THE IMPACT OF PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS ON CONFLICT TENDENCY

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Abstract

The impact of different personality types on team conflict emergence has been subject of numerous management theorists′ and practitioners′ researches. Accordingly, in one study, managers have reported that about 20% of the time, they have spent resolving conflicts and coordinating duties and tasks and different personality types. The aim of this study is to examine which types of personalities are more prone to conflict situations and whether there is a difference in respondents′ attitudes related to socio-demographic parameters.

*Keywords***:** *socio-demographic parameters, conflict, management, personality types, research.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Very high correlation between personality types and conflicts has been a research subject of many theorists and presents the base of this study as well. The aim of the paper is to indicate the relationship between personality types and conflicts, i.e. based on the given relations to point out which of the five great personality dimensions are most likely to get into the conflict situation. The authors of this study have used a HEXACO questionnaire (having used five basic personality types, although the study covers with six personality types), and obtained results showed in the study, applying the ANOVA method.
The first part of the paper presents theoretical personality and conflict concept, underlying subareas relevant for the research. It also includes basic data on HEXACO questionnaire.
The second part presents research process and methodology, research results, discussion of results and their explanation. Research methods help in solving problem presented in the introduction, but the discussion itself helps in getting concrete solutions, i.e. consequences related to the problem.

2. CONFLICT

Conflicts among people are inevitable. Actually, historians often observe the development of human society as a succession of conflicts and fights. The conflicts are mostly expressed in the business world. The most frequent conflicts are those between competing companies, but, there are also conflicts among people working in the same environment as a product of diversity of personalities.

The conflict means *disagreement between two or more group or team members, occurring as a result of sharing scarce resources, mutual tasks, having different goals, attitudes or perceptions.* [1]

To identify a situation as a conflict, there should be four elements: (1) *previous conditions for conflict emergence:* scare resources, wrong policy of a company, bad reward system, wrong perceptions; (2) *affective states of individuals and groups:* stress, tension, hostility, anxiety; (3) *cognitive states of individuals and groups:* beliefs, conscience, awareness that there is a conflict situation, endangering interests; (4) *conflict behaviour:* from passive resistance to aggression toward the other party.

Traditional attitude toward conflicts is negative, i.e. it is supposed that conflicts should be avoided. A contemporary attitude is that conflicts present natural and inevitable phenomenon in the society and working environment. Nowadays conflicts are accessed through the interaction perspective that not only accepts the conflict, but justifies its controlled and moderate stimulation in slack labour conditions and lack of creative solutions. [2] In other words, conflict is precondition to complete a work efficiently. It is essential to manage the conflicts and provide a level of conflicts guaranteeing labour productivity. Negative consequences are often emphasized in favour of positive ones. Different people provide different opportunities for conflict development. Avoiding conflicts at any cost is not recommendable as it is a good chance for them to find new ideas and solutions together. Leader of organizations, teams or groups should know how to recognize conflict and how to solve it efficiently so it can have positive consequences.

The term conflict usually refers to the conflict of interest (needs, motives, wishes, etc.) and conflict of values (insights, attitudes, ideology and similar). The basic assumption of conflicts is dissatisfaction of people due to the presence of a certain problem and demonstrated tension.

2.1. Sources of conflict

There are several sources that can cause conflicts. All sources of conflicts can be divided into two groups: *organizational and interpersonal.* [3]

Organizational sources of conflicts are specific for organizations and involve certain features of organizational structure and systems which create the favourable conditions for arising conflicts among employees. Some of the most significant organizational sources of conflicts are:

(1) *Limited resources.* Two or three employees should share limited resources. For example, marketing managers ask general manager to provide funds for a new product promotion while the production manager needs Financials for machinery repairing – it can lead to the conflict that is to be solved by the general manager.

(2) *Interpersonal relationships.* The conflict can emerge in case when a team member has great influence on his colleague′s work either by imposing his qualities or by his delays so the work cannot be done on time.

(3) *Mutually conflicting interests* refer to opposite of objectives of different organizational units that cannot be accomplished at the same time.

(4) *High differentiation of organizational units.* Highly expressed differences between groups within a company creates or stimulate conflict emergence. For example, production process requires larger series and standardized product, whereas commercial department requires small series and the product adapted to the customer.

