

# **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# GRATITUDE, FORGIVENESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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# Manuscript Info

#### Abstract

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*Key words:-*Gratitude, Forgiveness, Psychological Well Being, College Students In the midst of these complexities, it is critical to comprehend the factors that influence psychological well-being in order to promote holistic development and resilience of college students. Of the many factors that influence psychological well-being, the constructs of gratitude and forgiveness have drawn increasing attention in psychological research. Correlational research design was used in the study by assuming that a relationship could exist between Gratitude, Forgiveness and Psychological Wellbeing among adolescents. The sample consisted of 110 (55 girls and 55 boys) college students. The gratitude scale (Mohammad Anas, Akbar Husain, Asiya Aijaz and Shah Mohammad Khan), Forgiveness Scale (Reginald Amanze and Jerome Carson) and the Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Carol D. Ryff) were used to measure gratitude, forgiveness and psychological wellbeing in an individual. Pearson Product Moment Correlation test indicates significant relationship between gratitude and forgiveness among both girls and boys college students. There is significant relationship between forgiveness and psychological wellbeing, gratitude and psychological wellbeing among girl college students but there is no significant relationship between these variables in boy college students. We may conclude that there is a strong correlation between forgiveness and thankfulness, which emphasises how positive feelings are intertwined. Forgiveness, which is letting go of grudges and offering forgiveness, seems to be strongly related to gratitude, which is defined as acknowledging and appreciating gifts. This implies that those who feel one of these emotions are probably going to feel the other to some degree as well. Higher or lower level of gratitude and forgiveness of an individual will impact the level of psychological wellbeing of an individual and vice-versa.

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# Introduction:-

In the ever-changing world of higher education, the quest for both personal development and emotional well-being frequently collides with the pursuit of academic excellence. This transitional period for college students is marked by a number of significant challenges, including academic difficulties, the formation of an identity in the face of

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numerous social pressures, and a newfound independence. In the midst of these complexities, it is critical to comprehend the factors that influence psychological well-being in order to promote holistic development and resilience. Of the many factors that influence psychological well-being, the constructs of gratitude and forgiveness have drawn increasing attention in psychological research.

# Psychological Well being

Psychological well-being refers to "a person's level of psychological health and happiness, which includes emotions of accomplishment and life satisfaction". Physical well being is considered as separate and distinguished but interelated to Psychological well being (PWB). Physical well-being involves physical health such as sickness states, fitness level, and the ability to do activities of daily living (ADL) whereas PWB is the totality of an individual's life perspective, accounting for feelings of physical health as well as self-efficacy, interpersonal relationships, general happiness, and self-worth. Adopting a monistic perspective that recognises the unbreakable connection between PWB and physical well-being is preferable. Psychological wellbeing is a multifaceted concept that includes emotional, cognitive, and social functioning, among other facets of a person's mental condition that are to be summated to understand PWB as a whole. It represents a person's general contentment with life as well as their capacity to handle stress, uphold wholesome relationships, and feel fulfilled and have a purpose in life (Ryff, 2013).

# Gratitude

Whether something is tangible or immaterial, when someone is grateful of something, they can communicate their gratitude, a conscious, positive emotion. When someone gives us a present or makes a pleasant gesture, we are taught to say thank you from a young age. We develop the habit of saying thank you out of social convention. Being thankful and appreciative while expressing gratitude is a pleasant emotion that has been linked to numerous advantages. You express feelings of kindness, warmth, and other types of generosity while you are experiencing gratitude because you are appreciative of something or someone in your life (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Being nice is not the only thing that constitutes gratitude. It's a discipline that asks us to recognise the goodness that people have shown us or the good things in our lives. It encompasses both the act of identifying the positive aspects and their outcome (Emmons & Stern, 2013).

Having gratitude means appreciating what you have in life. When we talk about being grateful, we mean to be aware of how fortunate we are every day. It is a constructive emotion that enables you to achieve everything in life and improve yourself (Davis et al; 2016). Sometimes we become so enamoured with the material world that we lose sight of what we already have. We feel insecure as a result and desire more. Our childhood programming that makes us feel as though we will be happy if we have more material possessions is the source of these thoughts of desiring more.

