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Ethnographic communication analysis: Researching professional culture, power and practice in public relations

Mark Rasquinha *, Helen Sissons *

School of Management and Marketing, School of Communication Studies, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Public relations research continues to privilege survey-based, experimental, and textual methods that emphasize managerial frameworks, message effects, and attitudinal outcomes. These approaches provide limited access to how public relations work is accomplished in the lived flow of interaction, particularly in Global South contexts where professional practice is shaped by culturally specific communicative norms. This article introduces Ethnographic Communication Analysis (ECA) as a methodological framework that addresses this limitation by integrating video ethnography, Conversation Analysis, gesture analysis, and Critical Discourse Studies. ECA treats public relations as situated communicative action and examines how power, professionalism, and organizational culture are enacted through talk, gaze, posture, spatial arrangement, and tool use. Empirically, the article draws on fieldwork in two Indian public relations departments and illustrates the framework through a routine content-creation episode between a manager and practitioner. The analysis shows how the methodology can be used to make contributions towards public relations theory concerning organizational hierarchy, gender, and regulated workflows, performed in real time.

1. Introduction

Public Relations (PR) scholarship continues to employ methodologies such as interviews, surveys, textual analysis, and researcher-constructed accounts of practice (Fitch, Matheson, & Bourk, 2016). These approaches offer limited access to how PR work unfolds in real time (Burton, Lamme, & L'Etang, 2014; Edwards, 2018; Theunissen & Sissons, 2017). This creates a gap between PR's theoretical concepts and the professional interactional environments in which they are actually enacted, a challenge acknowledged by Edwards (2018), Edwards and Hodges (2011), and L'Etang (2013). As Mundy and Bardhan (2023) argued, this distance is even more significant in Global South contexts, where PR labor is informed by cultural dynamics that conventional methods struggle to capture.

Methodological innovation in PR research growing, and now include bibliometric mapping, computational communication analysis, qualitative network approaches, and data-mining methods, that broaden the discipline's empirical horizons and expands its capacity to analyze large-scale patterns across texts, platforms, and publics (Pompper, 2020; Yue et al., 2024). Yet this expansion has not resolved the fundamental methodological blind spot that Mundy and Bardhan (2023) identified in Global South contexts.

PR scholarship continues to privilege tools designed to capture outputs, patterns, and retrospective accounts rather than to observe how practitioners actually produce decisions, navigate authority, and enact organizational norms in the lived, situated contexts where professional practice unfolds. This limitation is compounded by the fact that the field's dominant methodological frameworks reflect Anglo-American professional norms, rendering the culturally specific communicative practices through which PR is accomplished in non-Western settings largely invisible to research. Additionally, as Atteveldt, Margolin, Shen, Trilling, and Weber (2019) and Kuan, Hasan, Zawawi, and Abdullah (2021) noted, existing methods emphasize macro patterns and message-level outputs, offering limited insight into the informal, embodied, and sequential activities through which professional decisions are negotiated and power is enacted in real time. A gap that Sissons (2015) identified as significant persists, making arguments by scholars such as Capizzo (2022), Edwards and Hodges (2011), and Ihlen and Fredriksson (2018) about the lack of methodological innovation capable of accessing the interactional, real-time practices through which PR work is produced especially relevant.

This paper addresses these limitations by presenting the

* Corresponding authors.
E-mail addresses: mark.rasquinha@aut.ac.nz (M. Rasquinha), helen.sissons@aut.ac.nz (H. Sissons).

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Ethnographic Communication Analysis (ECA) framework. ECA is a qualitative methodological framework that integrates video ethnography, Conversation Analysis (CA), gesture analysis, and Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) to examine how professional communication is accomplished through situated, embodied, and multimodal interaction. This integrated framework treats PR practice as a professional lived experience conditioned by organizational culture, relationships, and context, rather than as a stable phenomenon that can be measured in isolation. ECA is particularly well-suited to research questions that examine how practitioners enact power, negotiate authority, manage relationships, and navigate organizational norms in real time. ECA works best in contexts where communication unfolds in localized professional settings (offices, departments, agencies, consultancies) and where researchers can conduct extended fieldwork.

The framework is less applicable to research focused on macro-level communication strategy, message design divorced from context, or phenomena that cannot be directly observed. Critically, ECA offers particular purchase for examining how professional practice operates in non-Western or Global South contexts, where taken-for-granted cultural, linguistic, and interactional norms that shape PR work are often rendered invisible by dominant research methods. This paper demonstrates the approach through fieldwork in Indian political PR departments, where every day, embodied practices through which PR is accomplished are structured by linguistic hierarchies, postcolonial dynamics, and culturally specific professional norms, dimensions often overlooked by conventional methodologies.

By capturing these practices, the method helps researchers respond to calls by Edwards (2018) and L'Etang (2012, 2013) to attend more closely to the everyday conduct of professional PR work. Because ECA prioritizes depth of analysis over breadth, it is designed for purposively selected rather than statistically representative corpora, making it feasible across a range of fieldwork scales, from focused single-site studies to multi-site investigations, depending on the research question and access conditions. In this article, we outline the ECA framework and apply it to a naturally occurring workplace interaction between a manager and a practitioner engaged in routine content production within a political PR office. Although the task appears mundane, the interaction reveals how organizational hierarchy, role expectations, gendered address terms, and regulated workflow practices become visible through talk, gesture, gaze, and spatial positioning.

By demonstrating how ECA captures the multimodal and sequential features of professional conduct, that is, the embodied resources people use and the moment-to-moment organization of their actions, the paper shows how the framework can contribute to critical and cultural PR scholarship by providing methodological access to the everyday interactional foundations of PR work. ECA is most productively aligned with theoretical traditions that treat communication as constitutive and practice-oriented including critical PR, cultural PR, and Global South scholarship and is less suited to normative or effects-focused frameworks that model professional conduct as a measurable output rather than a situated accomplishment.