(5) *Differences in criteria of performance evaluation and reward system.* When two or more organizational units are evaluated and rewarded according to different criteria, employees can feel to be in an inferior position, so it leads to the conflict.

(6) *Organizational ambiguities and shortcomings.* Lack of a clear division of labour or delegating authority form the basis for conflict.

Interpersonal differences mean differences between personal beliefs, interests, commitments or, even level of education. The most important interpersonal sources of conflicts are:

(1) *Wrong perceptions and attribution.* Conflicts arise here primarily because of the wrong image that an individual creates or obtains on intentions, interests or cause of the behavior of another member of society, community, a team or a group.

(2) *Poor communication.* Poor communication can cause a misunderstanding about attitudes or intentions from the message sender.

(3) *Lack of trust.* Lack of trust among team members causes the emergence of very intensive conflicts.

(4) *Personal characteristics and values.* When people get into conflict because they dislike a person, it is a matter of value system, although differences in personality types can also be the reason for conflict emergence.

2.2. Most common types of conflict

Considering types of conflicts, conflict can be classified in several ways. In our scientific research, we have taken into account general division of conflicts into *cognitive* and *affective conflicts.* [4]

Cognitive conflicts are productive, their consequences imply better results, greater commitment to work and better work performances. They are characteristic and very desirable in organizations, groups or teams, hence they should be stimulated as their result is better decision making and greater cohesiveness. The persons who enter into cognitive conflict are often those with strong opposing opinions, whereas cognitive conflict does not generate personal conflict. After cognitive conflict, the relationship between persons strengthens as their contribution is balanced.

Affective conflicts are those that lead to fights, block activities, they are dysfunctional and often cause communication breakdown. Consequences of affective conflicts are bad decisions, weak work performances, less commitment, etc. Affective conflicts are related to personality and they express hatred and envy. They can be very dramatic for individuals and for the community, group or team (weakening productivity, failure to perform tasks on time etc.).

The Table 1. shows basic differences between affective and cognitive conflicts from the business aspect.

Table 1: Cognitive and affective conflict in a team [4]

COGNITIVE CONFLICT	AFFECTIVE CONFLICT
Related matters	Personified differences
Discussions with no arguments	Prejudices cause provocation
Focused on goals	Wasting time on behaviour „winner-loser"
Harmless way of disagreement	Phenomenon of domination
Avoiding domination or personal exclusion	The main objectives are transformed into
Open communication	personal attacks

2.3. The effects of conflicts

Despite the opinion that conflicts have positive effects on the team (group, organization) operation, implying that cognitive conflict may be followed by new ideas leading to work performance improvement or new product, conflict negative consequences are apparent as well.

Some of the conflict negative effects (referring to affective conflicts), often mentioned in literature, are: (1) *conflicts disrupt the normal functioning of organization,* as people spend all their time and energy to solve them instead to perform their tasks; (2) *conflicts underscore emotions instead of reason in making decision processes*, as they are taken too personally and cause emotional reactions; (3) *conflicts divert attention from joint to personal goals*, as some individuals considers conflict solution as their personal loss or avail and winning in conflict usually places above general interest; (4) *conflicts cause the stress, frustration and other negative consequences for employees.* [5]

Positive aspects of cognitive conflicts are the following: (1) *conflicts stimulate critical analysis*, as they require arguments against opposing opinion resulting in detecting the faults of a proposal; (2) *conflicts motivate people,* as many people want to reach the goal just because they are in conflict with someone else; (3) *conflicts are often cause of required changes*; (4) *conflicts purify the environment and eliminate the hidden misunderstandings*; (5) *conflicts stimulate internal cooperation between different organizations, teams and groups.* When a team is conflicted with another team, conflicts often can bring team members together and strengthen their cooperation.

3. PERSONALITY AND PERSONALIITY DIMENSIONS

Personality is one of the primary factors of individual behavior in an organization. Different people behave differently at work. Personality is often defined as a unique combination of personal characteristics characterized by the way one behaves and interacts with others. [6] Personality, also, involves integrated, consistent and relatively stable set of psychological characteristics of a person, determing their specific and consistent behavior. Personality is a unique combination of biologically given and acquired interactive properties. All personality definitions recognize the fact that unique profile or a combination of characteristics mark off a person from others in the environment. Additionally, all personality definitions indicate the fact that personality is formed and present in interaction with other people. Lifetime interactions form the personality and help us meet someone′s real nature.

