

Impact of COVID-19 and Psychological Distress on Psychological Flourishing among Married Individuals

Samar Fahd, *Fatima Khurram Bukhari, Shazia Yusuf, Riffat Tahira, Maria Tanveer, Samavia Shaheen

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (Pak).

*Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (Pak).

³Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Bahria University Islamabad(Pak).

⁴Assistant Professor, Department of Education, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (Pak).

⁵Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Riphah University, Islamabad (Pak).

⁶M.Sc. Scholar, Department of Applied Psychology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (Pak).

* Corresponding author: fatima.khurram@iub.edu.pk

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Abstract: This research was designed to measure the impact of COVID-19 distress on psychological flourishing among married individuals in a sample of married couples from Bahawalpur City. The total sample comprised of 200 (100 male, 100 female) participants, whom were selected through random sampling technique. The sample is justified by employing online A-priori sample size calculator (Soper, 2021). The power and precision was 0.9 and the confidence interval was 95% with 20% attrition rate. Three questionnaires were utilized in the present study; Fear of COVID-19 Scale (Ahorsu et al., 2020), Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10)(Kessler et al., 2002) and Psychological Flourishing Scale (Fahd, 2020). The collected data were analyzed through SPSS (23.0); Independent Sample t-test, Descriptive Statistics and Correlation would be suggested for hypotheses testing. Multiple Regression analysis would be used to test the impact of psychological flourishing between IV & DV. The results of regression analysis found that fear of COVID-19 and psychological distress significantly impact psychological flourishing of married couples. Moreover, Females were proved to be more fear of COVID-19 and psychological distress and their psychological flourishing also remained higher than cohort. The limitations and future avenues were also considered.

Keywords: Psychological Flourishing, Married Couples, COVID-19, Fear

1. Introduction

Epidemics are enormous outbreaks hampering a lot of individuals of several nations and increasing globally (Organization, 2010). In the course of the most recent few centuries, various pandemics have been accounted for triggering dangers for humanity (Taylor, 2019). On 11 March 2020, the WHO formally announced COVID-19 as a widespread epidemic. Before the statement, China formally detailed the

infection at the end of 2019. This novel coronavirus was labeled as the 6th global health emergency by WHO (Moghanibashi-Mansourieh, 2020).

Fear of COVID-19

Many governments has been implied stern laws, due to this pandemic, aimed to stoop this from spreading(Adhikari et al., 2020). Those governments, who have been affected much from this pandemic, e.g. Italy, China and Spain have been imposed strict lockdowns on their people to decrease the spread of infection. Due to staying at home for an unusual and unpredicted time, the life style of the population was impacted earnestly, particularly in under-developed countries. The dread and distress has been increased in people when they were uncertain about how the infection is spreading? How vulnerable the people are? The non-availability of its cure and the immunity of the infected people (Orellana & Orellana, 2020; Ornell, Schuch, Sordi, & Kessler, 2020; Rodríguez-Rey, Garrido-Hernansaiz, & Collado, 2020).

Psychological Distress

A systematic review directed to characterize the mental distress throughout the diagnostic course of potential breast cancer patients. There are numerous possible meanings of mental distress. According to this review, mental distress can be perceived as emotional strain, sadness and tension. The most explicit indicator of mental distress was anxiety, which found in some extent among each women being screened. Be the most well-known theoretical meaning of mental distress found in this survey, was portrayed as cognitive and behavioral reaction to an emergency hastening occasion apparent as compromising and appeared by tension and burdensome side effects.

