RESEARCH ARTICLE

Phenomenon of Destructive Leadership: Exploring Predictors

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Abstract: The research paper examines the phenomenon of destructive leadership with the sole aim of exploring its predictors or causes that reinforce destructive or toxic leadership behavior. The exploration process investigates the phenomenon from followers' perspective evolved from their sensitivities towards their leaders' behavior. Previous researches suggest that the phenomenon is least researched, and the existing literature is more related to the personality traits of the destructive leaders. Therefore, this research, from followers' perspective, attempts to explore the causes or predictors that persuade darkness or toxicity in the leadership behavior while driving their teams towards goals. A comprehensive exercise of literature review resulted in derivation of theoretical framework extending a research model evolved from presumed predictors of the destructive or toxic leadership behavior. Drawing from the destructive or toxic leadership theory, the cross-sectional survey research is quantitative in its approach. The research model established that five factors such as, narcissism, abusive supervision, authoritarianism, impulsiveness or unpredictability of leader's personality, self-promotion were having predictive relevance for destructive behavior. The study contributes to addressing the prevalent gap between theory of leadership and empirical findings of this research, thereby, differentiating between the dark sides of the behavior with its responsible side into one comprehensive leadership model. For future research, the paper proposes exploration the workplace outcomes from employees subjected to destructive leadership behavior.

Keywords: Destructive Leadership, , Narcissism, Abusive Supervision, Authoritarianism, , and Unpredictability of Personality
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1 Introduction

Leadership is the practice of putting team members' abilities, power, forbearance, perseverance, and stamina to the test to achieve organizational objectives. A psychological role of an organization is leadership, which motivates, guides, and leads workers through the job process intended for the reason. Sanguinity, optimism, and self-efficacy are used as inspiration for ambitious leaders who want to achieve their goals. Leadership entails more than only getting a mission and inspiring others; it often entails encouraging desirable behavioral results of workers and empowering them to reach greater levels of corporate engagement. As a result, a leadership function is seen as important in demonstrating moral and ethical courage, providing a positive example for others, and keeping track of one's own and the organizational successes and shortcomings in order to develop a good sense of truth. In brief, real leadership is reflected in the positivity and hope with which the followers' hearts and minds are influenced beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The literature on leadership is mostly portrayed sketch of leaders who are recognized for their constructive and principle-centered actions (Covey, 1992), which establishes the conditions for an idealistic sphere of leadership. Cote et al. (2017) define leadership as a central mechanism that motivates a group or person to achieve a common goal. Leadership, according to common workplace expectations, is a healthy and optimistic thing that persuades and energizes followers by manipulating their heart and mind (Higgs, 2009). All-inclusive leadership behavior fascinates followers' empowerment on multiple dimensions so as to cultivate them into accomplished ones with humane, ethical and self-sacrificing orientations (Eva et al., 2019). Leaders need not to be rigid or self-centered but rather they should invite collective wisdom, encourage and appreciate team initiatives or out of the box ideas in overcoming challenges, and happily share success with the followers (Anderson and Anderson, 2011; Marques, 2020; Rosen and Swann, 2018). Similarly, because of the positive effects of leadership, people place a greater emphasis on the constructive and ambitious aspects of leadership, whereas the negative aspects of leadership (the destructive side) have received much less consideration, especially in Pakistan.

The destructive or toxic side of the leadership is where a leader's actions have detrimental consequences. Confrontational, interpersonal inconsiderateness, narcissism or selfishness, accuracy, and recklessness are six dark-side personality characteristics (Redmond, 2014). According to Padilla et al. (2007), destructive or toxic leaders may have charm, utilize authority for personal gain, narcissism, an unhealthy lifestyle, and be authoritarian to their followers.

To keep the workplace efficient and followers strongly charged, the organization must create, exercise, and sustain an optimistic and proactive leadership approach along with emotional intelligence (Baloch et al., 2007). To ensure that leaders-followers' relationships are desired to be positive at work. Leaders, at all levels, in organizations must avoid or prevent antecedents that contribute to the creation of destructive or toxic actions in their behavior at workplace. Unfortunately, there is no systematic research available on the stimuli that influence destructive leadership and its consequences for organizational results. As a result, a research is needed to analyze and discuss leadership literature to identify the triggers of destructive leadership using established theories, principles, and structures. The results of the study will help to eliminate them on the one side and help to develop a mechanism to turn destructive behavior to positive leadership style on the other.

