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The Factors Affecting the Formation of Political Behavior in Iranian Sport Ministry and Federations

¹Robab Mokhtari*, ²Ali Mohammad Safania, ³Hosein Pursoltan Zarandi

¹Department of Physical Education, College of Human Sciences, Islamic Azad University, Khalkhal, Iran. ²Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. ³Faculty of Member, Payame Noor University, Alborz, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Background. When asked about employees' political behavior in the workplace, they often see it as signs of good behavior and see it as an ugly act that achieves personal goals at the expense of others, and May be harmful to the goals of the organization or individuals. **Objectives.** This study aimed to test a model of factors affecting political behavior in the sports industry. In the study, other objectives such as the moderating role of political skills and will, as well as the mediating role of the perception of organizational politics are discussed. **Methods.** The sample size of the present research is 705 people which are employees of the Ministry of Sport and federations (of football, volleyball, handball, basketball, weight-lifting, wrestling, taekwondo, veterans and disabled). These were selected by simple random sampling and a questionnaire was used to evaluate the variables under study. **Results.** The results did not show significant direct relationship between inter-organizational factors and show that perception of organizational politics mediated the relationship between inter-organizational factors and political behavior. The results showed that political skills and will, played the role of the moderator of organizational factors with political behavior. **Conclusion.** Politics is a fact of life in the organizations. Those who are not able to observe their political behavior cannot understand the fact that organization is a political system. Thus, the organizations should lead to the politicization and managers should make necessary attempts towards reaching organizational goals which is important.

KEY WORDS: *Internal Organizational Factors, Political Behavior, Political Skills, Political Will, Sport Federations.*

INTRODUCTION

Political behavior is considered as an activity not necessarily part of a formal role in the organization, but can affect the distribution of benefits and shortcomings in the organization. In other words, political behavior includes activities in an organization for the acquisition, development and use of power and other resources in order to achieve the priorities of a person in a situation in which there is uncertainty or disagreement about options. In this regard, there are different interpretations of

the policy of the organization, but many scholars believe that political behavior is not only negative, but can also be useful to members of an organization or the organization itself.

The past decade has seen the growth of research in the field of organizational policies (1). Politics in organizations are considered as a fact of life (2). Political behavior is the conscious influence by individuals or groups to enhance and protect their interests (short- and

*. Corresponding Author:

Robab Mokhtari

E-mail: robab_mokhtari@yahoo.com

long-term) when there are conflicting solutions (3-6). Thus, political behavior is (7) outside the scope of a person's job and (2) the attempt to use the power bases of a person. This definition is taken into consideration in many of the studies on political behavior as unproductive behavior in the organization. In fact, it refers to a negative connotation and is consistent with employees' general understanding of this phenomenon (8).

In general, political behavior refers to a self-serving behavior that threatens the interests of others (5, 9). Basically, political behavior is a behavior through which individuals, groups and organizations try to affect the others' behaviors or attitudes in an issue that is important and desirable (10, 11). It is more likely that self-serving behavior exists in the environment in which there is a high level of mistrust and lack of confidence. People who present this kind of behavior lack adequate social support (12).

Political behavior in organizations is often hidden and affected by differences in the perception and attitude of staff. It is determined based on the nature of the action or people's perception of reality, not reality itself (8, 13, 14). Therefore, a behavior may be interpreted as political or non-political and it depends on a person's previous experiences or a frame of references (15). There are a lot of politics in the organization, representing injustice and unequal distribution of resources among staff. Staffs who perceive improper distribution of resources, such as rewards and recognition, may have the feelings of jealousy and resentment (7). Such an environment may lead to a reduction in employee performance and higher levels of stress and mental pressure, decreasing job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and increasing tendency of displacement (16). It is argued that the more the perception of the policies, the greater will be the justice, equality and fairness in the organization (17-19). Policies determine the working time and limit the information sharing, therefore leading to communication barriers (8), increasing stress and working pressure (18), the perception of injustice of the performance evaluations and the development of negative attitudes towards work among employees with different job opportunities (20).