2. Theoretical framework

PR scholarship has developed a wide range of methodological tools for studying professional practice, each with distinct strengths and characteristic blind spots. The following review maps the most influential traditions and, in doing so, identifies the gap that ECA is positioned to fill. In recent years, a range of methodological innovations, such as bibliometric mapping, computational communication analysis, qualitative network approaches, and data-mining methods have been used to study the profession (Pompper, 2020; Yue et al., 2024). Despite this expansion, several large-scale literature reviews show that PR scholarship continues to be influenced by a dominant methodological orientation grounded in quantitative modelling, message-level analysis, and managerial frameworks (Christensen & Andersson, 2025; Dong & Van den Berg, 2025; Volk, 2016; Yue et al., 2024; Zhou, Capizzo, Page, & Toth, 2023). This dominance reproduces long-standing emphases on managerial and strategic perspectives, organizational control, relationship management, symmetrical communication, the situational theory of publics, and the Excellence framework (Dozier, 2008; Grunig & Grunig, 2008; Grunig, 1990).

While these approaches have produced substantial empirical knowledge about PR as a strategic and organizational function, they construct an understanding of PR as something managed and measured within organizational systems. These dominant approaches restrict researchers from examining how PR work is accomplished in the lived flow of real-time interaction. Yue et al. (2024) further noted that habitual reliance on psychological constructs and managerial models limits the field's ability to observe the social and interactional conditions in which practitioners act, a limitation consistent with broader critiques of macro-level theorization.

Critical and cultural PR scholarship has substantially expanded the field's conceptual resources. L'Etang (2008) characterized critical PR as an ongoing intellectual project that interrogates the field's epistemic boundaries and the assumptions embedded in managerial theorizing. Within this project, two broad strands have emerged. The first, grounded in Critical Theory, contributes to theories of institutional power, symbolic capital, hierarchies, and managerial domination (Edwards & Hodges, 2011; Ihlen & Fredriksson, 2018; Valentini, 2021).

The second, rooted in discourse studies and reflexive critique, focuses on how representation, and discursive practices shape professional identity, organizational meaning and resistance (Dutta & Pal, 2011; L'Etang, 2013; Munshi & Kurian, 2020). Postcolonial and Global South perspectives have further broadened the field's interpretive reach by foregrounding subaltern experiences and challenging Western hegemonies in PR practice (Munshi & Kurian, 2005; Dutta, 2015). Despite this range, these traditions rely on methods that are largely textual, conceptual, or retrospective. Edwards's (2006) account of symbolic power was developed through the conceptual application of Bourdieu, supported by practitioner interviews; Curtin's (2022) cultural economic model emerged from case-based analysis of campaign artefacts. Similarly, research employing genre analysis, narrative analysis, and discourse-oriented case studies examined organizational narratives without access to the micro-interactional processes that produce them (Fitch, 2017; Pompper et al., 2022; Weder & Weaver, 2025). Collectively, these approaches have built theory from retrospective accounts and textual outputs, which limits their capacity to examine how power is enacted in the moment of interaction.

Critical PR scholars continue to develop influential models of power, culture, and professional practice using methods that remain largely textual, conceptual, or retrospective (Ciszek, 2020; Ciszek, Place, & Logan, 2022; Curtin, 2022; Daymon & Hodges, 2009; Demetrious, 2024; Edwards, 2006; Fitch, 2017; Munshi & Kurian, 2020; Weder & Weaver, 2025). For example, Curtin's (2022) cultural economic model emerged from case-based analysis of campaign artefacts. Similarly, research employing methods such as genre analysis, narrative analysis and discourses examined through case studies interpreted organizational narratives without access to the micro interactional processes that produce them (Fitch, 2017; Weder & Weaver, 2025). Collectively, these studies relied on retrospective accounts and textual artefacts to build theory, which limited their ability to theorize how power and professional practice were accomplished in the moment of interaction.

In addition to these critical and conceptual approaches, postcolonial and Global South perspectives draw on a wider set of qualitative methods, including critical textual analysis, interpretive organizational case work, ethnography, and participatory research. Munshi and Kurian (2005) examined colonial and postcolonial hierarchies through discourse analysis, organizational interpretation, and reflexive engagement with practitioners, while Dutta's (2015) culture-centered approach employed ethnography, community participation, and dialogic inquiry to foreground subaltern experiences.

While qualitative methodologies broaden the field's interpretive capacity, they have inherent limitations, that are structural rather than incidental, each method, taken alone, captures only a partial slice of professional communicative life. Interview-based studies depend on practitioner accounts which, as ethnographic researchers note, are shaped by the belief that professional labor is ordinary and unremarkable (Rasquinha, 2024; Sissons, 2014; Theunissen & Sissons, 2017; Middleton, 2020). What practitioners recall and articulate about their work is necessarily filtered through retrospection, professional identity, and the assumption that routine action requires no explanation.

Ethnographic work faces the difficulty that PR labor often occurs in private or semi-private spaces, embedded in informal routines that may not be articulated (Rasquinha, 2024). As a result, ethnographic studies in PR frequently produce accounts of organizational intent rather than fine-grained observations of practice (Bhargava, 2024; Daymon & Hodges, 2009; Sissons, 2015). Textual and critical discourse approaches examine communication outputs but not the informal, embodied backstage processes that produce them (Smith & Sissons, 2023), while surveys and experiments foreground attitudinal outcomes but cannot capture the sequential, multimodal activities through which decisions are negotiated (Llewellyn & Hindmarsh, 2010). What these approaches share is a reliance on communication as product, text, reported experience, or measured attitude, rather than communication as process, unfolding in real time through talk, body, and space.

These limitations intensify in Global South contexts where PR practice is enacted through gesture, silence, spatial arrangement, and culturally coded interactional norms that rarely surface in interviews or textual data. (Al Kandari & Gaither, 2011; Al Tamimi, 2014; Zainuddin & Djusan, 2015). In these contexts, meaning is not only communicated through language but through registers of deference, multilingual code-switching, embodied hierarchy, and culturally specific interactional rhythms that no retrospective account can fully reconstruct. Without methodologies capable of documenting these forms of communicative action, much of the labor that sustains PR practice remains empirically inaccessible.

Scholarship that privileges textual analysis and interview-based accounts produces incomplete understandings of PR work. Willis (2018, p. 40) notes that promotional narratives of practice result in "an inaccurate, sanitized and arid understanding of how PR teams actually function" because they elide the "poor decisions, irrationality, conflict, misunderstandings and unintended consequences" that constitute lived experience. This gap manifests empirically: Jelen-Sanchez (2018) found that crisis communication dominates journal articles at 16.4 % despite practitioners identifying it as disproportionately studied relative to its actual occurrence. When scholars treat communication as a finished output or rely on retrospective accounts, they only partially theorize how power, authority, and professional identity are actually produced in interaction (Edwards, 2018; Theunissen & Sissons, 2017; Rasquinha & Sissons, 2025). This as Rasquinha (2024) showed, fundamentally constrains critical PR theory and prevents scholars from examining the interactional mechanisms through which organizational hierarchies are enacted and professional norms are negotiated in real time.

