked to indicate their supervisor's preferred interpersonal communication style. Respondents' views on this are shown in Figure 2.

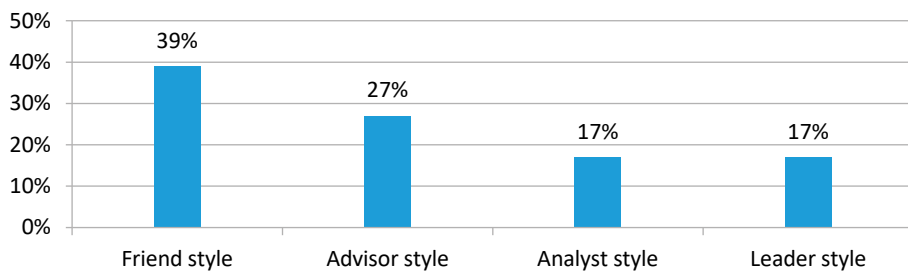


Fig. 2. Employees' preferred interpersonal communication style of the supervisor

Source: own research.

The largest number of respondents, 39%, indicated a *friend style*. This may be due to the respondents' frequent contact with superiors whose prevailing behaviour is different from the desired style, e.g. *leader style* or *analyst style*. In contrast, 27% of the surveyed group would prefer an immediate superior to use the *advisor style*. The least number of respondents indicated an *analyst style* (17%) and a *leader style* (also 17%). So, first and foremost, respondents expect a *friendly style* – a manager's attitude towards maintaining relationships, understanding subordinates' emotions and their beliefs and problems. Respondents also want to be able to express their own opinions. In addition, a supervisor is expected to be an *advisor style*, which includes influencing employees, listening to their suggestions, while at the same time giving advice and directing them towards a specific goal.

In order to analyse the communication process in the company, it is also important to determine the regularity of the meetings. Therefore, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of meetings in the organisation under study. The vast majority of respondents (as many as 78%) opted for the company's meetings to be held daily. In addition, 22% of respondents chose to select the answer *2-3 times a week*. This shows that meetings in

the organisation are a daily occurrence and that the communication process is the cornerstone of the company's functioning. Thus, one may infer that the company's employees often attend briefings and this is rather due to the specific nature of the organisation. This shows, in particular, the need to frequently establish priorities and details of the manufacturing process. In addition, daily meetings allow important issues to be raised on the agenda, which significantly reduces the likelihood of various problems developing in the future.

When the communication process is effective, it is easier to use a symmetrical approach in which the supervisor and subordinates learn from each other. The effectiveness of the process is determined by the effectiveness of choosing the right communication model (unilateral, bilateral, symmetrical) for the specific situation. In order to create group consensus, it is essential that both the team is involved and that the manager has optimal communication skills. For the purpose of analysing managerial competence, respondents were asked to evaluate their supervisors' choice of briefing methods.

Half of the respondents felt that the briefing methods were appropriately chosen. In addition, 44% of respondents answered that they tended to agree. Only 6% of respondents said that the way the briefings were conducted was not appropriate. The vast majority of the respondents – as 94% – believe that the supervisor conducts the briefings correctly and adapts them to the current situation. Flexibility in communication is important, as it allows the supervisor to respond to changing factors in the company and to adapt to the needs of subordinates. Briefings allow people to present their own views and address concerns at an early stage. In addition, they allow participants to change their role, both transparently broadcasting and receiving content and confronting it with their own opinion. The selection of appropriate methods for conducting meetings is crucial to the effectiveness of the communication process between employees at different levels of the company. To this end, it proves necessary for managers to continuously develop their communication skills.

In the research, respondents were also asked to indicate how tasks were communicated by their supervisor. The vast majority of respondents, as many as 94%, answered that the supervisor delegates tasks personally. Only 6% of respondents chose the answer "through other employees". One might infer that the supervisor sees the advantages of this solution – the ability to establish contact with the employee, the opportunity to communicate effectively and to make sure that the subordinate has understood

the instruction correctly. Personal delegation is an extremely important aspect of business operations. It should be carried out directly because, by involving intermediaries, the likelihood of additional communication barriers and unnecessary misunderstandings increases.

Another question of interest to the researchers was the form of task delegation by the supervisor in the surveyed company. The vast majority of respondents, as many as 89%, indicated that the supervisor communicates tasks verbally. This may be due to the specific nature of the company, where direct instructions for the manufacture of products are essential and lower-level employees do not use computers. In contrast, only 11% of the surveyed group indicated that the tasks communicated by the supervisor take the form of e-mail. For the most part, employees receive instructions in the traditional way, while the exception is managers who also receive messages by e-mail. In contrast, managers prefer to delegate tasks "here and now", having real contact with the employee. This form of delegation shortens the communication process and allows subordinates' concerns to be addressed immediately.

