ORIGINAL ARTICLE



# Leadership and its relationship with the work environment at the Ceibo Dorado Hotel in Portoviejo canton, Manabí, Ecuador

Liderazgo y su relación con el clima laboral en el Hotel Ceibo Dorado del cantón Portoviejo, Manabí, Ecuador

# Flavia M. Vargas<sup>1</sup><sup>®</sup> • Irene P. Navarrete<sup>2</sup><sup>®</sup> Geanella X. Moreira<sup>2</sup><sup>®</sup>

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Abstract The study examines the impact of leadership on the work environment at Hotel Ceibo Dorado in Portoviejo, Manabí, Ecuador, using a descriptive, explanatory, non-experimental, and cross-sectional approach. Data were collected through interviews with the manager, questionnaires completed by the 17 employees, and a direct observation form. The questionnaires covered topics on leadership and work environment, while the observation focused on key organizational dynamics. Biographical, inductive-deductive, and analytical methods facilitated a quantitative and qualitative analysis processed in Excel 2013. The results indicated that leadership at the hotel needs improvement, particularly in role-modeling leadership, emphasizing the need for clear guidelines and practical examples. Deficiencies in interpersonal communication were also identified, with recommendations to implement strategies to strengthen trust and feedback. Additionally, a weak perception of organizational identity and institutional values was noted. Training programs are suggested to align employees with the hotel's mission and vision. The study concludes that leadership is essential for enhancing the work environment by fostering strong interpersonal relationships, a sense of belonging, and increased productivity-key factors for sustainable development in the hospitality sector.

**Keywords** leadership, work environment, interpersonal communication, organizational development.

Resumen El estudio analiza el impacto del liderazgo en el clima laboral del Hotel Ceibo Dorado, en Portoviejo, Manabí, Ecuador, a través de un enfoque descriptivo, explicativo, no experimental y transversal. Se recopilaron datos mediante una entrevista al gerente, cuestionarios a los 17 colaboradores y una ficha de observación directa. Los cuestionarios incluyeron preguntas sobre liderazgo y clima laboral, mientras que la observación identificó dinámicas organizacionales clave. Los métodos biográficos, inductivo-deductivo y analítico permitieron un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo procesado en Excel 2013. Los resultados mostraron que el liderazgo en el hotel requiere mejoras, especialmente en la dimensión de liderazgo imitativo, con necesidad de ofrecer directrices claras y ejemplos prácticos. También se detectaron deficiencias en la comunicación interpersonal, recomendándose estrategias para fortalecer la confianza y la retroalimentación. Además, se observó una débil percepción de identidad organizacional y valores institucionales, sugiriéndose programas de capacitación para alinear a los empleados con la misión y visión del hotel. El estudio concluye que el liderazgo es fundamental para mejorar el clima laboral, promoviendo relaciones interpersonales sólidas, sentido de pertenencia y mayor productividad, factores esenciales para el desarrollo sostenible en el sector hotelero.

**Palabras clave** liderazgo, clima laboral, comunicación interpersonal, desarrollo organizacional.

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Flavia M. Vargas fmvm2@alu.ua.es

Universidad de Alicante, Spain.

<sup>1</sup>Universidad de Alicante, Spain. <sup>2</sup>Universidad Técnica de Manabí, Ecuador.



## Introduction

In recent years, in modern society, workers or employees have been called collaborators, considering them essential for all different types of companies, sufficient reasons that create the invaluable need to work in a pleasant organizational climate, stating that the workplace is the second home of employees. Recognizing precisely that it is where each person is physically all day to achieve maximum identification with each of the companies and, in this case, referring to the Ceibo Dorado Hotel in the Canton of Portoviejo, Manabi Province, Ecuador. Studies such as those by Amalou and Brahimi (2023) emphasize that organizational climate plays a crucial role in fostering employee well-being and improving organizational performance, making it a central element of modern management.

Companies have demanding jobs that depend mainly on their leaders' exceptional and professional management, who must know how to communicate with each of their collaborators. Their main objective is to motivate them to fulfill the goals and objectives of their companies, be it in each diversity of specialties. For all, it is the same modality and of great importance and needs communication and knowledge, which must symbolize every leader. Transformational leadership has been shown to significantly enhance employee engagement and performance, as highlighted in studies within the hospitality sector (Kloutsiniotis et al., 2022).