Cropanzano and Greenberg (1997) stated that workplace may be conceptualized as a social market where different people participate in numerous interactions and each one makes an attempt to obtain an appropriate rate of return on optimal investment (21). According to this perspective, the political environment creates precarious conditions and there is no way for immunity to adverse consequences. Thus, employees are reluctant to invest in such environments of the organization (2). Mintesberg (1983) argued that people with political behavior must demonstrate two major features: political will and skill. Political skill means complete involvement in politics (22).

Treadway *et al.* (2005) reported that political skills of employees can moderate the relationship between political behavior and emotional labor. Employees with low political skill have a higher level of emotional labor because of political behavior (11). They were the first to classify disparate motivations as political will and operationalize the need to succeed and intrinsic motivation as an indicator of this structure. In addition to the practical applications, one of the reasons for analyzing politics and political behavior in theoretical research is the inhibitory role in achieving optimal performance of the organization (15). In fact, government policies and political perceptions have a negative impact on employees and the work environment (8, 20, 23, 24), and damage productivity and individual and organizational performance (18). In an environment where there is a high level of political behavior, the level of job stress and staff displacement increases, and the positive attitude in the workplace is not fostered (8). Although, political behavior is difficult to measure, its measure is very important because it is considered as a potential threat to organizational efficiency and effectiveness (12, 25). For example, if a qualified employee feels that the others' political behavior prevents proper opportunities, he may have negative reactions, such as dissatisfaction, reluctance, anxiety and displacement (15). Therefore, organizational policies need to be studied deeply in order to understand, predict and cope with potential negative consequences for individuals and organizations (15).

While researchers have identified the importance of individual political behavior, understanding its conceptual foundations has not yet been considered adequately. The studies on the perceptions of policy implicitly show the relationship between perceptions of politics and political behavior in Sports Organizations (23, 24, 26, 27). However, this relationship has not been conceptually or empirically examined (6).

Most studies on organizational policies determine the predictors and consequences of perceptions of politics and eliminate the real political behavior from their models. However, both structures are important for understanding organizational policies (6, 27).

While previous research has emphasized the importance of political behavior in the organization, identifying the predicting factors in this phenomenon has not been adequately discussed. There are no studies on the predictors of political behavior in the organization, especially in the ministry of sports and federations. In political behavior studies, real political behavior has not been focused on and the study of the relationship between the perception of politics and actual political behavior has reduced in past research. Therefore, in the present study, the authors tried to fill the theoretical gap in this field. This justifies the importance and necessity of research in this field. From the point of view of the importance and practical necessity of research, it seems necessary to study and understand the policies and political behaviors and its influencing factors in the field of sport in Iran due to the role of the deterrent of political behavior in achieving optimal organization performance. Certainly, studies in this field will help sports managers to better manage the organizations. The final objective of this research was to answer the central question of factors affecting the formation of the phenomenon of political behavior in sports organizations. In this regard, the following hypotheses were presented:

1. Internal Organizational Factors have a significant effect on the Political Manner of sports organizations. 2. Internal Organizational Factors have a significant effect on the Political skill of sports organizations. 3. Internal

Organizational Factors have a significant effect on the Political perceptions of sports organizations. 4. Internal Organizational Factors have a significant effect on the Political will of sports organizations. 5. Political skill has a significant effect on the Political behavior of sports organizations. 6. Political perceptions have a significant effect on the Political behavior of sports organizations. 7. Political will has a significant effect on the Political behavior of sports organizations. 8. Political skill moderated the relationship between Internal Organizational Factors and political behavior. 9. Political will moderated the relationship between Internal Organizational Factors and political behavior. 10: Political perceptions mediated the relationship between Internal Organizational Factors and political behavior.

Given the fact that many employees and researchers have a negative view on organizational policies, this study aimed to test a model of factors affecting political behavior in the sports organizations. Considering the dimensions of political behavior and perception, the reason for the formation of political behavior in the workplace is investigated from the personal, professional and organizational perspectives with regard to perception of organizational politics as the mediating variable and political skill and will as moderating variables. Therefore, the proposed model is as figure 1.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design. The present study is an applied research in terms of purpose and a survey research in terms of data collection method which was performed using the field study.

Participants. The study population included all employees of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Federations. Using the Cochran's formula, 893 subjects were selected as the sample size. In spite of incorrect and unusable questionnaires, 705 questionnaires were used for testing the hypotheses. The samples were selected using the simple random sampling.

