



Behavioural Research Lab

Research Ethics Handbook

This handbook should be read and understood by all researchers conducting studies in the BRL.

Introduction

As outlined in LSE's [Research Ethics Policy and Procedures](#), researchers have responsibilities:

- to society at large;
- to those who fund their research;
- to the institutions that employ them or at which they study;
- to their colleagues and the wider academic and research community;
- to the people who take part in their research;
- and for their own safety and wellbeing.

While these responsibilities pertain to all social science research, maintaining sound ethical standards for research conducted in the BRL is particularly important as human participants are directly involved in the research. Therefore, to ensure that research conducted in the BRL upholds these standards the current guidelines and ethics approval application have been developed.

Guidelines

The British Psychological Society's [Code of Human Research Ethics](#) states that conducting research with human subjects requires mutual respect from the researcher and participant involved. Indeed, the reputation of the BRL is reliant on maintaining this mutual respect. As such, it is critically important to ensure that the rights and dignity of the participants are upheld to maintain a high-quality participant pool.

To this end, researchers that conduct studies in the BRL will be asked to complete an online [ethics application](#), which ensures that all BRL studies adhere to the BRL's ethical guidelines, which are outlined below.

1. *Protection from harm.* Both participants and researchers should be protected from physical, psychological, social, legal and economic harm. Participants and researchers should be fully informed of any risks they may experience during a study and protected from unnecessary risks.
2. *Coercion-free participation.* Participants should not be coerced to partake in the studies. They should freely decide to take part in the study and should not be punished if they decide to not participate in the study.

3. *Free to withdraw.* Participants should be able to easily withdraw from any point of a study without needing to provide an explanation or being penalised for choosing to do so. They can also ask for their data to be destroyed at any point.
4. *Adequately informed.* Participants should be informed of the study's procedures, what will be required from them, and how their data will be used and stored. This information should be provided in an *Information Sheet*, which summarises the study's procedures, what the participant will be asked to do, and how the data will be used and stored in non-technical terms. This does not mean that participants need to be informed of a manipulation or hypotheses for your study. Please see Appendix A – C for examples and templates.
5. *Consent.* After being adequately informed of the study's procedures and the data that will be collected, participants should consent to partake in the study and for their data to be used. Consent can be obtained orally, in writing, or explicitly online (by selecting 'I agree' in an online questionnaire). In any case, consent should include an explicit statement stating that information about the study has been provided to and understood by the participant. Please see Appendix A, B, and D for examples and templates.
6. *Maintain participants' confidentiality and anonymity.* Participants' data must be treated confidentially and their anonymity must be respected at all times. For this reason, the BRL's participant management system, SONA, will not provide researchers with the names of participants but rather assigns them a numerical code. Procedures for data storage must comply with legal requirements, especially the UK Data Protection Act 1998. Researchers are responsible for ensuring the integrity and security of data. This is especially the case for when consent is provided in writing and for payment receipts. Researchers must store the recorded consent and payment receipts separate from the data in order to prevent the data from being linked to names of participants.
7. *Use of deception.* At times, research procedures may require that participants are deceived in some way. As deception can potentially cause harm and disrupt the mutual respect between researchers and participants, it is important to exercise caution when using deception. Deception should not result in a participant feeling uncomfortable, angry, or embarrassed. Researchers should always protect participants' dignity and autonomy when using deception and there should be a strong scientific justification for its use along with risk and harm mitigation strategies.
8. *Debriefing procedure.* A debriefing procedure should be used after the collection of participant's data is complete. In some cases this may involve simply sharing a general description of the nature of the study with participants. In other cases, this may involve a more extensive procedure to ensure participants do not experience any risks or harm from exposure to the study materials – for example, if a mood manipulation or deception was involved in the study. In any case, adequately debriefing participants helps to maintain mutual respect between the researcher and participants by increasing the openness and transparency of the research conducted in the BRL. Please see Appendix E for an example.

Appendix A:

Combined information sheet with consent given online

We would like to invite you to take part in this research study, which looks at leadership and communication in organizations. The researcher in charge of this study is XXXXXX, XXXXXX in the Department of XXXXXXXXXX at LSE.

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to complete an online survey regarding leadership and communication. Your participation in the study will last for no more than 30 minutes. The session will take place entirely at the LSE. If you choose to participate, you will receive £5, regardless of whether or not you complete the survey.

There are no risks to you from this research and no foreseeable direct benefits. However, it is hoped that the research will benefit others (or science) who wish to understand leadership and communication in organizations. Any information from this study that is published or presented at scientific meetings will be completely anonymous.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You can choose at any time to cease participating in this research without any consequences. Whether or not you choose to take part in this research will have no bearing on your standing or grades in school.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact the Principal Investigator, XXXXXXXXXXXX at XXXXXXX@lse.ac.uk. If you agree to take part in the research, please select 'I agree continue to study' below.