3.1. Personality factors

One of the frequent question is: What are the most important factors forming the personality? The main discussion topics have been whether the greater impact on personality forming has heritage or environment. It is completely clear that heritage and environment are two basic personality factors. However, some authors add situational constraints as a corrective factor.
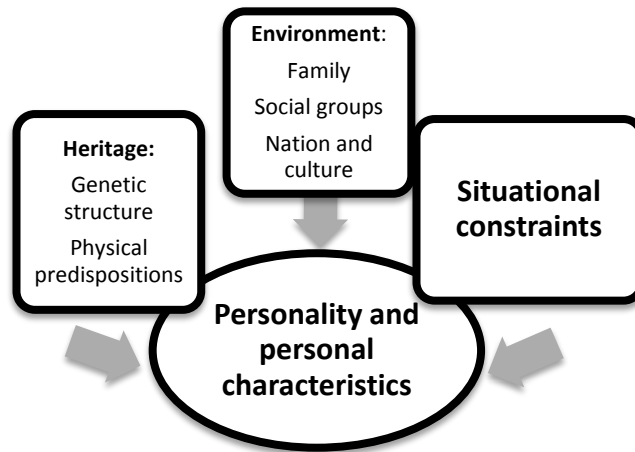
Figure 1. Personality factors [5]

The heritage consists of all impacts on personality that a man obtains at birth. They include different physical predispositions: physical constitution, gender and sexual orientation, temperament, energy level, biorhythm etc. But, genetic heritage is one of the significant factors influencing personality forming (an example is a research on twins having lived in separate families). Environment also comprises series of factors having the impact on personality. Firstly, impact of the family. It is the most important factor creating the personality (for example, children learn the model of parental behavior and they often unconsciously absorb characteristics and behaviour of their parents). Beside primary family, there is a great impact of extended family (grandfather, grandmother, uncle, aunt), school friend, etc. Other factors that have a great impact on personality forming include belonging to a specific social group, social class, profession... or to the nation and national culture. Situational constraints are not as important as heritage or environment, but they can influence personality development. They can rarely form specific personality trait if a person does not possess it, but they can potentiate the hidden feature the person had no idea to have had. That is the reason why we are sometimes surprised when a person behaves quite the opposite that we have used to.

3.2. Personality dimensions

The most significant classification of personality characteristics or traits is defined through five big personality dimensions (Big Five Model): [5]

Table 2: Big five personality dimensions [5]

Stable, self-confident, efficient, calm, safe, relaxed	Adaptability	Nervous, suspicious, worried, insecure, confused
Social, energetic, dramatic, talkative, active, self-confident	Sociability (openness)	Shy, aloof, reserved, quiet, closed
Tidy, responsible, thorough, organized, ambitious	Conscientiousness	Impulsive, carefree, irresponsible, careless, ineffective
Warm, tactic, careful, cooperative, tolerant,	Agreeableness (pleasantness)	Independent, cold, impolite, indecent, unpleasant

trustworthy, attentive, caring		
Imaginative, curious, original, intelligent, reasonable, creative	Intellectual openness	Boring, unimaginative, conventional

Extraversion - introversions (sociability or openness) – is a degree to which one is sociable, i.e. pleasant in relationships with others. Extravert or sociable people are communicative and friendly toward others. Introvert or unsociable people are less prone to get into social interactions and less enjoy in establishing new relationships. Extravert people are more satisfied with their jobs and more easily get into contacts with their colleagues, than introvert ones. The jobs that are more convenient for them are sales and public relations.

Agreeableness or pleasantness. This is a personality dimension is extreme; there are cooperativity, warmth and trust on one side, whereas coldness and distrust, on the other. This trait shows a tendency to agree with others and to keep good relationships. They are usually people showing great care for others, collegial and decent. They are great team members and right choice for jobs dealing with interpersonal relations. On the other, side, unpleasantless is related to distrust and non-collegiality, and good choice for completing unpleasant tasks such as payment.