As per one meaning of misery in disease, trouble is characterized as “a multifactorial unpleasant emotional experience of a psychological (cognitive, behavioral, emotional), social, and/or spiritual nature that may interfere with the ability to cope effectively with cancer, its physical symptoms and its treatment. Distress extends along a continuum, ranging from common normal feelings of vulnerability, sadness, and fears to problems that can become disabling, such as depression, anxiety, panic, social isolation, and existential and spiritual crisis” (Network, 2019)

Psychological Flourishing

A condition where people possess high levels of optimistic emotions (emotional well-being) and good psychological functioning (less psychological distress) in the society, is called psychological flourishing (Keyes, 2002). In contrast, languishing individuals are conceived of emptiness and stagnation, and describe themselves and life as “hollow”, “empty”, “as a shell”, and “a void”. Persons who are not in the state of flourishing nor the languishing state are known to have a modest psychological health (Keyes, 2002). To flourish, persons must show great levels on at least one of the measures of emotional well-being (positive affect and satisfaction with life), and at least on six levels of the 11 items of psychological and social functioning (see above). To languish, individuals must show low levels on at least one of the measures of emotions related well-being, and at least on six of the 11 items of psychological and social well-being.

What is the relation of mental health and mental illness? In order to examine this question, the model of mental health and illness has been established (Keyes, 2005). In the traditional view of mental health, the mental illness and health are conceived as opposite ends of the same continuum. Thus, people who do not suffer from mental illness are assumed to have automatically an optimal mental health, and vice versa. However, the above said model illustrates that mental health and mental ailment represent binary distinct but correlated axes. In practice, a correlation exists between high symptoms of mental illness and low scores on well-being. But this correlation is not flawless. A person who suffers from mental ailment could also have an increased positive mental health status at the same time, and vice versa. Therefore, the presence of psychopathology means not automatically a worse mental health. Conversely, the

nonappearance of mental ailment does not guarantee optimal mental health. Empirical findings support the validity of the two continua model (Keyes, 2005; Lamers, 2012; Westerhof & Keyes, 2010).

As a positive psychology notion, flourishing is an assessment of whole life wellbeing and is considered as significant to the notion of happiness (Dunn & Dougherty, 2008; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Modern scientists believe that people labeled as flourishing have a blend of great altitudes of emotions related well-being, subjective well-being and societal well-being (Keyes, 2003). Positive emotional feelings such as happiness convey interpersonal and subjective advantages, much more than just personal subjective experience. Thus, the construct psychological flourishing is suggested to designate the needed state whereby both hedonist and eudaemonist modules of well-being are concurrently present inside an individual (Huppert & So, 2013).

Psychological Flourishing and Marriages

During the course of life, an individual flourishes by close and purposeful social relationships. These relationships enable an individual to grow, prosper and thus lead to subjective well-being and positivity. Researchers have known for decades that there is a solid association between positive relationships and personal contentment (Argyle & Crossland, 1987; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976). Extensive assessment of the relationship literature has illustrated that committed and deep relationships lead to psychological flourishing (Cohen, 2004; Seeman, 2000; Uchino, 2009). The empirical study of flourishing and constructive dimensions of mental health had been always critical in perceiving the close, intimate relationships. Although, speculative models depict variations in their understanding of how they conceptualize and describe personal and subjective wellbeing (Cummins, Eckersley, Pallant, Van Vugt, & Misajon, 2003; Pavot & Diener, 2008; Shek & Liang, 2018), they all are of the same opinion that profound and significant close relations play a fundamental role in psychological flourishing of human beings.

Various personal and psychological factors play important role in maintenance of strength of relations. These factors of personality include personal skills/talents, discovery of purpose and engagement of life, positive view of self, resilience, self-esteem, perceived self-efficacy, better self-regulatory capacities, pro social orientation towards others, relationship growth/prosperity, happiness, life satisfaction/contentment, personal and interpersonal resources to flourish in adversity.