Being grateful means appreciating what you have, loving your body, and appreciating yourself. By doing this, it will be much simpler for you to respect others and everything in your environment (Kruger; 2023). Gratitude may show up in every aspect of your life. You can start your day by expressing thankfulness for your wellbeing, the lovely day, your life, and everything in it. Any small event in your life might be a cause for gratitude.

Even if some things could appear to be very challenging, if you try to see things from a different perspective and look for the good in both the terrible and the good, you'll see that everything in life is relative. This energy lasts longer than other happy feelings if you send gratitude towards something or someone. You can connect to something greater and notice the positive aspects of your life by practising gratitude. This vibration promotes happiness and fulfilment.

# Origin of Gratitude-

Gratitude is derived from the **Latin** word **gratus** that is used to express pleasure or gratitude. Ingratitude or ungratefulness is the absence of gratitude where thankfulness is expected. A recipient of another's generosity may feel grateful, appreciative, or grateful as a return (or some equivalent pleasant emotion). This act of compassion might take the shape of presents, assistance, favours, or other acts of generosity towards another person.

# Forgiveness

Forgiveness and Gratitude are two powerful psychological constructs that have been extensively studied in the field of positive psychology. Both concepts are closely related and have been found to significantly impact an individual's psychological wellbeing. Forgiveness involves the process of letting go of negative emotions and resentment towards oneself or others. Similarly, forgiveness is closely tied to psychological wellbeing. Holding onto grudges, anger, and resentment can lead to increased stress, negative emotions, and impaired relationships. However, the process of forgiveness allows individuals to release these negative emotions and promote healing and reconciliation. By forgiving oneself or others, individuals free themselves from the burden of carrying emotional baggage, which can significantly improve their mental health and wellbeing (Toussaint & Webb; 2005).

It's possible to characterise the act of forgiving someone—including oneself—as a conscious psychological process of letting go of anger, bitterness, resentment, and the desire for revenge and retribution. Evolutionary theory suggests that natural selection led to the development of both our capacity for forgiveness and our inclination for revenge. Early humans used social characteristics like revenge and forgiveness to resolve disputes. Even if these two characteristics are part of human nature, the possibility of altering them gives us hope that we might strive for a world that is less resentful and more forgiving (McCullough, 2008).

Forgiveness is a subjective process that varies from person to person. However, it generally involves consciously letting go of anger and resentment towards someone who has wronged you. This is not an easy task, as it requires effort and self-awareness. The act of forgiveness involves more than simply accepting what happened or letting go of anger. Rather, it involves actively changing how you think, feel, and act in response to a past hurt to break free from resentment and offer kindness to the other person (Lambert (Ed.); 2013).

#### The relationship between Gratitude & Forgiveness

Forgiveness and thankfulness are theoretically connected characteristics that are commonly studied apart from other traits. Breen, Kashdan, Lenser, and Fincham (2010) study examined forgiveness and thankfulness in the same group in order to better understand how these are related to personality traits, emotional vulnerabilities, and positive psychological processes. Data indicated that there are differences between the relationships between forgiveness and thankfulness and psychological qualities, emotional deficiencies, and healthy psychological processes. Forgiveness is more associated with relationships than gratitude.

Ramirez, Ortega, Chamorro, and Colmenero (2014) study examined participants' quality of life by using a positive psychology intervention. It used a training curriculum that places a strong emphasis on introspective reflection, feeling grateful, and forgiving others. The age range of the 46 participants in the sample was 60–93. Participants in the experiment group reported higher levels of specific memories, life satisfaction, and subjective happiness, and considerably lower levels of state anxiety and sadness when compared to the placebo group.

Dwiwardani et al. (2014) looked at attachment and ego resilience as indicators of forgiving, humility, and gratitude. Even after adjusting for religiosity, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses on 245 individuals revealed that resilience and connectedness were both significant predictors of humility, appreciation, and forgiveness. Further, Neto's (2007) results showed a relationship between long-lasting resentment and an overall tendency to forgive, with agreeableness and neuroticism in particular showing a link. Furthermore, appreciation was found to be a significant factor in explaining variation in overall forgiving tendency across many regression models.