With the latter in mind, the study aims to identify the prognosticators of destructive leadership and their sequential association with employee results at work. The study intends to use a quantitative research approach with correlational research methodology to strengthen through validation of the existing theoretical quantitative frameworks, prevalent in the related literature in organizational settings in the Pakistani social context.

2   Literature Review

The review of the related literature extends the awareness about leadership extensions ranging from the positive or servant side of the continuum towards another side of leadership i.e., dark or destructive side of leadership phenomenon. One of the mostly ignored illusion of the leaders is that they disregard or overlook the negativity or pessimism within the outfit functioning under them. This illusion tolerates the prevailing darkness or negativity to continue affecting the bondage between the leader and the led that eventually disrupts the organizational outfit. Leader must challenge the pessimism, renovate it to positivity and trust between the leader and the followers. There is relatively little literature on the negative or toxic aspects of leadership action. Such behaviour is described by Einarsen et al. (2007) as, "the systemic and repetitive behaviour by a chief, boss, or manager that undermines and/or sabotages the organization's objectives, chores, resources, and usefulness and/or the morale, well-being, or job fulfilment of his/her juniors by dejection and/or sabotaging the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the inspiration, well-being, or job satisfaction". However, according to Einarsen et al. (2007) the harmful leader's action is not intentional because he does not wish to harm; rather, it is the result of his thoughtlessness.

A leader with destructive behavior is a "person who has responsibility over a group of people or an organization, and who abuses the leader–follower relationship by leaving the group or organization in a worse condition than when they first found them". The phenomenon was first described by Whicker (1999) and Reed (2004) who associated it with a variety of unhealthy leadership styles such as the "little Hitler- a manager from hell, toxic supervisor, toxic manager, or dirty hands. The harmful and destructive leaders are those who "behave without dignity, lie and frequently contribute in many dishonorable activities" (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). According to Perry (2015) destructive behaviour utterly disrespects the rights and privileges of subordinates with the assumptions that this insolent behavior brands him or her leadership function with added effectiveness.

The term "toxic" and "destructive" is frequently used in business management literature with organizational manager, culture and organization that reflects the leader, who frequently bullies and threatens subordinates at work place (Milosevic et al., 2020). The manager whose temper fluctuates or swings from one degree to other or from one situation to other so frequently that it becomes unpredictable. However, destructive behavior might be appreciated at a workplace where employees prefer their comfort over work, personnel status and benefits over organizational survival and prestige.

Destructive leader is sometimes swapped with the term as "oppressive or tyrant leader" that, "undermines the subordinates' motivation by demeaning and manipulation in order to get the job done". The frequent and habitual use of toxic behavior is likely to bring followers on a unanimity of perceptions that they are being abused and ill-treated at workplace. Such perceptions if strengthened then the feeling of insecurity and humiliations

erupts which leads to frequent turnovers – psychological and financial loss to the organization. And such outcomes cause organization to bear enormous costs in term of organization's reputation loss and trained employees (Biçer et al., 2020). Schyns and Schilling (2013), in a meta-analysis encompassing 57 published research studies on destructive leadership phenomenon concludes high correlation between toxic or destructive behavior from the leaders and counterproductive work behavior from the subordinate at workplace. Hence, the destructive leadership that often ignores the respect and welfare of followers, humiliates through inhumane attitude or tyrant style, imposes orders without the consent of followers is counterproductive and uneconomical for the organization in the long run.