In recent decades, it has been mentioned that leadership exerts influence over its subordinates. This is considered natural since, as mentioned (Barroso & Salazar, 2010), leaders governed and guided others at the beginning of man in society; of course, as time has progressed, leadership has also been transformed. Leadership transformation aligns with the findings of Gong et al. (2023), who indicate that innovative leadership practices directly influence organizational creativity and customer engagement, especially in service industries.

Leadership is among the most determining factors influencing workers' perceptions of the organizational climate. James et al. (2018) highlight that effective leadership connects effect, actions, and influence to shape employees' experiences and perceptions, fostering a productive organizational climate conducive to achieving goals. This perspective resonates with Schwepker and Dimitriou (2021) conclusions that ethical leadership reduces workplace stress and enhances performance quality in hospitality contexts.

The primary principle of leadership is that people follow those who can help them achieve their goals (Koontz & O'Donnell, 2005). In this sense, the leader's role is to ensure that the organization generates relationships to obtain the expected results. Leaders strive to create new opportunities to share and learn what they have learned, thus transforming the context (Fullan, 2002). Additionally, Bhardwaj and Kalia (2021) highlight that fostering trust and engagement within organizational culture significantly impacts employees' tasks and contextual performance in hotel operations.

Also, the other variable, the work environment, will be analyzed, allowing us to know if they are combined for good performance within the hotel or if there is a problem with the combination of both for its continuous improvement. Recent studies support that organizational climate significantly influences the relationship between leadership and employee satisfaction. For instance, Menguc et al. (2016) found that a performance-focused climate can strengthen the positive effects of self-efficacy on employee engagement, highlighting the importance of a supportive work environment in enhancing employee outcomes.

In this sense, Hodgetts and Altman (1985) "define work environment as a set of characteristics of the workplace, perceived by the individuals who work there and serve as a primary force to influence their work behavior" (p. 376). The definition of organizational climate has different characteristics, which are perceived indirectly or directly by the workers of an organization. Each employee perceives the environment in which they operate differently. Therefore, it is the individual expression of the perception that managers and workers have of the organization where they work (Brunet, 1987). Similarly, Tsui (2021) highlights that during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, organizational climate directly affects job stress and overall employee wellness, illustrating the nuanced impact of environmental factors on performance.

As a result of the phenomenon of globalization, companies have sought strategies that allow them to maintain themselves and meet the imposed organizational objectives. However, it is important to emphasize that the success of an organization will not be reflected only in aspects such as infrastructure, income above the established goals, or, on the contrary, having the best tools and technology. Today, organizations are betting on another type of asset considered the most invaluable within the company: the organizational climate and leadership, in this case, seen at the Ceibo Dorado Hotel in Portoviejo canton. He et al. (2019) further elaborate that responsible leadership and human resource strategies significantly enhance millennial employee well-being, improving hospitality operations' performance outcomes.

For this reason, leadership is a topic that has aroused interest and taken on importance. According to Mohanty (2018), leadership strategies that focus on engaging employees individually and fostering collaboration within teams are pivotal for directing personnel effectively and achieving organizational goals. These approaches also help identify collaborators who contribute significantly to meeting organizational objectives. Chen et al. (2018) note that fostering a strong ser-



vice climate enhances employee performance and reduces workplace deviant behaviors, critical for maintaining high standards in the hospitality industry.

The leader's behavior influences their followers, and they are primarily responsible for their success or failure as they guide their teams to achieve organizational objectives. Muhammad et al. (2022) emphasize that effective leadership directs employee behavior and fosters a positive organizational culture that drives success.

Leadership is among the most determining factors influencing workers' perceptions of the organizational climate. Zuraik and Kelly (2019) emphasize that transformational leadership fosters an innovation climate, positively influencing organizational outcomes and employee performance. Given the importance of organizational climate in fulfilling an organization's objectives, a favorable climate generates a greater sense of belonging among employees, enhancing their performance.

On the other hand, the organizational climate directly influences the process and development of organizational functions, as it shapes the perceptions and interactions of employees within their workplace. Woznyj et al. (2018) highlight that organizational climate significantly impacts organizational outcomes through its influence on employee commitment and collective performance.