Conscientiousness. This dimension, partly refers to reliability and confidentiality, and partly to unreliability and distrust. It shows the level to which an individual can be caring and persistent. Those persons have a high level of organizational skills, they are tidy and self-disciplined. On the other hand, persons with low level of conscientiousness mostly have no feeling for activity direction and self-control. They are impulsive, carefree and often inefficient in the organization.

Emotional stability, adaptability or neuroticism. There is the emotional stability, security and calmness, and on the other side, nervousness, insecurity and depression. People who are emotionally stable are calm, relaxed and feel safe. They are often very efficient at work. Persons who have low emotional stability are nervous, distrustful, insecure and often confused. Those with high level of neuroticism are very critical toward their results and themselves. Their criticism usually forces them to perfectionism, and they have a very important role in a group as their task is to criticize each proposed alternative.

Openness. Characteristics of this personality dimension are the following: creativity, originality, creativity, curiosity and risk appetite. There are also quite the opposite traits: tightness, unimaginativity, conservatism and risk aversion. People with such characteristics are appropriate for jobs requiring innovations, permanent changes with high risk level.

3.3. Personality types and suitable jobs

Personality description and dimensions show that people differ a lot, but there are no personality characteristics or dimensions "better" or "worse" than others. People are just different. Nevertheless, it is not quite the same what characterized people in a company., According to Holland′s theory, although they are all legitimate human traits it is necessary to harmonize the features with the type of work the man performs. Not all people are equally suitable for all positions in the organization. Matching personal characteristics with job requirements will not only increase employee′s productivity, but will also increase his job satisfaction. In accordance with this concept, we can differ six main personality types suitable for specific jobs. [5]

Table 3: Personality types and suitable jobs [5]

Personality type	Personal traits	Suitable job
Realistic: values physical activities requiring strength, skillfulness and coordination.	Stabile, persistent, shy, practical	Plant line-worker, farmer, mechanic
Investigative: values intellectual activities including thinking, understanding and investigation.	Analytical, original, curious, independent	Economist, journalist, mathematician
Social: prefers helping others to improve themselves.	Friendly, sociable, empathic	Social worker, teacher
Conventional: respect order, rules, precise activities	Efficient, practical, non-flexible	Accountant, manager, service officer
Enterprising: skillful in verbal activities, in persuading people and obtaining power.	Self-confident, ambitious, dominant	Lawyer, entrepreneur, real estate agent
Artistic: likes unsystematic and creative activities.	Creative, emotional, impractical	Painter, musician, writer, decorator

4. HEXACO QUESTIONNAIRE

Each of big five personality types is based on HEXACO questionnaire. Beside them, HEXACO model defines the sixth personality dimension, the one which operationalizes the model - *honesty*, or *modesty*. As in the previous paragraphs we have already dealt with *segment big five personality types,* now we have to get an insight into the HEXACO acronym, representing the given dimensions: [7]

- H – Honesty, humility,
- E – Emotionality,
- X – Extraversion,
- A – Agreeableness,
- C – Conscientiousness, and
- O – Openness.

HEXACO basic structural model was developed as a highly used theoretical and research paradigm related to personality traits. As the *sixth personality factor*, was additionally incorporated, it indicates traits such: honesty, sincerity, sense of fair - play, loyalty and modesty, whereas the opposite side of the dimension includes traits as giddiness, Jesuitry, greediness, slyness etc. The content of dimension *honesty* is supposed to be the factor participating in generating moral relevant behavior.

Based on the given facts, development of HEXACO questionnaire, including questions that define specific personality dimensions, has facilitated scientific research processes and enabled detailed access to better understanding personality concept and other related fields.

5. RESEARCH

5. 1. Research methodology

Considering the high independence of the basic dimensions of personality conflicts themselves, a group of authors has come up with the idea to have an insight into the basic indicators of the given dependences in order to get conclusions summarized in the final discussion. *The main objective of the research* is tendency to indicate the mutual relation between personality types and conflicts, i.e. to find out which of the five personality types are most likely to get into the conflict situations.

The research was conducted from the beginning of January till the end of April, 2016, in Bor Municipality. The study includes 100 participants of different age, gender, divided into relevant age groups with the aim to get realistic results of the observed problem.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts (HEXACO questionnaire and questionnaire for analyzing personal attitude on conflict management), included two questions related to respondent demographic characteristics. HEXACO questionnaire for testing personality dimensions was adjusted to research needs, taking into account that only *five big personality dimensions* were tested as the sixth one was not taken into account. The second part of the questionnaire tested personal attitude on conflict management, created by professor Janićijević.