2. Conceptual Framework

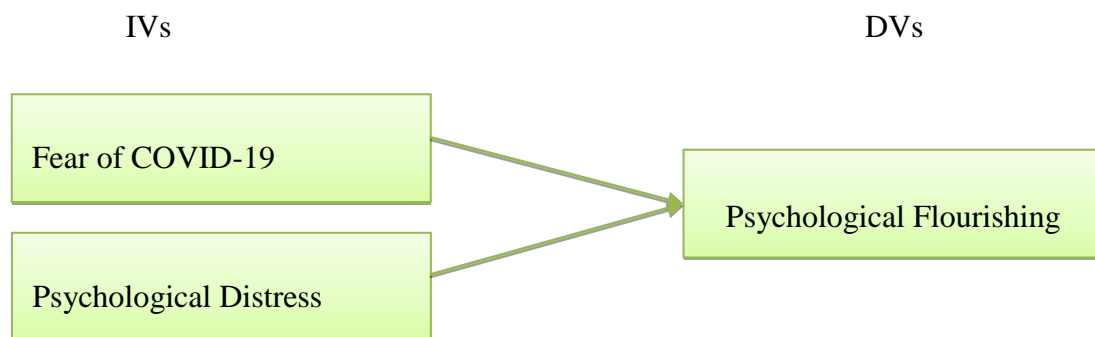


Figure 1. Hypothesized research model (Self-Constructed)

Rationale of the Study

In any epidemic circumstance, individuals will more often feel threat to their lives and their possessions. As the dread extends, it emerges in the form of distress. Psychological flourishing and languishing both relate to the various types of psychological distress. In view of the supposition, this exploration attempts to

comprehend the immediate and indirect connection between fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing. This study analyzes an underlying relationship to test the unique relationship among the above mentioned variables.

Objectives of the Study

1. To check the relationship between psychological flourishing, psychological flourishing and fear of COVID-19 among married individuals.
2. To check the demographic significance among married couples in the terms of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is a positive correlation between psychological flourishing and psychological distress and fear of COVID-19 among married individuals.
2. Fear of COVID-19 and psychological distress will be the predictors of psychological flourishing among married individuals.
3. The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be higher in female respondents than male respondents.
4. The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be higher among urban respondents as compared to rural respondents.
5. The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be higher in nuclear family systems as compared to joint family system.
6. The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be significantly different among different age groups.
7. The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be significantly different among different socioeconomic status.

3. Method

The sampling technique which was utilized in this study was purposive sampling. Data were gathered from married individuals. Total number of participants were (N= 200) married individuals from age group of 21 to above 40 years old. Statistical power level was 0.9, anticipated effect size was 0.3 and level of significance was 0.05. Sample size was calculated through denialsoper.com. Cross-sectional research design was used in this research.

Measures

Demographic sheet. Name of the respondent (optional), gender, age, education and marital status was included in demographic sheet.

Fear of COVID-19 Scale (Ahorsu et al., 2020). It is a 7 item Likert scale to measure the fear of COVID-19 among people. Scores range from minimum 7 to maximum 35 higher scores will show the greater level of fear.

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) (Kessler et al., 2002). The K10 proposed “nonspecific” measures of psychological distress. It includes measures of specific items that are closely related to depression and anxiety. Internal consistency was measured through curve performance that range from 0.89 to 0.91 (Furukawa, Kessler, Slade, & Andrews, 2003) and validity have not yet investigated in mental health setting. It is a 5 point Likert scale and takes two to three minutes to administer this test. The score range from 10 (minimum) to 50 (maximum). Scores above 30 will show the psychological distress in the respondent.

Psychological Flourishing Scale (Fahd, 2020). It is a 39 item scale, used to measure the psychological flourishing among married individuals. PFS comprised of two subscales named as relationship dimension (21 items) and individual dimension (17 items). Each item of the scale is scored on 5 point scale. High score manifests greater level of psychological flourishing. Relationship Dimension was measured by item

number 1-13, 17, 23, 25,29,30,33, 35, & 38. Whereas, Individual Dimension was measured using responses from items, 14,15, 16, 18, 19, 20,21,22,24, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 34, 36 & 37. To identify levels of psychological flourishing, responses are summed up and scoring was divided as low, moderate and high.