The study conducted by Datu (2014) investigated the subjective well-being and life satisfaction of Filipino teenagers concerning forgiveness and gratitude. Gratitude was the most accurate indicator of wellbeing in 210 Filipino college students. Most importantly, self-forgiveness and gratitude predicted subjective well-being independent of the Big Five personality traits. Chan's (2013) study investigated whether attitudes of forgiveness and thankfulness negated the effects of the three happiness-oriented orientations on subjective well-being in 143 Hong Kong Chinese teachers. Gratitude has a significant and positive relationship with forgiveness, subjective well-being, and a purposeful life direction. The development of effective, encouraging therapies to enhance teachers' wellbeing was discussed in light of these findings and the important role that forgiveness plays in lowering negative affect.

# The relationship between Gratitude & Psychological Well being

Wood, Joseph, and Maltby (2009) examined whether gratitude predicts psychological well-being or not. Gratitude was found to have small correlation (r=.17) with autonomy and medium to large correlation (r=.17) with environmental mastery, personal progress, positive relationships, life purpose, and self-acceptance. Gratitude is proven to have a very large impact on psychological well-being, in addition to the influence of the Big Five qualities.

Kardas, Cam Eskısu & Gelıbolu (2019) found Gratitude as best predictor of happiness followed by traits like hope, optimism, and life satisfaction. Thus, the variance in well-being could be predicted by gratitude alone in 35.4% of cases, by gratitude and hope in 45.4% of cases, by gratitude, hope, and optimism in 48.8% of cases, and by gratitude, hope, optimism, and life satisfaction in 50.7% of cases.

The study conducted by Arnout & Almoied (2021) revealed that the dependent variable of creativity was significantly influenced by the independent factors of thankfulness and resilience. Furthermore, these independent variables indirectly supported the dependent variable's prediction of creativity through their influence on well-being. The appreciation, resiliency, and wellbeing structural model that has been suggested shows good agreement with the data collected empirically and can predict the uniqueness of counsellors. These findings support the growth of appreciation, resilience, wellbeing, and creativity among psychological treatment providers. In a creative way, they also emphasised the importance of resilience, thankfulness, and overall wellbeing in the delivery of quality counselling services.

Jun, Lee, and Lee (2015) examined the relationships between clinical nurses' psychological health, depression, and gratitude. Participants were 411 clinical nurses who worked in U City. Four months of data collecting, from April to June of 2012, were finished. The mean scores for both psychological well-being and gratitude were higher than usual. Clinical nurses' psychological well-being was significantly correlated with both despair and gratitude (r=-.62, p.001) and r=.55, p.001). The clinical nurses' psychological well-being was significantly predicted by depression (=-.47, p.001) and thankfulness (=.34, p.001), which when combined accounted 48.0% of the variation.

According to Voci, Veneziani, and Fuochi's (2019) findings, heartfulness is a key component of mindfulness and, by encouraging a kind and conscious attitude towards oneself and others, it seems to support greater levels of psychological well-being or optimal human functioning. Gratitude, well-being, and quality of life are related in two study groups after the intervention, while these measures were not related before the intervention. Furthermore, a robust correlation was observed between the patients' enjoyment, quality of life, and overall wellbeing prior to and during the follow-up period. It seems that cultivating gratitude as part of an addiction treatment strategy improves psychological health and quality of life (Ghalesefidi, Maghsoudi & Pouragha; 2019).

Deichert, Fekete & Craven (2021) study tried to determine experimentally whether feeling appreciative increased the benefits of receiving assistance during stressful times. One of the options offered to the 128 college students was to write about an encounter that left them feeling appreciative or neutral. Following the writing activity, participants were assigned at random to either receive no support during a speech or some support. Study concluded with significant relationship between gratitude and receiving social support during. Individuals who feel gratitude towards receiving social support feel less stressed than who do not.