Instruments. The instruments used in this study were a 5-point Likert scale and summarized in Table 1.

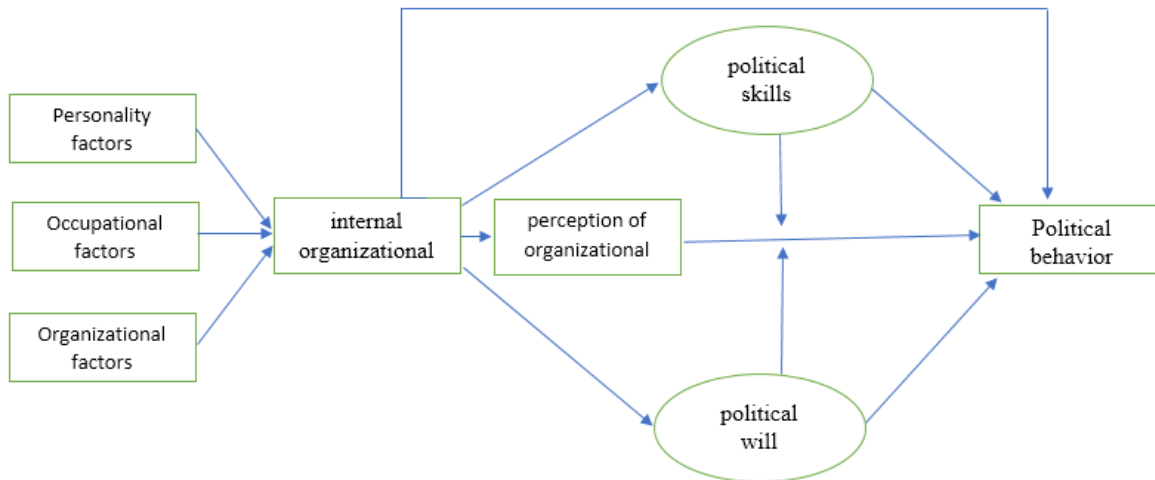


Figure 1. Conceptual model of study

Table 1. Research tool

Variable title	Number of questions	Variable title	Number of questions
1 Formality	5	9 Machiavellianism	20
2 Decision- Making Participation	4	10 Self-monitoring	13
3 Procedural justice	6	11 Locus of Control	24
4 Political skill	18	12 independence	4
5 Go along to get ahead	4	13 Feedback	6
6 Need for power	4	14 Skill diversity	5
7 Intrinsic motivation	3	15 Communication with Manager	7
8 Political behavior	39	16 Concentration	5

Statistical Analysis. After completing the questionnaire, compiled the data, coded by variables measurements scale and analyzed with SPSS (to analyze research hypotheses) and PLS (to analyze the research model) software.

RESULTS

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics. Table 3 shows the effect of the result of hypotheses 1-7. Table 4 shows the results of the moderating role of political skill and will in the causal relationship between internal organizational factors and political behavior.

Sobel test was used to test the effect of the mediating variable. The formula is as formula 1.

Forasmuch as 5.254 is not within the range of ± 1.96 , the impact of the mediating variable of political perception on the causal relationship between internal organizational factors and political behavior is significant. The variance-

accounted-for (VAF) statistic was used to determine the indirect impact of the mediating variable of political perceptions. This value was between 0 and 1. If the value is closer to 1, the impact of the mediating variable will increase. The VAF formula is as formula 2.

About 0.53 of the effect of the internal organizational factors on political behavior is indirectly explained by political perception.

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.5, and according to Magner et al. (1996), it is higher than 0.4. Hence, the value is acceptable. In addition, the composite reliability coefficient (Dillon-Goldstein's rho) and Cronbach's alpha coefficient are acceptable. As a result, convergent validity and reliability of the model are acceptable. Table 5 shows the AVE and the correlation values. The numbers in the diameter of Table 5 show the square root of the variance.

If the square root of the AVE is higher than the correlation value of the structures with each other, the divergent validity of the model will be approved. According to Table 6, the divergent validity of the model is confirmed.

Table 7 shows the coefficient of determination (R2). Table 8 shows values of Q2 and Table 9 shows values for goodness of Fit (GOF). As shown in Table 7, the model is evaluated to fit the data adequately.

