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# Communication as an Element of Personal Security

**Abstract:** The study refers to the role of building relations between the direct supervisor and employee teams, indicating the opportunities and threats resulting from conducting selected aspects of internal communication in the so-called uniformed organisations. The authors draw attention to the roles of communication competencies and their social overtones, seeing in these elements both opportunities and threats to the involvement of employees in the performance of official tasks, as well as their readiness to deepen relations with their direct superior. The presented results of empirical research concern the organisation of the Ministry of National Defence and the State Fire Service and are only an element of a larger research project. The aim of the research process was to determine the opportunities and threats generated by aspects of organisational communication in the context of maintaining a satisfactory state of personal security of the examined institutions participating in activities in the field of defence and protection of population, property and the environment.

**Keywords:** *security, communication, organisation, supervisor, relationships*

## Introduction

The conditions and principles of subcultures functioning within social groups, also in the organisation, are based on communication predispositions and the ability to establish relationships within specific codes. Striving to maintain a high level of security is often associated with the subjugation of human tendencies to dominate. Organisational conflict is when at least two dependent entities are aware of the contradiction between goals, tasks, interests, attitudes, or views that causes a change in the parties' behaviour through increased tension, emotional reactions, and even aggression (Piotrowski & Świątkowski, 2010, p. 98). Conflicts are an inseparable element of social life. Therefore, one can meet with the opinion of the need to maintain a conflict-free state, which is often against human nature, because it is worth remembering that some conflicts or tensions are a source of power and give a chance to strengthen one's potential, which can lead to development, constituting a path of transformation aimed at improving a given relationship (Ciekanowski et al., 2017, p. 187).

Communication noise, defined as disruptions of communication, originates from neurobiological conditions, processes typical for social groups, and the implemented strategies and policies. From the perspective of broadly understood security, it is worth analysing different levels of perception of communication and drawing on its functionality at every level of its use.

A man functions in the world of information, which is a valuable resource, but using it entails costs. The cleansing of the memory apparatus from useless information defined in R. Landauer's work is an effort for the brain that can lead to disturbances in the homeostatic functioning of the individual in society (Landauer, 1961, p. 184). Even at the level of work organisation in companies, enterprises, modern research shows that e-mails and their reading, organising, etc., generate significant stress for employees (Kushlev & Dunn, 2015, p. 226). Moreover, the effectiveness of e-mail communication has a directly proportional impact on employee satisfaction (Reinke & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014, p. 506).

## Organisational Communication

Communication in a group of employees is called organisational communication (Dobek-Ostrowska, 1999, pp. 111–113). This concept validates the interpretation of the system of social communication as a set of communicative relations, consisting in creating, collecting, and receiving information between the participants of the system, which is the general public. Therefore, if the focus remains on the collection and further transmission of data and information, communication can be referred to as, e.g. (Grudzewski & Hejduk, 2004, p. 143):

- communication between employees;
- employee – manager – director cooperation;
- cooperation between lower-level managers and company management;
- human – computer – data processing system cooperation;

- cooperation of employees in computer networks;
- active creation of data, information and compliance with data confidentiality policy in force in the company;
- communication of managers with advisers and experts;
- use by employees of databases, information banks, the Internet;
- the use of new means of communication: pagers, telephones, faxes, e-mail, mobile phones, copying devices;
- constantly developed ability to use personal computers and programmes for managing investment projects (e.g., MS Projekt, CIS, CIM).

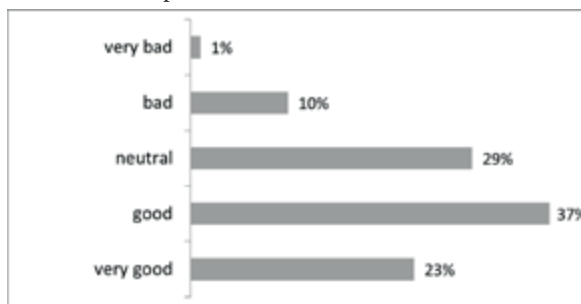
If security is treated as a state of absence of threat, conditioning the possibility of undisturbed existence and continuous development, in the plane of functioning and as an element of the organisation, communication seems to play a significant role. The need to obtain information and social contact are an element of skills and competencies in the area of communication.

### Communication with the Direct Supervisor in Light of Own Research

The remainder presents the results of empirical research of two organisations representing entities closely related to the mission of ensuring the security of state citizens. One of the institutions is an entity of the Ministry of National Defence (MND entity), and the other research group is represented by the State Fire Service (SFS) organisation. The survey was carried out on a sample of over 559 respondents, including soldiers, civilian employees of the Ministry of National Defence (171), and firefighters (388). The study's timeline is 2018–2019. The research aimed to determine the opportunities and threats generated by organisational communication in the context of maintaining a satisfactory state of personal security of the examined institutions participating in activities in defence and protection of people, property, and the environment. The indicated data are part of the research project.