Procedure

The main study was conducted on 200 married individuals. Permission was taken from first authors to use the scale. Data collection was done from Bahawalpur City. Generally, a person avoids participating in research in Pakistani culture. At first participants were debriefed, only willing individuals were included in research during data collection. Collected data were used only for research purpose and confidentiality was maintained. Females and males both were included in research from 21 to above 40 years. For the ease of participants’ English version of all scales were used. Data was analyzed using SPSS. Independent sample t test, ANOVA, descriptive statistics and Correlation were used for hypotheses testing.

Results

The results of “Impact of COVID-19 Distress of Psychological Flourishing among Married Individuals” are being presented here.

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Overall Sample (n=200)

Demographical Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	100	50
Female	100	50
Age (in years)		
21-30 years	108	54.0
31-40 years	73	36.5
Above 40 years	19	18.5
Residence		
Urban	108	54.0
Rural	92	46.0
Family System		
Joint Family	65	62.5
Nuclear Family	135	67.5
Socioeconomic Status		
Low	71	35.5
Average	98	49.0
High	31	15.5

Table 1 reveals that equal number of male participants (n = 100, 50%) participant in the study as compared to female participants (n = 100, 50%). Higher number of participants age from 21-30 years (n = 108, 54.0%), second number of age of the respondents from 31-40 years ((n = 73, 36.5%) participants in the study as compared to age of the participants from above 40 years (n = 19, 18.5%). Majority of participants belonging to urban area (n = 108, 54.0%) participated in the study as compared to rural area (n = 92, 46.0%). Majority of respondents belong to nuclear family system (n = 135, 67.5%) compared to combined family system (n = 65, 62.5%). Majority of the participants socioeconomic status are middle level (n = 98, 49.0%), second number of participants socioeconomic status are low (n = 71, 35.5%) participants in the study as compared to high level of socioeconomic status are (n = 31, 15.5%).

Table 2 Cronbach's Alpha of Fear of COVID-19, on Psychological distress and Psychological Flourishing (N=200)

Scale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's Alpha
Fear of COVID-19	21.53	4.89	10-30	.67
Psychological Distress	21.84	4.82	10-30	.78
Psychological Flourishing	18.98	3.68	9-28	.84

**p < .01

Table shows psychometric properties for the scales used in present study. The Cronbach's α values for fear of COVID-19 Scale was .67 (>.70), Psychological Distress Scale was .78(>.70) and Psychological Flourishing Scale was .84(>.70), which indicated greater internal consistency.

Table 3Bivariate Correlation between Fear of COVID-19, Psychological distress and Psychological Flourishing (N=200)

	N	M	SD	1	2	3
Fear of COVID-19	200	19.39	6.44	-		
Psychological Distress	200	21.84	8.82	.16*	-	
Psychological Flourishing	200	10.22	2.61	.19**	.44***	-

**p < .01

The above table presented that Fear of COVID-19 is significantly positively correlated with psychological flourishing and psychological distress among married individuals.

Table 4The effect of Fear of COVID-19 distress of Psychological Flourishing among married individuals (n=200)

Predictors	Psychological Flourishing	
	Model 1 B	95% CI
Constant	92.76**	[14.391, 0.485]
Fear of COVID-19	.23**	[09, .33]
R2	.001	
F	80.223**	
Constant	36.045**	[3.98, 36.045]
Psychological Distress	.502**	[193, 52]
R2	.000	
F	13.949**	

**p <.01 B for Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI for Confidence interval.

The findings showed that fear of COVID-19 was a strong significant predictor (R2 = .001, p <.01) in psychological flourishing, similarly, fear of COVID-19 significantly effects psychological flourishing. The above table also showed that psychological distress was significant predictor (R2 = .000, p <.01) in psychological flourishing of married individuals, in other words psychological distress was significantly effects psychological flourishing of married individuals.