When researchers cannot observe the embodied, moment-to-moment negotiations through which practitioners manage client relationships, assert expertise, and navigate contradictions between stated organizational values and workflow requirements, scholarship misses the relational and interpersonal dimensions that sustain professional action (Rasquinha & Theunissen, 2025; Rasquinha & Sissons, 2025; Theunissen & Bhargava, 2025). Furthermore, the discourse of the profession itself reveals what goes unobserved. Entry-level recruitment advertisements emphasize personality traits, being "fantastic," "friendly," and achieving "cultural fit", while minimizing discussion of professional competence such as research, planning, measurement, and evaluation (Bhargava & Theunissen, 2019). These repeated characterizations, drawn from practitioners' own occupational discourse, both reflect and reinforce particular stereotypes of who belongs in the profession. Without direct observational access to how practitioners actually accomplish their work, how they solve problems, make decisions, manage complexity, scholarship cannot challenge these narratives or ground occupational identity in documented practice.

2.1. *Ethnographic communication analysis: theoretical integration*

Ethnographic Communication Analysis (ECA) provides a framework that is flexible and integrates social theory with Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) seamlessly (Sissons, 2014). In this approach, CDS functions both as an interpretive (analytical) toolkit and a theory of power. It shows how discourse enacts, maintains, and contests power relations, structuring the conditions under which practitioners produce PR texts that carry ideological effects (Wodak & Meyer, 2015; Fairclough, 2001). Drawing from Fairclough's (2001) framework, ECA places discourse within the wider social, material, and organizational environments in which professional PR takes place. Instead of treating talk or text as the primary unit of analysis, ECA considers discourse to be one element within a multimodal field where power is enacted through spatial arrangement, timing, silence, gaze, gesture, and embodied alignment. This makes it possible to operationalize social theories of power, including disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977), symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991), legitimacy (Weber, 1978), and hegemony (Gramsci, 1971), within the fine-grained interactional practices used in professional work.

CDS has become increasingly prominent in PR scholarship, drawing on theoretical frameworks (Fairclough, 2001) to understand how discourse enacts power relations, and analytical methods (Wodak & Meyer, 2015; Machin & Mayr, 2012) to examine how those relations operate in communication. Sissons (2015) established the foundation by combining critical discourse analysis with conversation and gesture analysis to examine how power operates through multimodal interaction in professional settings. Building on this approach, Theunissen and Sissons (2017) explored how relational enactment, the strategic use of politeness, empathy, and discourse strategies, operates in in-house consultant interactions and sustains client-consultant relationships in practice. Rasquinha (2024) demonstrated how CDS combined with video ethnography reveals not only language hierarchies in multilingual PR contexts but how practitioners embody, negotiate, and resist these hierarchies in real time through intonation, gesture, and emotional expression. Similarly, Bhargava and Theunissen (2025) showed that ethnographic observation illuminates relational labor, the embodied interpersonal work, through which consultants assert expertise while maintaining client harmony. Wang (2025) extended this approach beyond organizational contexts, using multimodal analysis of vlogging practices to reveal how content creators strategically combine authenticity and performance through visual self-presentation, emotional appeals, and embodied cues to engage audiences.

This approach moves away from the textual and retrospective orientation that has framed much critical PR. Traditional discourse analytic work isolates communicative artifacts and reconstructs meaning after the fact, but ECA treats communication as situated, sequential, and embodied, and as something accomplished in real time in professional settings (Sissons, 2015). This understanding is grounded in Carey's (1989) ritual view of communication, which frames communication not as the mere transmission of information but as the ongoing maintenance of shared meaning through participation in cultural practice. From this perspective, the routine, taken-for-granted communicative interactions that constitute professional PR work are not incidental to organizational life, but as Geertz (1973) argued, they are the very means through which professional culture is enacted and reproduced.

Framing communication as the negotiated enactment of shared meaning makes it possible to examine how power operates through the contingencies of everyday organizational interaction rather than through abstract accounts or practitioner descriptions. By combining social theory with a multimodal interactional lens, ECA provides a way

to analyze how professional action, authority, and obligation are produced in practice. This theoretical orientation sets the stage for the following review of methodological traditions in PR and clarifies why existing approaches struggle to capture the lived and interactional nature of PR work.

3. Overview of the method

ECA is located within an interpretive qualitative design that treats PR practice as a professional lived experience conditioned by organizational culture, relationships, and context, rather than as a stable phenomenon that can be measured in isolation (Edwards, 2018; L'Etang, Hodges, & Pieczka, 2012; Sissons, 2014). It examines how practitioners make sense of and carry out work in their professional settings, treating meaning as something co-created through situated action rather than simply reported (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In line with interpretive traditions (Heracleous, 2004), ECA does not seek total or statistical generalization, instead, it aims for moderatum generalizations (Williams, 2000), by identifying interactional mechanisms and routines that are likely to recur in settings that share similar organizational and socio-cultural characteristics (Llewellyn & Hindmarsh, 2010; Smith & Sissons, 2023). This approach equips scholars to develop empirical explanations of how PR work is accomplished in practice without claiming that findings apply universally. Central to this process is the critical incident technique (CIT), which provides the analytic lens through which significant moments are identified from the broader corpus, a selection logic that is explained in detail in the "Selecting the Data" section below. Part of the rigor of ECA therefore lies in researchers clearly articulating the boundaries of their work, specifying the organizational, cultural, and interactional conditions that make their setting analytically relevant, and the contexts to which their findings can reasonably be extrapolated.

3.1. Preparing for fieldwork

ECA requires researchers to gather data in the real environments where professional communication unfolds. Because PR work often takes place in office settings, and within fast-moving organizational routines, gaining access is not a single step but a negotiated and ongoing process (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Sissons, 2014; Middleton, 2020). Access typically involves securing organizational approval, meeting unit managers, and building familiarity with practitioners who may initially be wary of being observed or filmed (Rasquinha, 2024). Once access is granted, researchers spend time in the setting to understand the layout, rhythms of work, interactional norms, and informal practices that inform communication.