These perceptions give life to the organizational climate, and management plays the most important role in generating an unfavorable or favorable climate. D'Amato (2023) argues that organizational climate is a complex construct shaped by communication, leadership styles, and employee interactions, emphasizing management's critical role in fostering a positive and productive work environment.

In Ecuador, public and private organizations are vulnerable to the constant changes to which they are exposed by a changing society, including the social, political, cultural, and economic spheres. This is due to recognized globalization, which causes companies to adapt to their needs, always aiming to provide excellent service (Montenegro, 2018).

The behavior of the leader towards the employees is both positive and negative. Suppose the leader transmits disobedience, immaturity, disorganization, detachment, and lack of communication. In that case, he will only make the company's workers create an environment that is incapable of coexistence, which frustrates his employees and causes them to be unable to pursue the company's goals. On the other hand, if the leader transmits peace, is talkative, extroverted, communicative, likes to help, guides his work team, etc., he will make the employees create a harmonious environment, pleasing not only the employees but also the clients since the development that the collaborators have will affect them.

This is why it is important to understand how leadership

and the work environment are related at the Ceibo Dorado Hotel in the Portoviejo canton, Manabí, Ecuador.

#### Methodology

The research has a quantitative and qualitative approach. Gutiérrez (2018) states, "The quantitative approach is the study of the analysis of numerical data, through statistics, to provide solutions to research questions or to refute or verify a hypothesis".

The qualitative approach allowed us to observe employees' interpersonal relationships with company authorities, determine the causes of poor employee performance, and propose strategies to improve the quality of employee-employer communication.

Therefore, qualitative-quantitative research will investigate how leadership affects the organizational climate within the Ceibo Dorado Hotel.

The type of study is descriptive because it characterizes the situation of leadership and the work environment. In turn, the scope of the research is explanatory because the purpose is to expose the relationship between both variables.

For the present research, a non-experimental cross-sectional design was applied. The study was carried out without deliberate manipulation by the researchers, and only the phenomena were observed in their natural environment to analyze them. The design was cross-sectional because the data obtained from the company were collected at a single time.

The research utilized a mixed-method approach with three data collection techniques. A survey was conducted among hotel staff using questionnaires designed to assess key variables. An interview with the hotel manager included six key questions to explore the relationship between leadership and organizational climate. Additionally, direct observation was carried out using an observation form to analyze employee behavior during work activities.

Several research methods were applied. The biographical method was used to review literature and theories on leadership and organizational climate, providing insights into factors influencing employees at Hotel Ceibo Dorado. The inductive-deductive method helped establish the relationship between leadership and the work environment. The analytical method was an initial study to break down leadership types and workplace factors, forming the foundation for more profound research. Given the small population of 17 employees and two family members, a general study was conducted to gather comprehensive data and propose solutions for improving workplace conditions.

No.	Department	Population and sample	
1	Manager	1	
2	Secretariat	1	
3	Administrative manager and accountant	2	
4	Cleaning supervisors	3	
5	Operators	10	

## Table 1. Population and sample

### **Results and discussion**

The company's general population diagnosed the Ceibo Dorado Hotel in the Portoviejo canton's leadership and organizational climate. The company has 17 employees with experience in the labor field, including two family members, allowing it to meet customer demand.

For the diagnosis and observation, a survey or questionnaire of questions and an interview with the manager were used to assess leadership and the hotel's organizational climate. The observation form and the respective observations were completed during the interview. During the observation process, in the first instance, the hotel fulfills its mission, vision, and organizational objectives with a strategic location that is visible to all employees so they can be aware of the business philosophy.

Considering the infrastructure, the hotel has its own fully equipped facilities. During the pandemic, demand decreased since the hotel and tourism sector was most affected. On the other hand, the atmosphere was favorable due to its location and the conditioning of its areas. The work environment at the hotel is very warm and comfortable, and it offers good treatment to its collaborators.