Table 5 Independent Sample t-test for Comparison between male and female sample for fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing (N=200)

Variables	Male (n = 100)		Female (n = 100)		t(198)	p	95%CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Fear of COVID-19	70.8	17.90	83.6	19.31	-5.31	.00	-17.5	-8.05
Psychological Distress	74.65	7.21	78.32	11.42	-2.98	.00	-6.09	-1.24
Psychological Flourishing	49.38	9.322	52.25	6.226	-5.31	.00	-17.5	-8.06

Note. CI =Confidence Interval; LL =Lower Limit; UP =Upper Limit.

The Table 5 showed that the mean score of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing were significantly high between female respondents in comparison to male respondents.

Table 6 Independent Sample t-test for Comparison between urban and rural sample for Fear of COVID-19, psychological Distress and Psychological Flourishing (N=200)

Variable	Urban (n = 108)		Rural (n = 92)		t(198)	P	95%CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Fear of COVID-19	78.6	19.69	74.47	19.28	1.54	.12	-1.17	9.60
Psychological Distress	76.48	9.64	76.59	9.93	-.08	.93	-2.78	2.55
Psychological Flourishing	51.20	7.90	49.95	8.23	1.11	.26	-.950	3.44

Note. C1 = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit

The above Table 6 demonstrates that the mean score of Fear of COVID-19 and psychological distress were higher between urban respondents than rural respondents.

Table 7Independent Sample t-test for Comparison between joint family and nuclear family sample for Fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and Psychological Flourishing (N=200)

Variable	Joint family (n = 65)		Nuclear family (n =135)		t(198)	P	95% of psychological flourishing was not significant among urban respondents as compared to rural respondents.CI	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Fear of COVID-19	75.83	17.47	78.66	21.21	-1.11	.05	-7.84	2.18
Psychological distress	76.14	7.99	76.83	10.96	-.54	.00	-3.14	1.78
Psychological Flourishing	50.50	8.27	51.08	7.80	-.55	.54	-2.60	1.46

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit

The Table 7 showed that the mean of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress was significantly higher among nuclear family respondents than joint family respondents. This table also showed that the mean of psychological flourishing was not significantly different among nuclear family respondents and joint family respondents.

Table 8 One way ANOVA for Age group for fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing (N=200)

Variables	21-30 years (n = 108)		31-40 years (n = 73)		Above 40 years (n = 19)		ANOVA		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	f-value	df	p
Fear of COVID-19	76.9	20.72	76.38	7.65	95.0	6.14	2.092	4	.083
Psychological distress	76.82	9.94	78.86	7.83	80.00	3.12	1.793	4	.131
Psychological Flourishing	50.64	8.34	53.00	5.84	59.00	2.35	1.041	4	.387

The above table showed that the mean of Fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing was insignificant among different age groups.

Table 9 One way ANOVA for socioeconomic status group for fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing (N=200)

Variables	Low (N = 71)		Average (n =98)		High (n = 31)		ANOVA		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	f-value	df	p
Fear of COVID-19	79.67	32.38	77.64	19.19	69.44	21.46	.795	2	.453
Psychological distress	69.33	4.13	76.87	9.67	72.22	11.02	2.714	2	.068
Psychological Flourishing	47.17	8.35	50.92	7.99	50.67	8.73	.640	2	.528

The above table showed that the mean of Fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing was insignificant among different socioeconomic status.

Discussion

The present research entitled impact of covid-19 distress of psychological flourishing among married individuals. For this purpose three questionnaires were used to check the COVID-19 distress of psychological flourishing among married individuals. First questionnaire was Fear of COVID-19 Scale, second questionnaire was Psychological Distress and third was Psychological Flourishing Scale.