Likert five-point scale was used for questionnaire estimation, indicating 1 as „completely disagree", 2 as „disagree", 3 as „no opinion", 4 as „agree" and 5 as „completely agree".

5. 1. 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

As we have already mentioned, research included 100 respondents, whereas all questionnaires were correctly answered, and basic demographic data on respondents are given in Table 5.

Table 4: Demographic structure of respondents

Demographic characteristic		Number of respondents
Gender	Male	22
	Female	78
Age	Younger than 18	8
	19-23	52
	24-35	22
	Over than 35	18

5. 2. Results of research

5. 2. 1. Descriptive statistics results

For data processing, we have used descriptive statistics, including *arithmetic mean, variance, standard deviation and frequency* [8]. It consists of (statistic) procedures for reducing raw data to forms easier for manipulating and more efficient analyzing. Descriptive statistical results for a group of questions related to conflicts are given in the following table.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics results

Questions	Grade					Middle value	Standard deviation	Variance
	1	2	3	4	5			
Q1	3	11	15	47	24	3,78	1,0306	1,062
Q2	2	15	18	38	27	3,73	1,30811	1,169
Q3	0	5	23	52	20	3,87	0,7869	0,619
Q4	1	7	20	51	21	3,05	1,4240	2,028
Q5	2	7	25	45	21	3,84	0,8729	0,762
Q6	2	7	25	45	21	3,76	0,9333	0,871
Q7	4	28	22	35	11	3,21	1,0944	1,198
Q8	7	34	19	23	17	3,09	1,2398	1,537
Q9	1	9	27	41	22	3,74	0,9387	0,881
Q10	2	8	16	50	24	3,86	0,9430	0,889
Q11	7	26	21	34	12	3,18	1,1580	1,341
Q12	7	27	24	26	16	3,17	1,1981	1,435
Q13	4	10	22	43	21	3,67	1,0450	1,092
Q14	8	38	17	22	15	2,98	1,2389	1,535
Q15	5	12	24	42	17	3,54	1,0676	1,140

Descriptive statistical results show that the greatest number of respondents, 72 of them, answered Q3 question "I do and I do accept concessions to reach a compromise" with "agree" or "completely agree". One of the very interesting data obtained by descriptive statistic is, also, the answer to Q4 question "I prefer to keep my opinion to myself than to compromise others" where as 72 to respondent answer with "agree" or "completely agree". The most interesting is the answer to Q10 question „I always try to solve conflicts satisfactory for both parties "whereas 74 respondents chose answer under 4 or 5 at Likert scale.

5. 2. 2. One-way ANOVA test

ANOVA presents an extension of independent test. It is used when researchers are interested in the fact whether arithmetic means of more of two independent groups differ mutually (Ho, 2006). The conditions that herein should be fulfilled are the following: (1) there should be only one independent variable; (2) independent variable should have more than two values; (3) there should be only one dependent variable..
Considering the ANOVA test, there are also the following premises: (1) all basic sets (population) from which samples have been taken have regular pattern; (2) homogeneity of variances; (3) observations are mutually independent.
Hence, the ANOVA test application may help in getting information on differences in respondent answers related to their demographic (gender, age, education level, working experience etc.) as well as if the difference is statistically significant. Accordingly, a group of authors having conducted this research, tested the impacts of each of the characteristics in relation to questionnaire responds and determined statistical significance. [9]
Taking into consideration *respondent gender* there is statistically significant difference at personality dimension *emotionality*, where statements have been graded higher by females

confirming results from previous researches and emphasized their emotional personality side.

Table 6: Statistical values of answers related to repondents′ gender

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotionality	male	22	3,0373	,74814
	female	78	3,5038	,70795
	Total	100	3,4012	,73910
Extraversion	male	22	3,4627	,47340
	female	78	3,5255	,68774
	Total	100	3,5117	,64506
Conscientiousness	male	22	3,2891	,53834
	female	78	3,4895	,51092
	Total	100	3,4454	,52102
Agreeableness	male	22	3,1823	,71464
	female	78	3,2541	,67351
	Total	100	3,2383	,67974
Openness	male	22	3,2132	,54798
	female	78	3,4040	,53060
	Total	100	3,3620	,53756

Considering the *respondents age,* there is statistically significant difference related to personality dimension _extroversion_, whereas the youngest respondents, included into category „younger than 18 " estimated themselves as very extrovert persons.