It was observed that there is a good interpersonal relationship between coworkers. Their communication is excellent since the relationships are both camaraderie and teamwork. They help each other to fulfill the hotel services and make the client feel at home. In addition, it is observed that the collaborators use safety masks and alcohol gel to protect themselves from COVID-19, which is provided by management. The cleaning service staff also has the necessary supplies for the assigned activities. The company does not have a management system to help improve processes. There are very few meetings between managers and employees, which affects communication.

It is stated that there is no manual of functions within the organization that allows each of the collaborators to know the functions or positions that they must perform, including the activities, even though the majority of the employees are aware of what they must do, internal regulations of the company need to be established. Being one of the leading hotels in the Portoviejo area, the quality of the service must be high, which is why the administrative and operational staff are trained in customer service and quality of service; despite this, the training is not continuous, nor is it established within a schedule.

The interview with the manager of Hotel Ceibo Dorado highlighted the direct connection between leadership and the organizational climate. The manager emphasized that effective leadership fosters motivation, organization, and a positive work environment, which enhances employee performance and workplace harmony.

Maintaining a suitable environment was crucial for employees to work with motivation and contribute to the company's development. Key leadership factors affecting the organizational climate include motivation, organization, and direction, all of which help employees feel satisfied.

Interpersonal relationships significantly impact the organizational climate, but employees must manage conflicts professionally to prevent disruptions. While fair salaries play a role in employee well-being, economic challenges limit how much wages can cover personal expenses. Lastly, a good leader should be aware of employees' personal and professional challenges, offering support without interfering in personal matters while ensuring that solutions do not negatively impact the organization.

The relationship between leadership and the organizational climate was established through the interview conducted with the manager. He expressed that the relationship established when a good, adequate climate is maintained allows collaborators to develop their activities effectively. Likewise, the leading manager, by showing genuine concern for his workers and motivating them while encouraging them by promoting teamwork and the relationships between them, creates an adequate environment of safety and quality, improving the responsibilities of the collaborators towards their daily work.

Regarding the leadership that can be identified within the company, it is established that this influences assertive communication. The boss communicates with his staff in such a way that it positively affects the development of their functions, creating leadership oriented towards conditions that arise from his capabilities and that can help his collaborators to effectively achieve their activities, being successful and experiencing a feeling of effectiveness.

#### The survey results were applied to collaborators

This research used two questionnaires, one for each of the leadership and organizational climate variables, to collect information. The questionnaires have indicators to determine their incidence.

The study of leadership at the hotel focuses on five dimen-





sions: empowering leadership, paternalistic leadership, laissez-faire leadership, transactional leadership, and imitative leadership. In the empowering leadership dimension, 71% of employees rated management's leadership as good, while 94% felt it contributed effectively to the organizational climate. The paternalistic leadership dimension revealed that 82% of employees believe the hotel authorities are committed to their work, with the remaining 18% expressing partial agreement. In the laissez-faire leadership dimension, 88% of staff felt they could freely develop ideas for hotel programs, while 12% expressed partial agreement.

The transactional leadership dimension showed that 76% of employees considered their salary fair to their tasks, with 24% expressing partial agreement. Finally, in the imitative leadership dimension, 65% of employees stated that their manager provides clear examples for tasks they do not understand, while 35% answered partially.

Four key dimensions—structure, conflict, reciprocity, and identity—were selected to assess the work environment. The questions were answered using a Likert scale: yes, partial, or no. In the structure dimension, three indicators were considered. For the comfortable work area, 94% of staff felt their workspace allowed them to work comfortably. Similarly, 94% of respondents agreed that the work environment was adequate, and 94% believed the infrastructure provided the necessary security for their tasks.

The conflict dimension included one indicator: personal relationships. 94% of staff reported no arguments between colleagues, while 6% responded partially. Additionally, 82% of respondents felt the company had a good organizational climate, and 76% agreed there was communication between leaders and their teams. The reciprocity dimension consisted of two indicators. 94% of employees felt the hotel cared about their workplace well-being, and 86% agreed that management was concerned about their problems.