Sampling follows an interpretive logic, where participants are selected not for statistical representativeness but because their roles make the interactional organization of PR work visible. Purposive and convenience sampling are therefore appropriate and often unavoidable in organizational settings where access is mediated through personal and practitioner networks, existing relationships, and situational constraints (Flick, 2007). This sampling strategy aligns with ECA's aim of identifying the interactional mechanisms that characterize professional practice within specific socio-organizational contexts.

In practice, ECA corpora can range from a focused, single-site study involving one or two participants and a small number of recorded hours to multi-site datasets gathered across several weeks or months. What determines corpus adequacy is not volume but whether the data contain sufficient instances of the interactional phenomena under investigation. A corpus of even a few hours of naturally occurring professional interaction can support rigorous multimodal analysis when episodes are examined in the fine-grained detail ECA requires (Llewellyn & Hindmarsh, 2010). Researchers working in constrained-access environments may therefore legitimately work with a single department or organizational unit, provided the setting yields rich, naturally occurring activity relevant to the research question. Studies examining variation across professional cultures or organizational contexts may require data gathered across multiple sites or extended periods of fieldwork. In all cases, corpus construction should be guided by the principle of analytic sufficiency, that is, the data should contain enough interactional material to identify recurrent mechanisms and support interpretive claims, instead of a fixed minimum threshold of participants or recording hours.

3.1.1. Data gathering methods

ECA relies on a combination of data gathering methods to produce a multimodal corpus of naturally occurring professional activity. Video ethnography provides the primary record, capturing talk, gesture, gaze, posture, task orientation, and the spatial organization through which communication and decision-making unfold in real time. In digitally mediated workplaces, this includes filming screens to document emails, messaging platforms, dashboards, and other digital artefacts that form part of the interactional environment, showing how on-screen activity is incorporated into moment-to-moment professional practice. Filming these naturally occurring work-related sequences allows researchers to document the full structure of events and the contingencies that shape interaction, while field notes provide contextual information about off-camera activity, spatial dynamics, and moments when recording is not possible.

In addition, interviews, either semi-structured or unstructured, are used flexibly to clarify practitioner intentions, explain actions that occur outside the camera's view, and fill analytic gaps by drawing on practitioners' own accounts of how tasks are assigned, negotiated, or justified. Minichiello, Aroni, and Hays (2008) argued that loosely structured interviews are vital in interpretive research because they create conversational space for participants to introduce issues, meanings, and experiences that the researcher could not anticipate in advance. Rather than imposing a predetermined set of questions, the interviewer responds to the participant's cues, allowing the discussion to progress naturally around the participant's own interpretive priorities. Lastly, when gathering data, researchers must maintain a non-intrusive presence in the field by observing without interrupting ongoing work, and ensure transparency by clearly outlining the study's purpose and obtaining informed consent from all participants.

3.1.2. Selecting the data

The selection of segments for analysis followed the principles of the critical incident technique (CIT), which Flanagan (1954) described as a flexible set of procedures for identifying observable human behaviour that carries analytic significance. CIT does not depend on rigid rules; rather, it provides adaptable guidelines for isolating moments that allow meaningful inferences about how professional conduct is organised. Within this framework, CIT is a practical tool for distilling a large corpus of video and ethnographic material to those sequences where the texture of PR practice can be examined in detail.

For an incident to be analytically useful, it needs to be sufficiently complete, display a clear purpose, and produce consequences that can be observed in the unfolding interaction. This approach draws on what Hall described as taking "a long preliminary soak" in the data, immersing oneself wholeheartedly in the material to draw out examples of the communicative ecology that illuminate the day-to-day lived experiences of participants (Hall, 1975). Following Gitlin's (1980) framework, the analysis looks for recurrent practices and encounter types relevant to the research problem. And in line with Gumperz's (2001, p. 223) emphasis on "strips of naturally organised interaction containing empirical evidence to confirm or disconfirm" assumptions, the selected segments need to capture the full, unfolding sequence of professional conduct. Within the ECA framework, an incident is treated as critical when it captures an entire event, reflects a significant aspect of PR practice, and exemplifies a pattern that recurs across the dataset.

For example, Rasquinha and Sissons (2025) selected a single content-production interaction lasting approximately four minutes,

from the moment a practitioner posed a question about translating campaign material through to the resolution of the linguistic choice, because it contained the complete arc of a workplace decision being made, involved the negotiation of authority and language hierarchy (a significant aspect of political PR), and this pattern of linguistic negotiation recurred consistently across the broader corpus of video data. Similarly, Bhargava and Theunissen (2025) focused on a phone call between a consultant and client that captured an entire delicate interaction beginning with the consultant's opening, moving through the provision of critical advice, and concluding with the client's response. The call demonstrated the relational labor that sustains consulting relationships, and exemplified interpersonal strategies (empathy, politeness, strategic language use) that appeared across multiple client-consultant interactions. The validity of focusing on such brief, bounded interactions rests not on statistical representativeness but on the depth of analysis they support and their consistency with patterns visible throughout the fieldwork.

3.1.3. Analyzing the data

ECA has been used by researchers examining social media practices, PR and Journalism (Bhargava, 2024; Middleton, 2020; Rasquinha, 2024; Sissons, 2015; Theunissen and Sissons, 2017). The framework's analytic toolkit includes the integration of multiple analytic strategies such as Conversation Analysis (CA) (Holmes, 2000), gestural analysis (Kendon, 1997; McNeill, 2005) and Critical Discourse Studies (Wodak and Meyer, 2015; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Together, they help analyze talk, gesture, spatial orientation, object use, and the unfolding temporal order of interaction.

CA provides the foundational structure for examining how participants organize their verbal contributions. Jeffersonian transcription conventions (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977; Schegloff, 1991) are used to represent timing, prosody, overlap, repair, and the sequential organization of speech. These transcripts function as analytical tools rather than descriptive records because they preserve the fine-grained detail needed to understand how practitioners display understanding, negotiate tasks, and coordinate action. The framework then expands outward to incorporate the embodied and material dimensions of interaction. Drawing on work in interactional sociology and multimodal analysis (Geertz, 1973; Goffman, 1964; Kendon, 1997; McNeill, 2006; Sissons, 2014), it analyzes posture, gaze, proximity, gesture, and participants' movements while performing PR work. These embodied actions are not treated as cues that decorate talk but as semiotic resources that structure participation and make professional intentions recognizable.