# The relationship between Forgiveness and Psychological Well being

Following a literature search and screening, 83 studies totaling 39104 people were included in the analysis of the Gao, Li, and Bai (2022) study. After applying the random-effects model to evaluate the data, it was discovered that people who have forgiven others had higher subjective well-being, more life satisfaction, and a greater proportion of good than negative emotions. The relationship between feeling uneasy and the characteristic of forgiveness in personality was influenced by gender. More precisely, the greater the proportion of females possessing the forgiveness personality characteristic, the lower the correlation is between the forgiveness disposition and negative feeling.

In contrast to gratitude, forgiveness proved to be a major predictor of subjective well-being in Hermaen and Bhutto (2020) study. Furthermore, weak positive associations have been found between subjective well-being and forgiveness (r=. 34 and .14) respectively. But this model's explanatory power was found to be significant suggesting that the variables have a high association and should be the subject of more in-depth study.

The findings of Yao, Chen, Yu, and Sang (2017) revealed that significant relationships exist between subjective well-being (SWB) and self-esteem, self-forgiveness, and forgiveness of others. The study found that both interpersonal and self-forgiveness act as mediator between self-esteem and SWB. Additionally, a structural equation modelling analysis demonstrated that self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others are significant routes from SWB to self-esteem.

The Chan (2013) study investigated whether the effects of life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect three happiness-oriented orientations on subjective well-being were overshadowed by feelings of forgiveness and thankfulness. Gratitude was found to be positively correlated with forgiveness, subjective well-being, and a purposeful life direction. They play significant role in the prediction of subjective well-being than happiness.

# The present Study

The present study investigates the relationship between gratitude, forgiveness, and psychological well-being among girls and boys college students.

# **Objectives:-**

- 1. To find out the relationship between gratitude and forgiveness among girls and boys.
- 2. To find out the relationship between forgiveness and psychological wellbeing among girls and boys.
- 3. To find out the relationship between gratitude and psychological wellbeing among girls and boys.

# **Hypotheses:**

- 1. There would be significant relationship between gratitude and forgiveness among girls and boys.
- 2. There would be significant relationship between forgiveness and psychological wellbeing among girls and boys.
- 3. There would be significant relationship between gratitude and psychological wellbeing among girls and boys.

# Methodology:-

#### Sample

The sample of the present research consisted of 110 students out of which 55 were girl students and 55 were boy students of colleges. The sample was collected from colleges through purposive sampling. The age range of the sample was 18 to 40 years.

# **Tools Used**

#### Gratitude Scale

Mohammad Anas, Shah Mohammad Khan, Akbar Husain, and Asiya Aijaz constructed this scale. There are 26 items or statements on this scale. Each item contains five possible responses, each rated 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, and strongly disagree. Five aspects of gratitude were determined for this scale, and they are as follows: 1. Desirable Aspect of Life; 2. Reciprocal Nature of thankfulness; 3. Gratitude Towards Others; 4. Experience Gratitude; and 5. Gratitude-Related Activities. To assess the reliability of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was employed. The calculated Cronbach's Alpha was 0.91, significant at the 0.01 level. The scale's high level of internal consistency provides evidence of its exceptional reliability. Because the scale's items were gathered from expert opinion and existing literature, the validity of the scale has been determined using two methods: factorial validity and construct validity.

# **Forgiveness Scale**

The Bolton Forgiveness Scale was given by Reginald Amanze and Jerome Carson. The present inventory aims to construct a test for assessing the forgiveness of the persons. This scale consists of 15 items or statements. All the items present on the scale are simple and brisk style. Each item has six alternate answers. This scale has three sub-scale i.e. letting go, developing positive feeling, and giving benefit of doubt on which we assess the forgiveness level of an individual. The minimum and maximum range of possible scores are 15 to 90. Each answer category was assigned a value from 1 to 6. Higher score indicates higher level of forgiveness and lower level of scores indicate lower level of forgiveness.