People emphasize the constructive and hopeful side of leadership because of the positive effects of leadership, whereas the negative or dark side of the leadership has received very little coverage, particularly in Pakistan. "A noxious or destructive leader is someone who takes advantage of his position in leader–led partnership, placing the group in a weaker position than before." Marcia Whicker invented the term in 1999, and it is "associated with a variety of abusive leadership types such as the tiny Hitler, manager from hell, poisonous supervisor, toxic manager, or filthy hands." Destructive leadership often disregards adherents' long-term well-being by placing directives or objectives on them without their permission. Destructive leadership is often known as toxic leadership which may be described in a variety of ways. For example, as a method, destructive leadership relates to a leader's poor or dishonest intentions that contribute to the destruction of the led and entity. Mirroring/self-projection, abusive social contact, unpredictability, narcissism, authoritarian leadership, and Machiavellianism are all typical behaviors of destructive leaders.

a. Abusive Leadership: "One whose primary goal is to dominate others, and such control is accomplished by tactics that generate terror and bullying," is referred as an abusive tyrant (Tepper, 2000). Abusive management means their workers being subjected to constant criticism at work. Instead of being recognized for their efforts and receiving the recognition they receive, they are mistreated and viewed as though they do not exist. Abusive leadership is described by Tepper (2000) as 'subordinates' views of the degree to which their superiors participate in the continuous show of aggressive verbal and nonverbal behaviours" (p.178). Using justice theory, Tepper (2000) finds that abusive supervisory behaviour is a predictor of employee job dissatisfaction, a decline of organizational commitment, psychological distress, and increased turnover intentions, resulting in a loss of trust between leaders and followers, a loss of workplace harmony, and a reduction of organizational productivity and competitiveness (Rice et al., 2020).

b. Narcissism: Narcissism is one of the trait of dark side of the personality at workplace, behaving psychopathic and Machiavellianism with other. Narcissistic personality encompasses a design of feeling of superior and wickedness, self-centered, selfish with egotistic mindset and conduct, disregard and absence of empathy and concern for others (Fatfouta, 2019). Honesty-Humility characteristics have clear detrimental associations with this dark phenotype. Employees that are narcissistic are more likely to indulge in counterproductive job behaviour, particularly if their self-esteem is challenged (Grijalva et al., 2015). At work, Machiavellianism is described as the "use of cunning and duplicitous actions in a business environment" (Belschak et al., 2018). The Prince is a book by Machiavelli that gives rulers guidance about how to control their subjects. The Machiavellian style is characterized by manipulating circumstances for personal gain while disregarding others' rights and freedoms, which they may or may not warrant based on merit (Machiavelli, 1995).

c. Authoritarian Leadership: Autocratic or authoritarian leadership are used interchangeably for a style branded by discrete control of leader over all decisions and choices having very little or no input fellow members (Purwanto et al., 2019). Authoritative leaders characteristically seldom seek guidance from followers thereby constraining followers' independence, autonomy, initiative, and creativity rather calls for submission to own agenda in totality (Harms et al., 2018). The style dictates the direction and procedures without involving subordinates, and it is in control of all operations. Under close observation, subordinates' responses to issued commands are either disciplined or praised. The acquisition of power and authority by an authoritarian or autocratic individual represents the accumulation of power and authority, the exercising of absolute autonomy according to one's own beliefs, and the reservation of the right to make decisions (Schuh et al., 2013; Siddique et al., 2020; Zhang and Xie, 2017).

d. Self-Promotion: Self-promotion encompasses behavior that endorses and projects leaders' self- interests with the aim of under rating or over shadowing rival competitors and/or capable endowed subordinates (Den Hartog et al., 2020).

e. Unpredictability: This trait encompasses changing and shifting moods thereby enacting unpredictably wide variety of behaviors that reflect vibrant transferals in temper and attitude states Den Hartog et al. (2020); Finney et al. (2021).

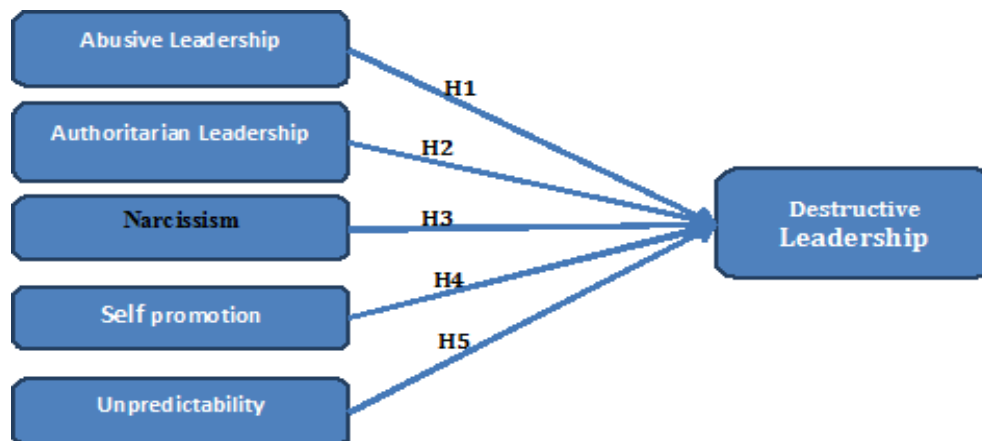## 2.1 Theoretical Framework & Development of Hypotheses