Therefore, the analytic task is to integrate these communicative streams, to ask how the verbal, embodied, spatial, and material elements jointly produce the action at hand. Many sequences only become interpretable when multiple modes are examined together. For example, the timing of a directive may depend on a practitioner's orientation toward a screen, a shift in gaze may signal alignment or withdrawal, and a gesture may complete or contradict what is said aloud. Through this process, ECA reveals aspects of practice that remain invisible in methods that prioritize reflective accounts of practitioners.

ECA requires a style of data presentation that makes the interactional and multimodal features of professional communication visible, while still honoring the ethical conditions under which the data are gathered. Data are presented through a combination of video stills, field note descriptions, transcript excerpts, and where relevant, artifacts such as social media screenshots or work-related materials. When interaction occurs in more than one language, the transcript retains the original script when it contributes meaningfully to the analysis. For example, utterances in non-English languages may be shown in the original script alongside an English translation so that readers can see how elements such as emphasis, elongation, intonation, or register contribute to the action (See Middleton, 2020 and Rasquinha, 2024). Alternately, if participants speak in English, the need for a separate translation column does not arise.

ECA also incorporates a reflexive process in which selected transcript segments or visual stills are shared with consenting practitioners. This exchange allows practitioners to clarify intentions or contextual details that are not evident on camera, and it enables the researcher to test initial interpretations against the understanding of those who participated in the interaction. Reflexive feedback is used as one source of insight among many rather than as a definitive account, and it contributes to a form of triangulation that brings together observational data, participant perspectives, and detailed interactional analysis. These practices ensure that ECA not only makes its analytic procedures transparent but also grounds its claims in a rigorous and ethically responsible multimodal record.

Across all cases where data is presented, visual stills are used to display spatial positioning, gaze direction, gesture, and the use of tools and devices. Identifying details such as faces, branding, and recognizable office features are obscured, which ensures that ethical obligations are met while preserving the analytic visibility of embodied action. For example, pseudonyms are used in all transcripts to protect identities, although contextual recognition remains a possibility. In what follows, we provide an example that illustrates how these components are assembled to support ECA's approach to analyzing professional communication. Specifically, the example examines how organizational hierarchy, gendered professional norms, and workflow regulation are enacted through the moment-to-moment interaction of a manager and practitioner during a routine content-creation task Table 1.

3.1.4. Providing context

Before presenting any multimodal excerpt, researchers using ECA often provide a concise but analytically rich contextual background of the interaction. This descriptive section follows Flanagan's principle that CIT requires contextual grounding to support meaningful inference (Flanagan, 1954). It also adheres to Geertz's recommendation that a thick description is essential for interpreting the significance of action within its cultural frame (Geertz, 1973). Furthermore, by providing background, ECA also aligns with Gumperz's (1982) insistence that naturally occurring interaction must be situated within its social and situational environment to be analytically interpretable.

This background section operates in two parts. The first provides the broader case context in which the interaction is situated, outlining the professional setting, organizational environment, and communicative conditions that make the episode analytically relevant. The second part, "Setting the Scene," narrows in on the specific moment of interaction, describing the participants, their roles, and the spatial and relational arrangements that shape how the episode unfolds. Together, these two components justify the selection of the critical incident and establish why the sequence carries analytical significance.

Table 1
Summary of the data gathering and analysis method.

Data Gathering Method	Data Type	Analysis Method
Video Ethnography	Talk, gesture, gaze, posture, spatial orientation, object use, temporal sequencing	Conversation Analysis (CA), multimodal gestural analysis, Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)
Interviews	Practitioner intentions, routines and meanings attributed to processes and practices	Anecdotal data used to support observations and triangulate findings
Field Notes & Observations	Off-camera settings, organizational and contextual information and digital artifacts	Ethnographic description and context (setting the scene)

3.1.5. Background of the interaction

As the first part of this contextualization, the background section outlines the professional task from which the selected episode emerged. The interaction took place in a political communications office in Karnataka, India, operating in support of a local elected representative within India's parliamentary democratic system. In this context, PR practitioners function as the operational link between elected officials and their public-facing communications, managing content, messaging, and digital presence under conditions of close political oversight and time pressure. In the interaction examined here, the team was preparing a routine social media post for a local politician. The task began when the manager received a WhatsApp message from a politician's secretary containing both the image to be used and the accompanying caption text. This external instruction immediately set the parameters of the work: the content was not being generated by the practitioners themselves but was passed down as a directive that required precise execution.

With this message, the manager assumed responsibility for acting as the conduit between political authority and the practitioner's labor. The workflow that followed, involving selecting the correct image file, adjusting formats, and assembling the post, was therefore governed less by creative discretion and more by adherence to political expectations, time pressure, and established organizational routines. This interaction illustrates how organizational hierarchy is reproduced through moment-to-moment communication. What appears to be a mundane decision about choosing an image file becomes a window into how hierarchy, accountability, and professional judgment are negotiated in everyday PR practice.

3.1.6. Setting the scene

As the second part of the context-setting process of ECA, this section outlines the immediate conditions in which the interaction unfolded, situating the excerpt that follows. Just before the exchange here began, the practitioners were working at adjacent desks in a shared office space. The manager, Berty, stepped in behind Philo's workstation to oversee the preparation of the post. Philo, a mid-level practitioner responsible for design and content assembly, was seated at her computer, while Luka, a junior technician, worked nearby.

In the following illustration, the participants involved, included the manager, Berty, who is responsible for regulating tasks; Philo, a mid-level practitioner who worked on graphic design, content preparation, and social media coordination; and Luka, a junior technician with the same job description. At the time of the interaction these participants had worked together for over three years (3 years). Prior to the interaction (Fig. 1), Philo was observed smiling and chatting with another colleague and one of the researchers, but as Berty took a seat slightly behind Philo, she turned back to the monitor (image 1.0), her expression tightening into focused attention. The interaction that follows, presented in Fig. 1, appears on the surface to be a routine decision about which image file to use. It is precisely this ordinariness that makes the episode analytically valuable for ECA, because it allows us to examine how hierarchy, gender, and technical judgment are negotiated in practice. With this foundation in place, the following excerpt demonstrates how ECA presents multimodal data in a form that makes these interactional dynamics apparent to researchers.