# **Psychological Wellbeing Scale**

Psychological Well-Being Scale was developed by Carol D. Ryff in 1989. It was used to measure psychological well-being among the participants. It consists of 18 items measuring six dimensions (subscales) of wellbeing i.e. Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance. Each subscale has 3 items, each item with the Seven-point response category varying from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Thus the scale provides scores on six dimensions/subscales, in addition to a score on the total psychological wellbeing. High score indicates high psychological wellbeing. For the total wellbeing score, the internal consistency reliability coefficient is reported to be.86 to .93 for the six sub-scales. The test claims high

content validity. Each answer category was assigned a value from 1 to 7. Ten items should be reverse scored. Higher scores mean higher levels of psychological wellbeing.

### Procedure

The data was collected from colleges of Bhiwani from where volunteers were selected for data collection. A good rapport was established with the participants. There were given a briefing about the aim of the present investigation. Instructions were given according to the used questionnaire. They were assured that their information would be kept confidential and used only for research purposes, so they were addressed when required. Approximately 30-40 minutes were required to fill the details of the given study questionnaires. After this, scales were administered and data was collected.

#### **Statistical Technique**

The data was collected and analysed by using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). The hypotheses were checked using Pearson Product Moment Correlation in SPSS.

# **Results & Discussion:-**

Pearson product moment correlation was used to ascertain the type and extent of the association between the psychological health, forgiveness, and gratitude scores in college students. Data was evaluated in order to confirm the objectives and test the hypotheses. The study's findings are displayed in the table below:

Objective 1: To find out the relationship between gratitude and forgiveness among girls & boys.

**Hypothesis 1:** There would be significant relationship between gratitude and forgiveness among girls & boys. To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was applied. Results are presented in table 1.

 Table 1:- Pearson Product Moment Correlation Table of Gratitude and Forgiveness among girls and boys .

	Boys	Girls
Variables	Forgiveness	Forgiveness
Gratitude	.359**	.281*

\*\*significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 shows that correlation value of Gratitude and Forgiveness for boys is .359\*\* which is significant at the level of 0.01 and for girls is .281\* which is significant at the level of 0.05. It means that there is a significant relationship between gratitude and forgiveness in both girls & boys. So, the hypothesis "There would be significant relationship between Gratitude and Forgiveness among girls and boys" is proved and accepted. Results show that there is positive relationship between gratitude and forgiveness. It means high level of gratitude will lead to increase in forgiveness level of an individual for both girls & boys.

Objective 2: To find out the relationship between forgiveness and psychological wellbeing among girls and boys. Hypothesis 2: There would be significant relationship between forgiveness and psychological wellbeing among girls and boys.

To test this hypothesis Pearson Product Moment Correlation was applied. The results are presented in table 2. **Table 2:-** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Table of Forgiveness and Psychological wellbeing among girls and boys.

	Boys	Girls
Variables	Psychological wellbeing	Psychological wellbeing
Forgiveness	.074	.395**

\*\*significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows that correlation value of Forgiveness and Psychological Wellbeing for boys is .074 which is not significant at any level and for girls is .395\*\* which is significant at the level of 0.01. It means that there is a significant relationship between forgiveness and psychological wellbeing among girl students but there is no significant relationship of these variables among boy students. So, the hypothesis "There would be significant relationship between Forgiveness and Psychological Wellbeing" is proved and accepted for girls but rejected for boys. It means that high level of forgiveness will lead to increase level of psychological wellbeing of an individual for girls & vice versa but this is not true for boys.

Objective 3: To find out the relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Wellbeing among girls and boys.

**Hypothesis 3:** There would be significant relationship between gratitude and psychological wellbeing among girls and boys.

 Table 3:- Pearson Product Moment Correlation Table of Gratitude and Psychological wellbeing among girls and boys.

	Boys	Girls
Variable	Psychological Well being	Psychological Well being
Gratitude	066	.347**

\*\*significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3 shows that correlation value of Gratitude and Psychological Wellbeing for boys is -.066 which is not significant at any level and for girls is .347\*\* which is significant at the level 0.01. It means that there is a positive relationship between gratitude and psychological wellbeing among girls but there is no significant relationship of these variables among boys. So, the hypothesis "there would be significant relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Wellbeing among girls but rejected for boys. "There would be significant relationship between Gratitude and Psychological Wellbeing among girl and boy college and university students" has been proved for girls but this hypothesis is rejected for boys.