Table 2. Descriptive findings

Descriptive findings		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	433	61.4
	Female	272	38.6
Level of Education	Elementary school - diploma	64	9
	Associate Degree	80	11.4
	Bachelor's degree	352	50
	Master's degree	192	27.2
	P.H.D	17	2.4
Field of Study	Physical Education	195	27.6
	Non-Physical Education	510	72.4
Organizational position	Deputy	17	2.4
	Middle managers	31	4.5
	Expert	314	44.5
	Responsible Expert	126	17.9
	Expert Assistance	14	2.1
	Other	203	28.6

Table 3. The results of the hypotheses 1-7

Hypothesis	Variable	Variable	β	t-value	Result
1	Internal Organizational Factors	Political Manner	0.098	1.467	Non-significance
2	Internal Organizational Factors	Political skill	0.582	14.886	Significance
3	Internal Organizational Factors	Political perceptions	0.636	24.379	Significance
4	Internal Organizational Factors	Political will	0.346	6.585	Significance
5	Political skill	Political behavior	0.034	0.613	Non-significance
6	Political perceptions	Political behavior	0.171	2.300	Significance
7	Political will	Political behavior	0.156	1.918	Non-significance

The critical values are ± 1.96.

Table 4. The results of the mediation hypotheses

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Moderating variable	Dependent variable	β	t-value	Result
8	Internal Organizational Factors	Political skill	Political behavior	-0.258	1.977	Significance
9	Internal Organizational Factors	Political will	Political behavior	0.356	2.649	Significance

The critical values are ± 1.96.

$$\text{Formula 1: } Z = \frac{0.636 * 0.171}{\sqrt{(0.171^2 * 0.074^2) + (0.636^2 * 0.026^2) + (0.026^2 * 0.074^2)}} = 5.254$$

$$\text{Formula 2: VAF} = \frac{a*b}{(a*b)+c} = \frac{0.636*0.171}{(0.636*0.171)+0.098} = 0.526$$

Table 5. Average variance extracted and the reliability

Variables	average variance extracted	composite reliability	Critical value	Result	Cronbach's alpha coefficients	Critical value	Result
Internal Organizational Factors	0.47	0.70	0.70	Acceptable	0.82	0.70	Acceptable
Political skill	0.51	0.71			0.80		
Political perceptions	0.46	0.74			0.76		
Political will	0.44	0.73			0.71		
Political behavior	0.48	0.71			0.84		

Table 6. Average variance extracted and correlation values

Variables	Internal Organizational Factors	Political skill	Political perception	Political will	Political behavior
Internal Organizational Factors	0.686				
Political skill	0.582	0.714			
Political perception	0.636	0.354	0.678		
Political will	0.346	0.481	0.158	0.663	
Political behavior	0.424	0.293	0.392	0.327	0.693

Table 7. The coefficient of determination (R2)

Variable	R2	Critical value	Status	Result
Political skill	0.339	0.19 (weak)	Medium	The model is judged to fit the data adequately
Political perception	0.405		Strong	
Political will	0.120	0.33 (Medium)	Weak	
Political behavior	0.450	0.67 (strong)	Strong	

Table 8. Values of Q2

	Q2	Critical value	Status	Result
Political skill	0.141	0.02 (weak)	Medium	The model predictive power is medium.
Political perception	0.142		Medium	
Political will	0.053	0.15 (medium)	Weak	
Political behavior	0.210	0.35 (strong)	Medium	

Table 9. Values for goodness of Fit (GOF)

GOF	Critical value	Status	Result
0.666	0.01	Weak	The model is judged to fit the data adequately
	0.25	medium	
	0.36	Strong	

According to Table 7, the model predictive power (prediction of internal organizational factors) is medium. The shared value of the dependent variable (political behavior) is 0.987 and the coefficient of determination to estimate the model fit is 0.450.

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{Communality} \times R\text{square}}$$

$$GOF = \sqrt{0.987 \times 0.450} =$$

$$GOF = \sqrt{0.444} =$$

$$GOF = 0.666$$

The final model of the research can be seen in figure 2.