After the data analysis results showed that the overall sample of equal number of male participants (n = 100, 50%) and female participants (n = 100, 50%). Most of the participants were from the age group of 21-30 years (n = 108, 54.0%), the ratio of the respondents from age group of 31-40 years was ((n = 73, 36.5%), participants above 40 years (n = 19, 18.5%) were of the minimum ratio in the study. Majority of participants belonging to urban area (n = 108, 54.0%) participated in the study as compared to rural area (n = 92, 46.0%). Majority of respondents belong to nuclear family system (n = 135, 67.5%) compared to combined family system (n = 65, 62.5%). Majority of the participants socioeconomic status are middle class level (n = 98, 49.0%), second number of participants socioeconomic status are low (n = 71, 35.5%) participants in the study as compared to high level of socioeconomic status are (n = 31, 15.5%).

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis of this research was “There would be a positive relationship between Fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing of married individuals”. In Table 3 results exhibited that the Fear of COVID-19 was significantly positively correlated with psychological flourishing. Results were similar with previous researches (Wang et al., 2020). Logically, Fear of COVID-19 has relation with Psychological Flourishing that is positive. Findings are in line with the previous researches. . So the first

hypothesis is accepted. Next hypothesis is dealing with psychological flourishing and psychological distress of married individuals (Allemand, Hill, Ghaemmaghami, & Martin, 2012).

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis of this research was Fear of COVID-19 and psychological distress will be the predictors of psychological flourishing among married individuals. The results showed that the independent variables predict the dependent variable and the hypothesis are accepted.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis of this research was “The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be higher in female respondents than male respondents.” In Table 5 results presented that the mean score of fear of COVID-19 was high between female respondents as compared to male respondents. The Table also showed that the mean score of psychological flourishing was high between female respondents as compared to male respondents. Similarly, the mean score of psychological distress was notably higher among female respondents as compared to male respondents. Past researches were had similar results (Freedman & Enright, 1996; Freese, 2004). Results support by previous researches, so hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 4 and 5

The fourth hypothesis of the study was “The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be higher among urban respondents as compared to rural respondents”. The fifth hypothesis of this research was “The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be higher in nuclear family systems as compared to joint family system”. In Table 4.6 results showed that the mean of Fear of COVID-19, psychological distress was significantly higher among nuclear family respondents than joint family respondents. Similarly, the mean of psychological distress was significantly higher among nuclear family respondents as compared to joint family respondents. Results revealed against hypothesis, so hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 6 and 7

The sixth Hypothesis of this research was “The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be significantly different among different age groups” and the seventh hypothesis was “The levels of fear of COVID-19, psychological distress and psychological flourishing will be significantly different among different socioeconomic status”. In Table 9 results showed that the mean score of Fear of COVID-19 among low SES was significantly higher than average or high SES. This Table also showed that the mean of Psychological Flourishing among low SES was less than average or high SES. This also showed that the mean of psychological distress among average or high SES was significantly higher than low SES. Results of Table 9 indicated that fifth hypothesis is not accepted nor rejected.

All the results indicate that Fear of COVID-19 and psychological distress effect psychological flourishing. Both, fear of COVID-19 and psychological distress are positively correlated with psychological flourishing. Female respondents score is higher as compared to male respondents in Psychological Flourishing, Fear of COVID-19 and psychological distress. Previous researches have also similar results.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The present research entitled “impact of Fear of COVID-19, psychological distress on Psychological Flourishing among married individuals”. After data analysis, it was concluded that Fear of COVID-19 and psychological distress were significantly associated with Psychological Flourishing among married couples. Gender was playing a significant role with Fear of COVID-19, Psychological Flourishing and psychological distress. Moreover, area of residence (Rural & Urban) was also playing significant role with Fear of COVID-

19, Psychological distress and Psychological Flourishing. Family system (Joint & Nuclear) was also playing a significant role with Fear of COVID-19, Psychological distress and Psychological Flourishing. For upcoming researches, it is advised to study Fear of COVID-19 on psychological distress and Psychological Flourishing (both or separate) as a predictor factor with other phenomena of positive psychology. It is counseled to consider the population of whole Southern Punjab, the other provinces individually or the whole Pakistan for future researches regarding these variables.

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