# **Conclusion:-**

The research paper concludes with strong evidence of the positive correlation between forgiveness and gratitude in both boys and girls. Additionally, there are noteworthy relationships between girls' psychological well-being and forgiveness, as well as between gratitude and psychologicalwell-being. First of all, the study shows that those who are more grateful, irrespective of their gender, also have stronger propensities to forgive. This implies that, regardless of gender differences, developing thankfulness may naturally cultivate an inclination towards forgiveness. In a similar vein, the positive link shown between forgiveness and appreciation highlights how these two concepts are intertwined in shaping people's experiences in relationships and emotions.

Furthermore, the findings show that forgiveness is essential for fostering psychological well-being in the setting of teenage girls. Girls who have stronger forgiveness capacities also typically report better psychological well-being, with lower levels of stress, anxiety, and sadness. This underscores the role of forgiveness as a coping mechanism for resolving interpersonal disputes and fostering emotional resilience among adolescent girls. In a similar vein, the study emphasises how thankfulness improves girls' psychological health. Teens who show gratitude to others and acknowledge the good things in their lives are more likely to be psychologically welladjusted overall, with better levels of self-worth, positive affect, and life satisfaction. This implies that cultivating gratitude may protect girls against mental health issues and increase their sense of contentment and pleasure in general.

In light of these findings, it is obvious that both thankfulness and forgiveness play vital roles in fostering psychological well-being among adolescents, particularly girls. Interventions and programs focused at enhancing these positive attributes may hold promise for improving mental health outcomes and encouraging good youth development. Adolescents can improve their general quality of life, develop resilience, and deepen interpersonal connections by practicing forgiveness and gratitude. Gender variations and developmental trajectories should be included in future study as it explores the mechanisms behind the association between psychological well-being and forgiveness and appreciation. In the end, funding treatments that foster these good traits can help produce an adolescent generation that is more emotionally robust and empathetic.

# **Implications:**

Forgiveness, gratitude, and psychological health are all interconnected and have a big impact on college students' general wellbeing. Gratitude practice has been linked to happier, less stressful, and better mental health, according to studies. Conversely, there is evidence that forgiveness is associated with reduced feelings of anxiety, despair, and rage. Combining these two approaches can have an even bigger influence on psychological health by assisting students in improving their outlook and overcoming the difficulties of college life. In general, acknowledging the role that forgiveness and gratitude play in supporting the psychological health of teenagers, especially females, creates opportunities for creative interventions, learning campaigns, and neighborhood-based initiatives that support resilient and positive youth development. By harnessing the power of gratitude and forgiveness, we can create environments that nurture empathy, compassion, and mutual respect, ultimately contributing to the holistic well-

being of adolescents and society as a whole. We can foster situations that foster empathy, compassion, and respect for one another by utilising the power of forgiveness and gratitude. In the end, this will improve the overall wellbeing of teenagers and society at large.

# Limitations:

- 1. Self reporting measures were used for collecting the data that are vulnerable to biasness.
- 2. Large Sample is needed to generalize the findings.
- 3. A certain organizational group was considered for data collection, therefore, findings cannot be applied to other organizational sectors.
- 4. There might have other confounding variables that affect the relationship between these variables were not controlled.

# **Recommendations for Future Research:-**

- 1. More variables should be included in the current analysis, as only three have been; more advanced statistical methods might be applied. This will serve a better function and increase the validity of the results.
- 2. To determine the connection between forgiveness, gratitude, and psychological wellbeing, a large sample size is required. Subsequent research endeavours should concentrate on this boundary by examining a larger and more inclusive sample.
- 3. Building the same research within a different setting, society, and context. Future studies should address the connection between psychological wellbeing, forgiveness, and gratitude. Future study can examine how a particular occurrence, the development of fresh data or a theory, or other contemporary phenomena, affects our research question.

# **Conflict of Interest**

The authors have no conflict of interest (financial or non-financial) associated with this publication that could have affected the outcome.

# Data availability statement

The data will be made available upon request for verifying or reproducing results.

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