The excerpt illustrates how ECA integrates verbal, embodied, and spatial cues to reveal how professional relations are enacted in real time. The analysis begins with the verbal substrate, where intonation, stress, overlap, and sequencing provide evidence of how participants negotiate authority and alignment. Jefferson (2004) transcription conventions help capture features such as elongated vowels (L2 and L3) ("ಏದು::" [This one]), rising intonation ("?,ಅದು" [that]), and stressed lexemes ("ful,lu: comple,te"), each of which provides interactional cues that are central to interpreting participants' orientations. Research in interactional sociolinguistics shows that intonational patterns often index stance, certainty, or deference (Holmes, 2000). In this exchange, Berty's rising intonation during instructions functions as an authoritative directive rather than a question, a pattern consistent with hierarchical workplace talk (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). Philo's elongated vowels and soft tokens ("ah::") register hesitation and the need for clarification, a stance that aligns with her junior professional role.

Verbal cues also reveal ideological and relational work. The alternation between Kannada and English reflects code-switching practices that index expertise, modernity, and technological competence (Heller, 2010). English lexical items such as "PNG" and "convert" signal technical knowledge, while Kannada is used for relational alignment and pragmatic negotiation. Code-switching therefore functions as an ideological resource through which practitioners perform professional identity and mark domain-specific authority. Coupland's (2000) work on small talk demonstrates that seemingly formulaic exchanges often sustain group solidarity and relational maintenance; here, even brief phatic turns ("slow ide," "Is it not coming?") serve to maintain collegial rapport despite the hierarchical asymmetry.

Nonverbal cues, documented through stills, are central for interpreting how authority and accountability are enacted. Goffman (1964) and Kendon (1997) demonstrate that posture, bodily orientation, and gaze serve as fundamental resources for organizing participation. In Image 1.1, Berty's forward-leaning posture and pointing gesture mark him as the ratified decision-maker, while Philo's seated orientation and upturned gaze signal attentiveness and acceptance of supervisory authority. Gesture studies (McNeill, 2005) show that deictic pointing clarifies referential meaning and strengthens directives; here it anchors Berty's verbal instruction and narrows the interpretive space available to Philo.

Spatial organization and dress further contextualize authority (Rasquinha, 2024). Workplace ethnography shows that physical layout regulates access and visibility (Smith & Sissons, 2023). As the images show, Berty stands behind Philo's chair, a position that enables surveillance of her screen and situates him as an overseer. This echoes Sissons' (2015) argument that professional space is not neutral but materially organizes how authority becomes visible. Dress, although not explicitly analyzed in this excerpt, typically indexes professional role and hierarchy; ECA treats such visual details as communicative resources that contribute to meaning within the interactional ecology.

Integrating the verbal and nonverbal cues allows researchers to investigate broader constructs such as organizational authority, gendered address terms ("Sir," "Madam"), and relational alignment. These gendered expressions function as markers of respect and deference and are widely used in South Asian professional settings with a colonial past. They are also interactional resources that reproduce gendered structures of professionalism (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). Humor and light phatic exchanges, such as Luka's slightly exaggerated "ಇಲ್ಲಾ Sir" ("No Sir), fits within Coupland's (2000) account of workplace banter as a vehicle for softening hierarchy while simultaneously reaffirming it.

By drawing together these multimodal elements, ECA demonstrates how fine-grained interactional details illuminate the structure of professional relationships and the cultural logics that shape PR work. Rather than treating these behaviors as incidental, ECA shows how they are constitutive of professional practice itself and how concepts such as hierarchy, expertise, gender, and ideology become observable through the lived, sequential organization of routine tasks.

4. Opportunity and limitation of the method

ECA offers distinctive methodological advantages for PR scholarship. Its foremost contribution lies in providing fine grained access to the interactional production of professional practice. PR research has long relied on interviews, surveys, textual analysis, and retrospective practitioner accounts, approaches that reveal what practitioners say they do but rarely what they actually do in the flow of work (Volk, 2016). ECA also interrogates taken-for-granted organizational norms that

The excerpt below presents a multimodal transcription combining dialogue (in Kannada and English), translations, and ethnographic annotations documenting a workplace exchange between Berty (manager), Philo and Luka (PR practitioners). Images 1.1–1.3 visually capture micro-interactions (verbal and non-verbal) during content creation.

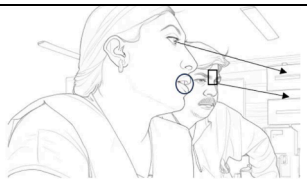
L1:Berty	?,ಅದು ಅಲ್ಲ, ಇದು	Not that one, this one, take the complete thing	 Image 1.1
L2:Philo	ಎದು:: ah:,	This one ah	
L3:Berty	ಅದು ((ful,lu: comple?te)) ಹಾಕ್ಬೇಕು ↑,ಅದು ಎದೆ ಅಲ್ಲಾ- ↑,ಪಿಎನ್ಜಿ ಅಫ್ ಬೇಖು	This one, the full thing, the complete thing must be put That one's there right the png one	
Ethnographic Notes: Berty, the manager, points toward the computer monitor to indicate which image he is referring to, while Philo watches attentively, her expression focused as she tries to follow his instruction.			
L4:Philo	ಎದು ಆಹ್::, PNG ಇಲ್ಲ.:: ಇದು ಎದು ಕನ್ವರ್ಟ್ >ಮಾಧಕ್ <↑ಹೋಗಿದ್ರೆ ಕೇತಗತೆ	This one eh, this is not a png file If I go to convert this, these things on the top will get spoilt	 Image 1.2
Ethnographic Notes: When Philo notes the PNG file cannot be used, Berty frowns slightly, showing visible frustration while Philo remains attentive.			
Berty	At this point Berty looks down and starts to murmur ((ಅದು ಯೆನ್ ಮ್ಯಾಟರ್ ಕಲ್ಸಿದರೆ ((indistinct)) ಅದೇ ಬೇಹ್ಕು ಅಂತಹರೇ)) ((What matter has he sent [referring to the type of Image] ((indistinct)) he/she wants that one only]		
L5:Luka	ಫೀಡ್(.) ಬರತಿ,ದೆಯ, ಬರ್ತ್ಯೆದೆ::	Is the feed working, Madam?	 Image 1.3
L6:Philo	ತುಂಬಾ ((slow ide)) (.)ಬರ್ತ್ಯೆಲ್ಲ	It is very slow	
L7:Berty	↑ಬರ್ಥ್ಯೆಲ್ವ	Is it not coming?	
L8:Luka	ಇಲ್ಲಾ ↑Sir	No Sir	

Fig. 1. Excerpt from an interaction between public relations practitioners.

conventional methods typically render invisible. The micro practices of workplace life, including code switching, gesture, silence, spatial positioning, and culturally informed registers of humor or deference, rarely appear in interviews or organizational documents yet shape how PR practitioners interpret and accomplish tasks. By foregrounding these situated actions, ECA allows researchers to identify how professional culture exerts control, how practitioners negotiate or reproduce authority, and how informal rules are enacted through routine communicative work. This is especially important in Global South contexts where Rasquinha (2024) demonstrated how linguistic hierarchies, region-specific ideologies, caste-coded communication norms, and culturally embedded role expectations are performed through multimodal interaction rather than articulated in formal discourse.