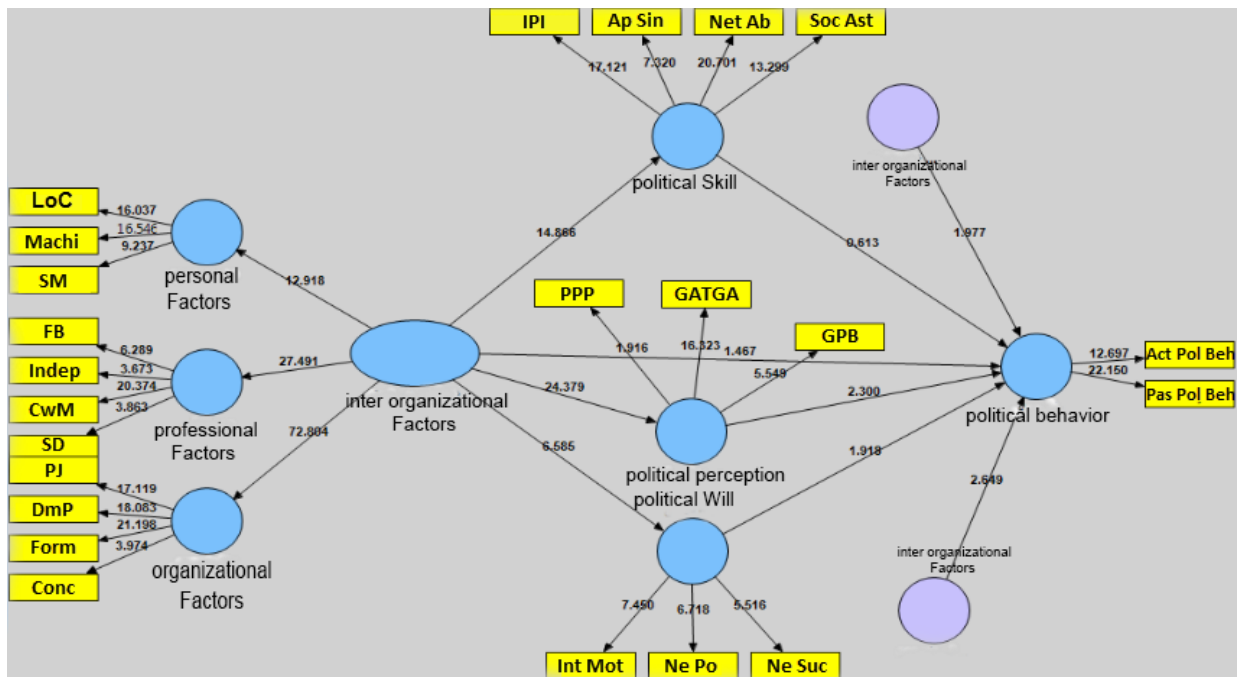


Figure 2. Final model of the Factors Affecting the Formation of Political Behavior in Iranian Sport Ministry and Federations. **LoC:** Locus of Control; **Machi:** Machiavellianism; **SM:** Self-Monitoring; **FB:** Feedback; **Indep:** Independence; **CwM:** Communication with Manager; **SD:** Skill Diversity; **PJ:** Procedure Justice; **DmP:** Decision-making Participation; **Form:** Formality; **Conc:** Concentration; **IPI:** Interpersonal Influence; **Ap Sin:** Apparent Sincerity; **Net Ab:** Networking Ability; **Soc Ast:** Social Astuteness; **PPP:** Pay and Promotion Policies; **GATGA:** Go Along to Get Ahead; **GPB:** General Political Behavior; **Int Mot:** Internal Motivation; **Ne Po:** Need for Power; **Ne Suc:** Need for Success; **Act Pol Beh:** Active Political Behavior; **Pas Pol Beh:** Passive Political Behavior.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that internal organizational factors do not have a significant positive effect on the political behavior of sports organizations. This finding is not consistent with the results of the other studies (8, 13, 28). The behaviors influencing the political behavior of sports organizations can also be evaluated. Thus, internal organizational factors including (need for power, positive and negative emotional states, etc.) and extra organizational factors, such as national culture, affect the political behavior.