I disagree
exit from study



I agree
continue to study



Appendix B:

Combined information sheet with consent given in writing

We would like to invite you to take part in this research study, which looks at decision making in organizations. The researcher in charge of this study is XXXXXX, XXXXXX in the Department of XXXXXXXXX at LSE.

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in business-related tasks and a decision-making discussion. You will also be asked to complete confidential questionnaires. Your participation in the study will last for no more than one hour. The session will take place entirely at the LSE. If you choose to participate, you will receive £10, regardless of whether or not you complete the tasks.

There are no foreseeable direct benefits to you from this research. However, it is hoped that the research will benefit others (or science) who wish to understand decision-making in organizations.

There are minimal risks involved with your participation in this research, which include the possibility of feeling stress or discomfort in relation to your interactions with the other person in the discussion. While there is a small chance that the confidentiality of the information collected could be compromised, we will take care to prevent this from happening.

Please note that the decision-making discussion will be recorded on videotape. However we will not collect your name or any other identifying information, so your identity will be kept confidential. In addition, the videotapes will be stored in a locked file and will only be viewed by the research team. Informed consent documents will be stored separately so that names cannot be linked to the data collected. After this study is completed, we will save the videotapes and other data. However, the same confidentiality guarantees given here will apply to future use of the materials. Any information from this study that is published or presented at scientific meetings will be completely anonymous.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You can choose at any time to cease participating in this research without any consequences. You may refuse to answer any questions and may stop taking part in the study at any time. Whether or not you choose to take part in this research will have no bearing on your standing or grades in school.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact the Principal Investigator, XXXXXXXXXXXX at XXXXXXX@lse.ac.uk. If you agree to take part in the research, please sign the form below.

I have read this consent form and I agree to take part in this research.

Signature

Name (please print)

Date

Appendix C:

Separate participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before deciding to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information. Feel free to discuss issues with anyone, and if there is anything which is not clear or any questions you have, feel free to ask. Take your time reading, and don't feel rushed.

What is this research about?

INSERT A BRIEF ACCESSIBLE DESCRIPTION OF YOUR RESEARCH HERE

Who is doing this research?

INSERT A FEW SENTENCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF, INCLUDING YOUR CONTACT DETAILS AND SUPERVISOR'S DETAILS IF APPROPRIATE

Why have you asked me to participate?

INSERT A FEW SENTENCES ABOUT HOW YOU HAVE SELECTED POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS.

What will participation involve?

STATE CLEARLY WHAT THE PARTICIPANT HAS TO DO HERE

How long will participation take?

TELL THE POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE

What about confidentiality?

EXPLAIN WHAT DATA WILL BE RECORDED, AND HOW IT WILL BE ANONYMIZED AND USED

**If you are willing to participate, then please sign a Consent Form.
You can keep this Information Sheet for your records.**

Appendix D:

Separate informed consent form

Informed Consent

Project: INSERT THE TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT

Researcher: INSERT YOUR NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS

Supervisor: IF THIS IS A STUDENT PROJECT, INCLUDE SUPERVISOR'S DETAILS HERE

To be completed by the Research Participant

Please answer each of the following questions: QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ADJUSTED DEPENDING ON THE STUDY'S PROTOCOL. SAMPLE QUESTIONS INCLUDED BELOW.

Do you feel you have been given sufficient information about the research to enable you to decide whether or not to participate in the research?	Yes	No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about the research?	Yes	No
Do you understand that your participation is voluntary, and that you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, and without penalty?	Yes	No
Are you willing to take part in the research?	Yes	No
Are you aware that the interview/focus group will be audio/video recorded?	Yes	No
Will you allow the research team to use anonymized quotes in presentations and publications?	Yes	No
Will you allow the anonymized data to be archived, to enable secondary analysis and training future researchers?	Yes	No

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

If you would like a copy of the research report, please provide your email or postal address:

Appendix E:

Debriefing sheet outlining the nature of the study

Decision Making in Dyads

Debriefing Summary

This study investigates the interactions between supervisors and subordinates during joint decision-making tasks. Specifically, we are examining the behaviour of the supervisor, particularly the supervisor's nonverbal style, and the effects of that behaviour on the subordinate's perception of the supervisor and participation in the decision-making discussion.

If you would like to find out more about the specific hypotheses being tested or the background of the study, please contact the Principal Investigator, XXXXXXXXXXXX at XXXXXXXX@lse.ac.uk.

Thank you once again for participating in this research. And please remember not to share any information about the study with others who might participate in future.