The method further provides a way to localize and extend PR theory. Because ECA situates professional practice within the lived contexts that shape it, it reveals how macro-level constructs such as professionalism, strategy, legitimacy, or symbolic power are accomplished through micro-level communicative work. The analysis therefore clarifies how dominant theoretical models, particularly those built through interviews, case descriptions, or textual analysis, may obscure the relational mechanics through which power is enacted. In this sense, ECA complements critical and cultural scholarship by offering a technique for operationalizing social theories of power within everyday interaction, a contribution consistent with calls by Edwards (2018); Valentini and Edwards, (2019); L'Etang et al. (2012) and Sissons (2015) and others to expand the methodological repertoire available to PR.

Despite these opportunities, ECA presents several limitations. Video ethnography is restricted by the camera's frame. Professional work, particularly in political and organizational environments, often involves parallel activities occurring across multiple screens, phones, workstations, and semi-private micro spaces. Interactions that occur slightly outside the recording device's view remain inaccessible, limiting the completeness of the interactional record. To address this constraint, the study incorporated both semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews conducted early in the day provided insight into practitioners' goals, expectations, and interpretive orientations, while unstructured conversational interviews during fieldwork elicited explanations, reflections, and justifications for actions not fully visible on camera. These interview accounts do not function as primary data for formal analysis but serve as interpretive scaffolding that helps contextualize the interactional findings.

The limited scale of ECA fieldwork also presents a challenge. The method favors depth over breadth and, consequently, does not aim for statistical generalization. Instead, it offers the form of moderatum generalization outlined earlier by Williams (2000): analytic insights that hold for similarly structured communicative environments. In this study, fieldwork spanned two departments within a single political communication organization. While modest in scope, this design is methodologically purposeful. The objective is to trace the subtle multimodal mechanisms enacting professional culture, not to produce representative distributions of behaviors across the industry.

Access to communication offices and other professional environments (for example, work from home settings) compounds these methodological constraints. As mentioned, gaining permission involved extended negotiation, and the presence of cameras can raise sensitivities. However, building a rapport and establishing familiarity helps reduce these concerns. Once researchers establish trust with their participants carrying out fieldwork becomes easier.

ECA requires continual reflexive attention to ethical and relational dynamics to maintain trust with participants. To make sure participants were comfortable with the analysis and agreed with the findings of the study, a feedback mechanism was incorporated. In this way, practitioners reviewed preliminary analyses and were invited to express concerns or correct interpretive misalignments. This process reduced researcher bias, strengthened relational trust, and ensured that participants retained agency over how their professional conduct is represented by the researcher.

Finally, ECA is resource intensive. It requires long term immersion, repeated viewing of video data, time intensive multimodal transcription, and analytic integration across speech, gesture, spatial arrangement, and organizational context. This limits scalability. Yet it is precisely this analytical depth that enables ECA to address methodological blind spots in PR research by offering access to the interactional, embodied, and cultural foundations of professional practice. For questions concerning how power is enacted through everyday communicative action, the method remains particularly well suited.

5. Extending critical theory

ECA extends and challenges the theoretical foundations of PR by shifting the analytic focus from organizational abstractions to the micro-level practices through which power, professionalism, and legitimacy are enacted. Classical PR theories, relationship management, Excellence theory, symmetrical communication, and even much of critical-cultural PR, treat authority and power as structural positions or strategic functions (Al-Kandari, Gaither, & Dashti, 2025; Curtin, 2022; Edwards & Hodges, 2011; Grunig, 1990; Grunig & Grunig, 2008; Kim & Krishna, 2023). In contrast, ECA demonstrates that authority, agency, mentoring and/or relationship building between practitioners is produced and reproduced interactionally, through moment-by-moment practices such as pitch movement, gaze allocation, gesture, interruption, silence, and spatial positioning.

The example in this paper, when analyzed through ECA, reveals how organizational and hierarchical authority is co-constructed in real time. Professional-cultural labels ("Sir," "Madam") signal institutional hierarchy and gender, while directive intonation and gesture (Kendon, 1997; McNeill, 2005) enact managerial authority as an embodied practice rather than an abstract organizational category. These moment-by-moment displays of power complicate managerialist assumptions that authority flows from structure alone. Instead, they show that PR practice involves continuous negotiation of status and expertise through interactional cues that are often invisible in interviews or textual analysis.

ECA further challenges dominant accounts of professionalism that presuppose Western ideals of neutrality, standardization, and English-dominant communication. By attending to multilingual code-switching, culturally coded humor, and interactional politeness norms, ECA reveals the local and situated nature of what counts as "professional." Heller (2010) showed that code-switching is ideological work; it indexes expertise, solidarity, and symbolic boundaries. Similarly, Coupland's (2000) work on workplace small talk illustrated how humor and informal asides maintain group cohesion, while simultaneously reinforcing or softening hierarchical distinctions. In multilingual professional settings such as those analyzed by Middleton (2020) and Rasquinha (2024), these practices define belonging and legitimacy in ways that mainstream PR theory cannot account for.

Therefore, ECA does more than document communication and practice-based communication processes, it provides a methodological standpoint from which researchers can critique the epistemic assumptions built into PR theory. Concepts such as power, culture, relationality, and professionalism are not treated as fixed constructs but as interactionally accomplished. This bottom-up view exposes the limitations of managerial frameworks that rely on surveys, self-reports, and decontextualized models. It shows that "strategy," "alignment," or "professional judgment" are not cognitive states but social practices. In this sense, ECA expands existing theory by showing how the everyday communicative labor of PR practitioners materially produces the organizational structures that theory often treats as pre-existing.