The identity dimension comprised two questions related to organizational values. 88% of staff felt they were somewhat trained in organizational values, while 12% disagreed. Regarding institutional values, 82% believed they were partially reflected in the hotel's internal policies, but 18% felt

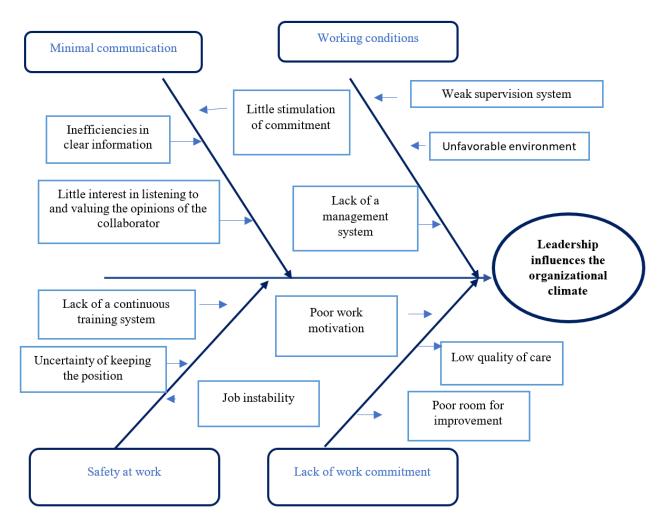


Figure 1. Ishikawa diagram.



they were not established, signaling a weakness in the hotel's communication of its regulations.

For the diagnosis of Leadership and work environment, the Ishikawa diagram was used to determine the causes and effects generated in Leadership that affect the relationship with the organizational climate of the Ceibo Dorado Hotel. The study, which was applied through observation, interview, and survey, was able to identify the main problems in the hotel, determine that leadership must be improved, and establish guidelines to improve the relationship between the two study variables.

From the Spearman Rho study, it was determined that there is a high relationship between the Leadership variable and organizational climate, where the value is (Spearman Rho, 0.939), which indicates a highly significant relationship between both variables, assuming the positive relationship between the study variables, we proceed to reject the null hypothesis (Ho) and accept the alternative hypothesis (Ha) which is that leadership is related to the work environment of the Ceibo Dorado Hotel in Portoviejo (Table 2).

Table 2. Evaluating correlation.				
			Leadership (Grouped)	Organizational climate (Grouped)
	Leadership (Grouped) n	Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.939**
		Next (bilateral)		0.000
Spearman		Ν	17	17
Rho	Organizational climate (Grouped)	Correlation coefficient	0.939**	1.000
		Next (bilateral)	0.000	
		Ν	17	17

Table 2. Evaluating correlation

\*\*The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

# Actions to improve leadership and work environment at the Ceibo Dorado Hotel

After conducting research at the Ceibo Dorado Hotel and given the importance of leadership (Orellana, 2019), he mentions that leadership has caused a key point today because there are people with low capacity skills to manage teams and meet objectives over half. Likewise, (UNIR, 2021) he mentions that the work environment is the activities, procedures and situations that occur intrinsically in a company and that are also directly linked to employee satisfaction in their work environment.

#### Type of leadership that the Ceibo Dorado Hotel

The Ceibo Dorado Hotel is a quality hotel that welcomes office clients, managers, and foreign and national users. Since its doors approximately 12 years ago, it has welcomed great personalities from the artistic, political, and cultural world. The findings from the analysis of leadership and organizational climate at this hotel underscore the interdependence of these variables and their collective impact on employee satisfaction and organizational performance. By examining the results alongside established theories and recent studies, we can contextualize the observations and identify opportunities for improvement. Within the five dimensions to be calculated through the staff survey, it was possible to obtain the types of leadership that the hotel authorities possess: empowering, paternalistic, and laissez-faire. The survey revealed that empowering leadership is prevalent at the Ceibo Dorado Hotel, with the majority of respondents acknowledging its positive impact on the organizational climate. This aligns with the work of Arana (2020), who emphasizes that empowering leaders fosters synergy and collaboration through training and relational engagement. These qualities were evident in the responses, where 94% of employees believed that leadership effectively contributes to an enabling organizational climate.

The survey results corroborated this, with 82% of employees affirming strong work commitment from hotel authorities. This finding aligns with Bhardwaj and Kalia (2021) assertion that leadership styles prioritizing trust and employee welfare significantly enhance task performance and engagement.