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Hypotheses: The set of Hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework developed as a result of reviewed literature are appended below.

H-1: Abusiveness in leadership interaction with followers is a significant predictor of destructive leadership.

H-2: Authoritativeness in leadership interaction with followers is significant predictor of destructive leadership.

H-3: Narcissism or self-admiration of leaders in interactive behavior with subordinates is a significant predictor of destructive leadership.

H-4: Self-promotion predisposition amid leaders-followers interactive behavior is a significant predictor of destructive leadership.

H-5. Unpredictability of Leader's behavior is a significant predictor of destructive leadership.

3   Research Methodology

The quantitative research endeavored to ascertain the nature of correlations between the factors affecting the phenomenon of destructive leadership and determine the degree of change happening in the destructive behavior of leadership with the corresponding variation in any of the factors. Philosophy of this quantitative research evolved from positivism – a basic approach of social sciences. Positivism views that scientific knowledge is the only genuine knowledge and old-fashioned philosophical dogmas are to be overruled as hollow. Positivists believe that reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective viewpoint (Lee, 1991; Lincoln and Guba, 1989; Smith et al., 2014).

Items in the questionnaire are measured with a 7-point Likert scale where 1 denotes "Strongly Disagree" and 7 denoted "Strongly Agree". In the current study, all the constructs are reflective in nature. Six antecedents which are derived from extensive literature reviews were identified in the current study. These predictors or determinants are abusive leadership, Authoritarian leadership, Narcissism, Self-promotion, and unpredictability. All the measurement instruments for these antecedents were adapted from the work of Schmidt (2008). However, based on a qualitative study, necessary changes have been made to these items based on the context of the study. The measurement instrument for dependent construct (i.e., dark leadership) was also adapted from Schmidt (2008), however, considering the context of the current research different changes were made to capture the essence of dark leadership in police department.

The comprehensive survey tool study gathered data by conducting an adopted questionnaire to 330 police officers in the Mardan Division. Out of the 291 returned questionnaires, 291 were complete and useful, resulting in an 88 percent answer rate. The Cronbach's alpha value of all the constructs was greater than 0.7, indicating that the questionnaire was reliable. The instrument was tweaked after the pilot study revealed that minor changes were required. Cronbach's Alpha, discriminate, build, and convergent validity exercises were used to ensure the questionnaire's reliability and validity. Table 3 shows that the square root of the AVE was higher than the inter-item correlations, indicating that the model has discriminant validity (Chin, 2010).

To ascertain the significance of relationship between the predictors and the phenomenon of destructive leadership structure equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed for the measurement and the structural regression analyses. The use of PLS-SEM was preferred over than other offshoots of SEM because it reveals added statistical command than CB-SEM (Hair et al., 2017). This PLS technique also prudently addresses the issues of restrictive assumptions, and unsuitable resolutions (Hair et al., 2017).