These alignments provide concrete guidance on where ECA is most productively applied and where it is less well-suited. ECA pairs naturally with theoretical frameworks that treat communication as constitutive, relational, and culturally embedded: critical PR theory (Edwards &

Hodges, 2011; L'Etang et al., 2012), cultural PR scholarship (Daymon & Hodges, 2009; Mundy & Bardhan, 2023), organizational communication approaches that foreground power and discourse (Bourdieu, 1991; Wodak & Meyer, 2015), and Global South perspectives that attend to culturally specific communicative norms (Rasquinha, 2024). Carey's (1989) ritual model of communication is also a productive theoretical pairing: ECA's focus on habitual, taken-for-granted communicative routines of professional life resonates with Carey's conception of communication as shared cultural performance and participation rather than mere transmission of information.

In contrast, ECA is less aligned with theoretical frameworks that operate at the macro or message level and effects-oriented scholarship (Kim & Krishna, 2023; Kuan et al., 2021). This is not because these frameworks lack validity, but because ECA's unit of analysis is the interactional episode rather than organizational outputs, media effects, or attitudinal outcomes. Researchers working within those traditions should approach ECA as a complementary method for accessing the micro-level practices that their primary frameworks cannot reach.

6. Suggestions for future research

Future research can extend ECA in multiple directions that deepen its theoretical and empirical contribution to PR scholarship. One clear opportunity is the development of comparative ECA studies across communication settings in regions such as Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Existing work in the Asian contexts shows that PR labor is shaped by culturally specific modes of deference, humor, gesture, and multilingual practice (Bhargava, 2024; Middleton, 2020; Rasquinha, 2024; Sissons, 2014 Theunissen & Sissons, 2017). Comparative ethnographies would allow researchers to examine how these culturally situated practices reorganize concepts such as authority, agency, and professional legitimacy, which dominant Western frameworks often universalize without evidence.

A second direction concerns the growing integration of generative artificial intelligence into everyday PR work. Recent PR scholarship has begun examining AI's implications for professional practice, ethics, and identity from textual, survey-based, and conceptual perspectives (Christensen & Andersson, 2025; Dong & Van den Berg, 2025). What remains largely unexamined, however, is how AI integration unfolds interactionally, in the moment-to-moment communicative adjustments practitioners make as digital tools enter their workflows (Rasquinha & Theunissen, 2025). As Bhargava's (2024), Rasquinha (2024) and Smith & Sissons's (2023) practice-based studies show, the introduction of digital tools reorganizes practitioner roles, shifts authorship practices, and redistributes decision-making authority. ECA is particularly suited to documenting how these developments occur interactionally, for example through changes in turn-taking, tacit delegation to software, new embodied routines around screens and devices, or altered patterns of mentoring and oversight. Studying these dynamics would make visible how AI reshapes the distribution of agency within teams rather than simply accelerating production workflows, a distinction that survey-based or retrospective methods cannot access.

Longitudinal ECA research represents another important avenue. communication work is evolving, and PR departments often restructure roles, norms, and communicative routines in response to this evolution. A longitudinal design would allow scholars to track how micro practices change or stabilize over time, how new hires learn or resist hierarchical expectations, and how organizational culture is embedded through recurring interactional patterns. This responds directly to calls within critical PR for understanding how professional norms are reproduced rather than assumed (Edwards, 2018; Mundy and Bardhan, 2023).

There is also substantial promise in the combination of ECA with computational discourse analysis. While ECA offers fine-grained access to embodied and sequential interaction, computational approaches can reveal large-scale linguistic regularities, thematic clusters, affective patterns, and circulation dynamics across PR outputs (Rasquinha, 2024). Linking micro interactional data to macro textual corpora would create genuine methodological triangulation. These complementary approaches could respond to the gap noted by Yue et al. (2024), who argued that the field lacks methods that can join real-time interaction with broader institutional and discursive patterns.

Finally, ECA can also be extended into emergent digital domains such as influencer communication. Influencer labor is performed through gesture, tone, visual framing, gaze, and conversational orientation toward imagined audiences, all of which align with ECA's multimodal commitments (Bhargava, 2024). Building on work by Coupland (2000), Holmes, (2000) and Tannen (1987) on repetitions, stance, relationality, and conversational performance, ECA could document how influencers construct credibility, manage audience alignment, or negotiate promotional obligations. Such studies would broaden PR scholarship into contemporary forms of mediated persuasion.

7. Conclusion

This paper advances Ethnographic Communication Analysis as a methodological contribution to PR scholarship and as a response to persistent gaps in how the field accesses lived professional practice. Existing approaches in both positivist and interpretive traditions tend to separate communication from the interactional environments in which it is produced. They privilege messages, attitudes, or practitioner accounts while leaving unexplored the sequential, embodied, and situated practices through which PR work is actually accomplished. ECA addresses this limitation by treating communication not as an output or abstract construct but as a performance that unfolds through talk, gesture, posture, spatial alignment, and tool use in the moment of action.

By integrating video ethnography with analytic resources from Conversation Analysis, gesture analysis, and Critical Discourse Studies, ECA makes it possible to see how power, authority, professionalism, and alignment emerge through micro-level practices. It captures how practitioners negotiate obligations, display expertise, establish hierarchy, and manage relational cohesion through everyday actions that are rarely visible in interviews or textual analysis. This multimodal and sequential sensitivity provides a corrective to dominant frameworks that model PR as strategic design or managerial intention. Instead, ECA demonstrates that organizational structures are enacted, reinforced, and sometimes contested through the communicative labor of practitioners. Importantly, ECA does not replace established methods, but it expands what counts as data, what counts as communication, and what counts as evidence. By foregrounding the day-to-day, interpersonal communication constitutive of public relations work as situated accomplishment, it offers a way for PR scholarship to build theory from the ground up.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used ChatGPT for three limited purposes: to condense verbose sentences for clarity and concision, to check American English spelling conventions, and to convert fieldwork photographs into anonymized sketches. ChatGPT was not used to generate, develop, or contribute to the intellectual content, theoretical arguments, or scholarly analysis of this article. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed and edited all text to ensure accuracy and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

Declaration of Competing Interest

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used ChatGPT in order to edit and review the structure of this article. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the published article.

We have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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