Table 7: Statistical values of answers related to repondents′ age

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Emotionality	younger 18	8	3,1050	,80225
	19-23	52	3,4063	,66665
	24-35	22	3,3932	,85537
	over 35	18	3,5278	,78788
	Total	100	3,4012	,73910
Extraversion	younger 18	8	3,8525	,60585
	19-23	52	3,2919	,57404
	24-35	22	3,6445	,55494
	over 35	18	3,8328	,75408
	Total	100	3,5117	,64506
Conscientiousness	younger 18	8	3,4363	,56971
	19-23	52	3,4588	,48718
	24-35	22	3,3114	,58312
	over 35	18	3,5744	,52315
	Total	100	3,4454	,52102
Agreeableness	younger 18	8	3,1050	,59824
	19-23	52	3,2402	,70288
	24-35	22	3,1591	,73858
	over 35	18	3,3889	,58896
	Total	100	3,2383	,67974
Openness	younger 18	8	3,1887	,50104
	19-23	52	3,3594	,47183
	24-35	22	3,3032	,58812
	over 35	18	3,5183	,66321
	Total	100	3,3620	,53756

5. 3. Discussion

Research conducted by the authors of this paper, having included 100 respondents of different age, has shown that initial premises, related to personality types and conflicts interdependence, are completely grounded.

Analyzing respondents′ answers confirming their attitudes and behavior in different conflict situations, obtained from 15 statements, it can be concluded that the greatest number of respondents is ready to get into conflict with other persons in order to consolidate their position, integrity, defend personal attitudes as well as to find solution convenient for both parties. Most respondents have declared that, although they are ready to get into conflict, they tend to find an appropriate compromised solution through it, taking into account advice and proposals of other persons. Nevertheless, by detailed analysis of data, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents tend to compromise, but not to conformity, i.e. they do not adapt themselves to demands of people with different attitudes and beliefs without having personal benefits.

The study has disproved traditional attitude toward conflicts, basically negative, that implies that conflict should be avoided and confirmed contemporary one that conflict is inevitable and can be the source of possible new solution for existing problem. It is specifically confirmed by Q14 statement: „I think it is not worth wasting energy and time on disputes and different opinions", on which 46% of respondents answered that they "disagree" or "completely disagree".

Conflict also implies relation „winner – loser", and 42% of respondents have declared they try to win in the conflict and prove correctness of their opinion, even in case it means achieving a compromising solution. Reaching desirable goals in conflict situations is often

more important than keeping good relationships with colleagues, also implying readiness to certain losses.

Analyzing questionnaire results related to personality dimensions and connecting given dimensions with conflicts, it has been noticed that there is a significant difference at dimension *emotionality*, related to gender, where statements have been graded higher by females confirming results from previous researches and emphasized their emotional personality side. On the other side, considering the *respondents' age,* there is a statistically significant difference related to personality dimension *extroversion*, whereas the youngest respondents, included into category „younger than 18" estimated themselves as very extrovert persons.

Comparing five basic personality types with conflicts, a number of respondents who have been classified as extrovert, according to their answers, are more likely to get into conflict situations, confirming that initial premises of the authors match the results of previous researches.

6. CONCLUSION

The research conducted from January to May, presented in this study, has mostly proven initial hypothesis and results from previous researches on interdependence between personality characteristics and conflicts. Previous discussion clearly indicates the impact of personal characteristics on their tendency to conflicts, which is more emphasized at extrovert persons, versus introverted personalities, who avoid conflict situations. The results of the research are representative, but there is a possibility of slight deviations, considering that there is a great number of questions, or lack of clarity in the formulation of statements. Also, surveying process has been interrupted after completing 100 questionnaires, and the possibility of obtaining greater and more representative sample, that could have contributed in obtaining more relevant data, has been ignored. This work contributes studying in the field of conflicts and personality dimensions, obtaining results that can be used in further research purposes and more detailed studies.

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