4   Findings

Most of the research conducted on leadership have been much idealized and focused on transformational, charismatic, ethical, authentic, or servant, whereas, the aggressive or de-

structive side of the leadership has been mostly neglected. However, the leadership and their personalities discussed in the literature submit that there exists urge for power or reflection of egoistic or dominance amongst many leaders. Hence, destructive leadership is a reality with its consequential counterproductive and deviant behavior from the followers. Therefore, the research investigated the causes of such behavior as perceived by the police officials of Mardan District, Pakistan. The subsequent paragraphs represent analyses of the data acquired from the respondents:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Characteristic	Sub-category	Frequency (N=291)	Percentage
Gender of respondent	Male	227	78
	Female	64	22
Age of respondent	18-24 years	82	28.8
	25-34 years	53	18.2
	35-44 Years	75	25.8
	35-54 years	49	16.8
	>55 years	32	11
Years of experience	6-10 years	164	56.4
	11-20 years	88	30.2
	21-40 years	39	13.4

The measurement model was assessed using two-step approach as recommended by Anderson and Anderson (2011). After calculating and ensuring reliability and convergent validity in first step, convergent validity was tested through following three conditions, shown in table-3 below, as follow:

- That factor loading was larger than 0.5. (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).
- The composite reliability value was greater than 0.7. (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).
- AVE was larger than 0.5. (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

The second step was to calculate discriminant validity which was positively attained because of all required indicators. The values in table-2 below reflect that the respondents of the survey research were conscious of the construct. The table-4 tabulates that the multicollinearity is nonexistent as the value of "variance inflation factor" (VIF) was found within the range of 5.

Table 2: Discriminant validity of constructs

	AS	AL	Nar	Self	Unp	DL
AS	**0.9**					
AL	0.22	**0.8**				
Nar	0.06	0.12	**0.8**			
Self prom	0.09	0.32	0.21	**0.86**		
Unp	0.08	0.04	0.17	0.13	**0.7**	
DL	0.02	0.13	0.16	0.24	0.3	**0.72**

Note: The square root of AVE is represented on the diagonals, while the other entries are the association values.

Table 3: Estimation of Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Loading	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Abusive Supervision	AS1	0.86	0.91	0.66
	AS2	0.96		
	AS3	0.76		
	AS4	0.76		
	AS5	0.91		
	AS6	0.87		
	AS7	0.82		
Authoritarian Leadership	AL1	0.74	0.85	0.75
	AL2	0.87		
	AL3	0.86		
	AL4	0.72		
	AL5	0.68		
	AL6	0.8		
Narcissism	Nar1	0.72	0.85	0.53
	Nar2	0.72		
	Nar3	0.87		
	Nar4	0.74		
	Nar5	0.67		
Self-Promotion	Self1	0.68	0.84	0.51
	Self2	0.77		
	Self3	0.71		
	Self4	0.74		
	Self5	0.63		
Unpredictability	Unp1	0.72	0.84	0.62
	Unp2	0.76		
	Unp3	0.76		
	Unp4	0.91		
	Unp5	0.87		
	Unp6	0.82		
	Unp7	0.74		
Destructive Leadership	DL1	0.81	0.83	0.56
	DL2	0.91		
	DL3	0.87		
	DL4	0.82		
	DL5	0.82		

Hypotheses testing results are exemplified in tables 4 and 5 below which support all of the five study's hypotheses having been created from theoretical framework.

The first theory concerned the link between abusive supervision and Destructive leadership. It was discovered to be linked to Destructive Leadership (β=0.21, p$\leq$0.05). As a consequence, H1 has been accepted.

The second theory was that oppressive leadership had an effect on negative leadership, which was shown to have a favorable association (β=0.223, p$\leq$0.05).

Because of their good interaction (β=0.173, p$\leq$0.05), the third theory connecting Narcis-

sism and Destructive Leadership was also acknowledged. The fourth theory, positing a connection between Self-Promotion and Destructive Leadership, was also shown to be correct, as the findings indicate that Self-Promotion is positively linked to negative leadership (β=0.243, p$\leq$0.05).

Finally, H5 theories linking unpredictability to Destructive Leadership were found to be valid. Unpredictability is favorably correlated with destructive leadership according to the findings (β = 0.164, p$\leq$0.05).