Figure 1 of MND presents a general opinion on the quality of communication with the immediate supervisor.

**Figure 1 MND.** Overall assessment of the quality of communication with the immediate supervisor (for MND)



Source: own research.

In general, more than half of the respondents assess communication with their direct supervisor positively (60%), of which almost every fourth responder (23%) declared a very good assessment, and the majority gave these relationships a good one. Approximately every third respondent assessed this aspect sufficiently (29%), and every tenth employee gave it a negative assessment.

Also, the SFS respondents highly evaluated the general aspect of communication with the immediate superior, which is indicated in the data presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** General assessment of the quality of communication with the immediate supervisor (applies to the SFS organisation)

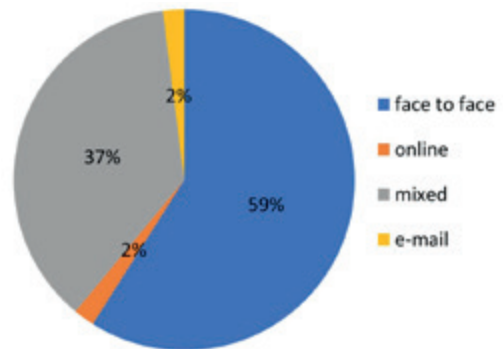
Employee group	number / % of the total	How do you generally assess communication with your direct supervisor?						total
		sufficiently	very good	good	mediocre	very bad	no response	
SFS officer	number	58	103	163	16	3	1	344
	% of the total	14,95%	26,55%	42,01%	4,12%	0,77%	0,26%	88,66%
civilian employee / member of the civil service corps	number	4	12	22	4	2	0	44
	% of the total	1,03%	3,09%	5,67%	1,03%	0,52%	0,00%	11,34%
total	number	62	115	185	20	5	1	388
	% of the total	15,98%	29,64%	47,68%	5,15%	1,29%	0,26%	100,00%

Source: own research.

Almost 88% of respondents in SFS assess the general state of communication with their direct supervisor as good or very good. A sufficient assessment appears at the level of about 16% of responses, while a negative assessment was declared by about 6% of respondents. It is precisely the relationship with the direct supervisor that is a differentiating element in the comparison of both institutions. The quality of communication with the boss is declared higher by SFS representatives.

Figure 2 of MND presents answers to the question about the dominant form of transmission of the message “downwards” – from the immediate superior.

**Figure 2 MND.** The dominant form of information transfer by the immediate superior (for MND)



Source: own research.

In the surveyed MND organisation, the dominant type of information transfer is face-to-face contact of the interlocutors (60%), with 37% indicating a mixed form, based on direct communication and by e-mail.

A similar result was obtained among 388 officers and civilian employees of the SFS, as indicated in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The dominant form of information transfer by the immediate superior (for SFS)

Employee group	number / % of the total	What form of information transfer by your direct supervisor is currently dominant?					total
		face-to-face	electronic (online)	mixed form (direct and electronic)	another	no response	
SFS officer	number	234	17	87	5	1	344
	% of the total	60,31%	4,38%	22,42%	1,29%	0,26%	88,66%
civilian employee / member of the civil service corps	number	26	3	14	1	0	44
	% of the total	6,70%	0,77%	3,61%	0,26%	0,00%	11,34%
total	number	260	20	101	6	1	388
	% of the total	67,01%	5,15%	26,03%	1,55%	0,26%	100%

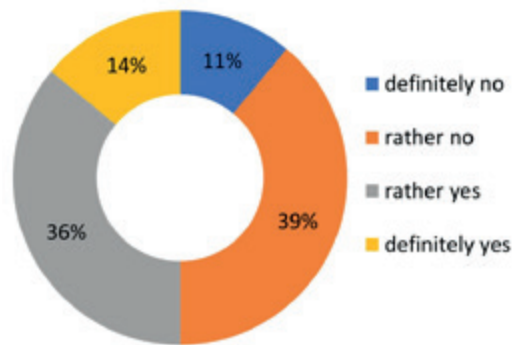
Source: own research.

About 67% of the surveyed SFS representatives declare direct communication as the leading one, with 26% of responses indicating a mixed type (direct and electronic communication). Only about 5% of respondents indicate the dominant type of information transmission by electronic means.

Figure 3 of MND presents opinion on non-professional, human support from the immediate superior.

Half of the respondents declare a lack of support from their direct supervisor in non-professional matters, while the other half positively answers to this question.

**Figure 3 MND.** Do you receive human/life support from your immediate supervisor? (for MND)



Source: own research.