Researcher in this study found that internal organizational factors have a significant positive effect on political skills, perceptions and will of

sport organizations. This finding is consistent with the results of the some studies (4, 6, 8, 11, 14, 18). Participation in decision-making reflects the distribution of power in the organization. When organizations provide internal organizational factors, such as occupational and organizational factors, and people are talented, their ability increases for energy development to achieve a specific purpose. This increased ability is referred to as the political will through which some people are more willing to engage in political behavior.

Several studies have proved that political skill has significant effect on political behavior (1, 22, 29, 30). In the current study, political skill has no

significant effect on the political behavior of sports organizations. When people at work can understand others effectively, they have the ability to influence others and enhance individual and organizational purposes. Each political skill does not lead to political behavior because employees having political skill consider how to obtain political influence. In contrast, employees who have political behavior consider the nature of political influence. There are other factors that are more effective in creating the political behavior than political skill. In addition, this non-significance is related to the lack of adequate training in political skills in organizations and especially, sports organizations and using improper political skills.

According to the findings, political perceptions have a significant positive effect on the political behavior of sports organizations. So, this hypothesis was confirmed. This finding is consistent with the results of the other studies conducted by (1, 10). Thus, high levels of political perceptions indicate a threatening work environment in which employee's resort to informal behavior in order to succeed and there is uncertainty about whether hard-working will bring good consequences or not. Considering the uncertainties and ambiguities, employees prefer to have political behavior to provide their personal benefit and reduce organizational uncertainty and negative consequences of organizational politics perceptions.

Several studies have proved that political will has significant positive effect on the political behavior (11, 31). In the current study, political will has no significant positive effect on the political behavior of sports organizations. Self-determination theory (SDT) is considered as a basis to evaluate the effect of intrinsic motivation on political behavior. According to this theory, the pursuit of internal goals positively affects individuals' needs for competence and communication, provided there are few disturbing factors. Since proving people's merits is intrinsically rewarding, people who have a low level of intrinsic motivation are not involved in political behavior in order to ensure that their merits are recognized.

Consistent with these results, the mediating role of political perception is significant in the causal relationship between internal

organizational factors and political behavior. So, this hypothesis was confirmed. This finding is consistent with the results of the some studies (30). People operate based on their political perceptions in the workplace and probably have behavioral reactions based on their perceptions. So, perception of organizational politics is considered as a status variable which affects and increases the political behavior in the workplace. According to the findings, the moderating role of political skill is significant in the causal relationship between internal organizational factors and political behavior. So, this hypothesis was confirmed. This finding is consistent with the results of the other studies (11, 31). In sports organizations, there are many politicians who create different mentality and perceptions for people and ultimately, a negative relationship between internal organizational factors and political behavior. People who have strong political skills are very calculating and shrewd to communicate with others.

The results of the study indicate that political will has a significant effect on the relationship between internal organizational factors and political behavior, and strongly moderates this relationship. Political will is considered as an essential element of the behaviors through the development of energy to pursue political goals. Such incentives may be rooted in the structure of individual needs. The personal needs stir up behaviors by introducing values and goals. The general conclusion of this study is that political skill, perception and will have a significant effect on political behavior. Therefore, managers should consider this issue and make necessary efforts to increase productivity in the organization (11, 22).

CONCLUSION

The results of the data analysis are consistent with that of the final structural equation model and all the hypotheses except, the effect of intra-organizational factors on political behavior, the effect of political skill on political behavior, and the effect of political will on political behavior, which were confirmed at 99%. Regarding the results, fitting the structural model is strong.

Like other management studies, this study had some limitations such as the cross-section type of study, quantitative type of the study, lack of generalizability of the results to other

organizations and some variables because of insufficient time and resources etc.

APPLICABLE REMARKS

- Holding internship sessions, executive coaching, and leadership books for those seeking to acquire skills in order to increase political skill, political will and perception of the organizational policy is suggested.
- Managers should evaluate individuals' performance in the context of transparent objective criteria, and evaluate and promote staff as much as possible on their competency.

- In the field of political behavior management, it is suggested that organization should clarify the foundations in the assessment process. In rewarding system, those who have high or poor performance should be distinguished.
- It is suggested that students and researchers should investigate this research in the private sector and in other organizations such as services, etc. Also, it is suggested that other factors affecting the political behavior including extra-organizational factors, national culture, etc, should be investigated.

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