## **Conclusion**

Although the topic of communication in an organisation is relatively common, one should note that it is just as commonly underestimated. In the literature on management, many authors emphasise its importance for organisational effectiveness, which was the basis for the authors to undertake the issue of the communication process in a manufacturing plant. The analysis and interpretation of the results of the research carried out made it possible to conclude that, due to the nature of the business, employees prefer the oral form of communication. The important role of "bottom-up" communication is also recognised. Meetings in the manufacturing company are usually held daily and, for the most part, respondents are satisfied with the choice of briefing methods. The organisation's management is viewed positively when it comes to the communication. However, attention is drawn to the need for a friendlier approach from managers to lower-level employees. A manager's focus on the emotions and problems of subordinates would allow for a more effective creation of a cooperative atmosphere, improved interpersonal relations and increased work motivation. The manager should be distinguished by flexibility – focusing on the multiple characteristics of the recipient and adapting his or her message to them.

Referring to a study carried out in another manufacturing plant, proper communication is definitely facilitated by a small number of employees (Kliche-Zwierzchowska, 2020). In turn, the dynamic expansion of the organisation increases the turnover rate of employees, which is not favourable for the exchange of information. Furthermore, inadequate communication is a frequent cause of employee resignations. In her research, Kliche-Zwierzchowska draws attention to problems occurring in the communication process, which coincide, so to speak, with the conclusions and recommendations of the authors of the publication. The main mistakes made by employees at managerial levels are: long decision-making time, lack of feedback and lack of transparency. A supervisor should demonstrate the ability to listen and have a high level of communication competence. Information sharing should be a valued aspect of business operations and proficiency in the use of constructive feedback a necessary skill for good communication.

Practical implications drawn from the research suggest adapting the intra-organisational communication process to the specifics of the company. The majority of employees surveyed prefer to communicate verbally. In manufacturing plants, direct orders regarding the manufacture of products are used. Efficient “bottom-up” communication makes it possible to signal and then eliminate problems occurring at lower levels of the organisation that are not perceived by managers. In addition, the need for continuous development of managers’ communication skills is recognised. Optimally, training courses dedicated to improving communication skills should be organised. The authors also emphasise the importance of continuous improvement of managers’ awareness of the communication process in the organisation and its impact on task performance.

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### Uwarunkowania procesu komunikacji wewnątrzorganizacyjnej

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#### STRESZCZENIE

Celem publikacji jest przedstawienie wyników badań dotyczących wybranych uwarunkowań procesu komunikowania się w organizacji. W pierwszej części artykułu zaprezentowano tło teoretyczne komunikacji wewnątrzorganizacyjnej jako podstawę badań empirycznych. W kolejnej części publikacji przedstawiono metodykę badań oraz scharakteryzowano próbę badawczą. Następnie dokonano przeglądu wyników badań własnych. Jako główną metodę w badaniach zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego z techniką ankiety. W celu uzyskania opinii respondentów posłużono się kwestionariuszem ankiety. Próbę badawczą stanowili pracownicy przedsiębiorstwa przemysłu metalowego. Artykuł zakończono wnioskami i rekomendacjami. W kształtowaniu sprawnej komunikacji w organizacji znaczącą rolę pełni menedżer i jego kompetencje. Jako istotne uwarunkowania procesu komunikowania się w organizacji należy wymienić dobór stylu komunikowania się, odpowiedniej formy komunikacji

oraz jej kierunku. Na uwagę w kwestii sprawnego porozumiewania się w organizacji zasługują także dobór odpowiednich metod prowadzenia spotkań oraz ich częstotliwość. Implikacje z badań pozwolą na dopełnienie luki w kwestii rekomendacji właściwego wykorzystania procesu komunikowania się w organizacji o określonej specyfice.

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**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE** proces komunikacji, komunikacja wewnątrzorganizacyjna, zarządzanie komunikacją interpersonalną, kompetencje menedżera, kompetencje komunikacyjne

### Biographical note

**Dorota Balcerzyk** – PhD in social sciences. Assistant professor at the Faculty of Management of the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces in Wrocław. Her academic achievements involve the field of management and quality sciences. Author of numerous scientific publications in national and international journals and editor of monographs. Author and member of research projects in the field of organisational human resource management and leadership.

**Marek Oślizło** – MA in Management, 2nd Lieutenant in the Polish Armed Forces. Graduate of the Faculty of Management at the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces in Wrocław. Co-author of scientific articles in the field of management and quality sciences. Areas of interest: human resources management, organisational culture, communication in organisations. Participant and co-organiser of scientific conferences.

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### ORCID

Dorota Balcerzyk  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3948-7146>

Marek Oślizło  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8937-2418>

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### Conflict of interests

All authors declared no conflict of interests.

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### Author contributions

All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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### Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.