A summary of the responses of SFS representatives is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Human/life support from your immediate supervisor (for SFS organisation)

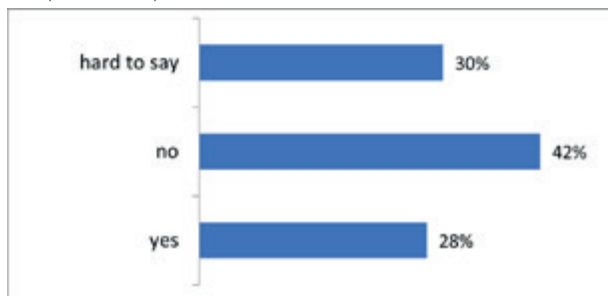
Employee group	number / % of the total	Do you receive human/life support from your immediate supervisor?				
		definitely not	rather not	rather yes	definitely yes	total
SFS officer	number	27	115	170	32	344
	% of the total	6,96%	29,64%	43,81%	8,25%	88,66%
civilian employee / member of the civil service corps	number	5	6	30	3	44
	% of the total	1,29%	1,55%	7,73%	0,77%	11,34%
total	number	32	121	200	35	388
	% of the total	8,25%	31,19%	51,55%	9,02%	

Source: own research.

Over 60% of respondents from the SFS indicate that they receive support in the human, non-professional space from their direct superiors. Thus, about 40% deny such a state.

Chart 4 of MND presents answers to the question about the willingness to invite a direct superior to the private household.

**Figure 4 MND.** Would you invite your immediate supervisor with sincere social pleasure to Sunday dinner with your family at your home? (for MND)



Source: own research.

The majority of employees (42%) would not like to host their immediate supervisor for a family dinner in their family home. About 30% hesitate to do so, while 28% are strongly against inviting their supervisor to a family dinner.

The list of answers to the same question among SFS officers and employees is indicated in Table 4.

According to Table 4, more than 46% of SFS respondents would invite their immediate supervisor to their family home for a meal. Almost 29% of respondents are sceptical about this idea, with almost 27% undecided.

**Table 4.** Social invitation for the immediate supervisor for the family dinner in their own home (for SFS organisation)

Employee group	number / % of the total	Would you invite your immediate supervisor with sincere social pleasure to Sunday dinner with your family at your home?			
		no	yes	hard to say	total
SFS officer	number	94	153	97	344
	% of the total	24,23%	39,43%	25,00%	88,66%
civilian employee / member of the civil service corps	number	14	23	7	44
	% of the total	3,61%	5,93%	1,80%	11,34%
total	number	108	176	104	388
	% of the total	27,84%	45,36%	26,80%	100,00%

Source: own research.

### Conclusions from the Data Analysis

The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the presented data suggest the nature of communication in the organisations. If in terms of support from the manager the group is evenly polarised (Figure 3 MND), this indicates challenges in the area of management style in the organisation in question. More than half of the employees positively assess the flow of communication with the supervisor (Figure 1 MND) but, as can be seen from the data (illustrated in Figure 4 MND and Table 4), it is not building a relationship strong enough to willingly open up to non-professional relationships. However, in-depth research indicates a regularity, namely, employees with more than 10 years of experience in a given community and people at a higher level in the hierarchy of functional degrees are more likely to invite direct supervisors to their homes. A positive correlation was also noted in the case of people declaring a high level of commitment to the implementation of official tasks. Creating a clear need to separate the private sphere from professional relations may indicate a lack of willingness to build deeper relationships, maybe also trust, even though the transfer of information at the organisational level is characterised by direct contact (Figure 2 MND, Table 2). Considering the safety of functioning in the organisation, it can be concluded that the correct level, understood as 50% of people satisfied with the quality of communication with the immediate supervisor, can be treated as a challenge to improve relations with the remaining half of employees, which would potentially strengthen the organisational culture, attachment, and commitment to perform the task. It is reasonable to compare the obtained results with subsequent variables of the entire research process.

Studies indicate that the declared higher level of communication quality assessment correlates positively with the assessment of the readiness of the immediate supervisor to be helpful, also in non-professional situations.

## Conclusions

The specificity of the functioning of the surveyed organisations, commonly referred to as uniformed organisations, imposes a long-term perspective of employment. Significant investment in the development of skills necessary to perform service and work theoretically binds the employee to the organisation, which would be a significant facilitation in conducting policy in the modern labour market, where one of the leading obstacles to the functioning of the organisation is a high level of fluctuation. It seems that a strong organisational culture built based on effective and positive communication takes on the characteristics determining success in the area of employment policy. The conclusions from the conducted research seem to be all the more interesting.

Maintaining communication in human employee groups is a challenge that, if not addressed, can turn into a significant threat to the quality of tasks performed and the desire to identify with the organisation. These facts may become the cause of dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations prevailing in the organisation, and finally may lead to the unuse or loss of human capital (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 406).

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