Conversely, laissez-faire leadership was observed to a lesser extent, with the manager allowing employees to develop ideas for hotel programs. While this autonomy can empower creativity, Gong et al. (2023) caution that excessive reliance on this style may limit proactive guidance, potentially impacting long-term organizational goals. Nonetheless, the respondents' positive perception of idea development suggests that this approach has been balanced effectively in the hotel's operational context.

The findings highlight strong camaraderie and teamwork among employees, supported by effective communication and mutual respect. This resonates with Tsui (2021) findings



	Objective	Strategies	Activities
		Coordinate	
	Improve the	administrative actions	Create learning and development programs for
General	directions and signs	to improve the	new employees and job changes.
Gelleral	on how to carry out	instructions and signs	Encourage employee participation so that they
	the activities	on how to carry out	also participate in their coworkers' development.
		work activities	
	Improve	Coordinate	Increase interaction between staff and
	communication	actions to improve	collaborators to achieve maximum
	between authorities	communication	performance, create a harmonious work
	and hotel staff.	between hotel	environment, and meet the needs of both
	Increase training in organizational values.	authorities and staff.	employees and guests.
		Develop a training plan on organizational values.	Execute the training program and observe the
			participants throughout the process.
			Organize a team integration dynamic.
			Prepare some extra activities to reinforce the
Spacific			training in case it ends early.
Specific			Provide assessment tools to measure behavioral
			change after attending the training plan.
			Closing with certificates to the work team.
	Check if the hotel's internal policies are established in organizational values.	Coordinate actions to improve knowledge of the hotel's internal policies.	Reporting on strategy development to
			employees.
			Support organizational values by establishing
			them in the hotel's internal policies.
			Provide the hotel's internal policy guide to
			each employee so that they know the hotel's
			organizational values.

Table 3. Improvement action

that positive interpersonal relationships and workplace well-being directly reduce job stress and improve employee wellness, particularly in hospitality settings. The warm and comfortable work environment observed at the Ceibo Dorado Hotel supports employee morale and productivity, contributing to a favorable organizational climate.

However, particular areas, such as the lack of a structured management system and the absence of internal policy manuals, present challenges. These gaps underscore the need for improved administrative processes to formalize roles and responsibilities. Amalou and Brahimi (2023) noted that structured organizational policies are critical for fostering consistency and enhancing employee understanding of institutional goals. The study revealed deficiencies in training related to organizational values, with 88% of respondents indicating partial or insufficient training in this area. This aligns with He et al. (2019) assertion that consistent training programs in organizational values are essential for aligning employee behavior with institutional objectives. Additionally, implementing structured training plans could address these gaps, fostering a deeper understanding of the hotel's mission and vision while reinforcing internal policies.

# Conclusions

The Ceibo Dorado Hotel employs three leadership styles: empowering, paternalistic, and laissez-faire, as identified through a survey of the hotel's employees. These leadership styles foster a positive work environment by promoting interaction, idea creation, participation, and secure communication between staff and management. The leadership at the hotel has a generally positive impact on the work environment, with more positive aspects than negative ones found in the survey responses. Leadership contributes to employee well-being, enhancing job satisfaction and performance. However, communication levels are low, affecting employee-manager relationships. To improve this, authori-



ties should encourage stronger interpersonal relationships to achieve goals and create a harmonious work environment. Additionally, the hotel lacks a structured method or strategy to further enhance leadership and the work climate, which was reflected in the survey results. Therefore, an action plan has been proposed to help the hotel implement strategies to improve these areas in its strategic plan.

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#### **Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

#### Author contributions

Conceptualization: Vargas, F. M., Navarrete, I. P., & Moreira, G. X. Data curation: Moreira, G. X. Formal analysis: Navarrete, I. P., & Moreira, G. X. Research: Vargas, F. M., Navarrete, I. P., & Moreira, G. X. Methodology: Vargas, F.M. Supervision: Vargas, F. M., & Navarrete, I. P. Validation: Vargas, F. M., Navarrete, I. P., & Moreira, G. X. Visualization: Vargas, F. M., Navarrete, I. P., & Moreira, G. X. Writing the original draft: Navarrete, I. P., & Moreira, G. X. Writing, review and editing: Vargas, F. M.

#### Data availability statement

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

#### Statement on the use of AI

The authors acknowledge the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies to improve the readability and clarity of the article.

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