Table 4: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta value	Standard error	t-value	Decision	VIF
H1	Abusive Supervision → Destructive Leadership	0.211	0.075	.2.39	Established	1.05
H2	Authoritarian Leadership → Destructive Leadership	0.223	0.065	2.81	Established	1.17
H3	Narcissism → Dark Leadership	0.173	0.071	2.26	Established	1.06
H4	Self-Promotion → Dark Leadership	0.243	0.067	2.82	Established	1.15
H5	Unpredictability → Dark Leadership	0.162	0.077	2.26	Established	1.15

Table 5: Results of Prediction Values

	SSO	SSE	Q2(=1-SSE/SSO)	R2
Abusive Supervision	1441	1441		
Authoritarian Leadership	1531	1531		
Narcissism	1339	1339		
Self-promotion	1619	1619		
Unpredictable	1901.11	1499.77		
Destructive Leadership	18995	1632.44	0.219	0..23

Note: Blindfolding procedure only conducted for reflective constructs.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

Our observations support previous findings that the apparatus of destructive leadership is closely correlated with its antecedents, as seen in previous research on the dark side of leadership. Any leader's dark or destructive nature is unappealing, but its reflection has been witnessed as a fact, though smaller scale. A thorough knowledge of dark or destructive behaviour, its predictors, and consequences will assist a leader in minimizing the negative impact on followers and the organization, as well as the corresponding expense. This research adds to our understanding of destructive leadership and approves the pervasiveness of destructive qualifications in Pakistani context, such as narcissism, abusive supervision, authoritative leadership, self-projection and unpredictability, and workplace bullying of followers (Ackerman et al., 2011; Kurtulmuş, 2020; Padilla et al., 2007; Schyns and Schilling, 2013; Tepper, 2000). The study backs up previous studies that show leaders who are prone to dark conduct are obstinate in oppressive control, showing interactional and procedural injustice; "psychological contract breaches" and "authoritarian leadership style are positively linked to abusive supervisory behaviour" (Dorasamy, 2018; Lindberg McGinnis et al., 2010; Perry, 2015). Henderson (2015) discovered that Machiavellian dark habits are often associated with coercion and deception of others through concealing harmful personal knowledge. Destructive or toxic behaviour is a biologically ingrained pattern that arises from interactions with people and their surroundings, with a leader-member interactive landscape in a specific time frame (Lewin et al., 1939). As a result, today's leadership's grim, toxic, or Destructive activity cannot be seen as an exception, but rather as a pattern that has occurred in the past, albeit less often.

5.2 Conclusion

Leadership is a behavioural study that is not only rooted in a specific circumstance or personality, but often considered as a function of the interaction of several variables involved in the internal and external world. Because of their overarching legal and ethical responsibilities to their adherents, leaders. The key findings from the analysis of literature exercise were backed up by this study, which found that dark or toxic leadership is underpinned by unusual person motivations that trump administrative interests, eroding organizational efficiency. The study found that predisposed followers of dark / toxic leadership contribute to a favorable environment that encourages toxic behaviour to continue. According to the findings, a dark / toxic leader's behaviour has negative consequences, which are exacerbated by the colluding followers. As a result, a different study project is required to investigate the leader-follower relationship in a toxic setting. This study will aid in the introduction of organizational practices capable of avoiding or addressing the detrimental effects of toxic or dark leader actions, as well as positively impacting toxic leader-follower relationships. The research suggests that contemporary and evolving leaders will appreciate self-awareness of their own toxicity or destructiveness of behavior so that this enhanced understanding would aspire their motivations, help diagnose weaknesses related with their personalities, and avoid potential snags as they lead their organizations.

5.3   Limitations and Directions

The study does not refute the reality that successful leaders must resist threats, manipulation, and bullying behaviour that chastises their followers. Police officers can often engage in non-nervous behaviour, thus establishing organizations as fearless workplaces where employees are encouraged to provide suggestions and participate in a participatory and shared leadership atmosphere. The usage of an accepted questionnaire designed for representatives and adherents working in Western socio-cultural values is a clear drawback of the research sample. To overcome this constraint, the researchers re-created a variety of elements that were appropriate for the population's comprehension, accompanied by a plot analysis exercise. Furthermore, halo/horns prejudices, which are known to cause calculation errors, were avoided by requiring respondents to read and address the queries, as well by using reverse-scored objects. Future studies can look at the long-term consequences of destructive leadership behaviour, as well as strategies for improving dyadic relationships and reducing counterproductive job behaviour. Future study, on the other hand, may take into consideration the prevalence of personality disparities in leader-follower relationships, as well as persistent job frustration in the workplace, which could influence the findings.

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