

## **A STUDY ON MEDIATING EFFECT OF ALTRUISTIC BEHAVIOR ON BENEVOLENT LEADERSHIP AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING**

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### **Abstract**

*The determination of this study is to develop and test a model, which analyses the direct effect of supervisors' benevolent leadership and subordinates' psychological well-being. Also, the indirect effect of these variables is tested when supervisors' altruistic behaviour mediates between them. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires from a sample of subordinates' employing at five-star hotels in Coimbatore. The findings of the hierarchical regression analysis disclosed that supervisors' benevolent leadership possesses a significant positive relationship with subordinates' psychological well-being. On the contrary, when supervisors' altruistic behaviour mediates, the positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables weakened. Furthermore, the study unveils practical implications and future directions were discussed.*

**Key Words:** *Benevolent leadership, Paternalistic leadership, Psychological well-being, Altruistic behaviour, Entrepreneurship*

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### **Introduction**

Nearly for decades, leadership studies had greatly relied on the concepts emerged from the western context, such as transformational and transactional leadership. Though these western leadership styles played well-efficient in the eastern context, it is important to understand the phenomena of indigenous leadership styles (Zhang, 2012). Paternalistic leadership is one of those indigenous leadership styles which are renowned to be effectively practiced in the Chinese context. Paternalistic leadership is streamlined into three dimensions

namely, authoritarian, benevolence, morality. The research focuses on leader benevolence because, in Indian business culture, the employees tend to form a close relationship with their leaders. Leaders are looked upon as father-figures and are expected to show support, care and protection at times of personal and family problems. In some cases, abiding by their paternal style, leaders even participate on their employees' special occasions (birthdays, weddings, etc), thereby leaders-employees share a family-like relationship. Hence, benevolent leadership is much prevalent in the Indian

context. Benevolence means leader behaviors that exhibit individualized, holistic care for employees' personal and familial well-being; also, manifesting a positive change into the organization by inculcating ethics, spirituality, vitality, and community (Gumusluoglu *et al.*, 2016; Karakas and Sarigollu, 2012).

In line to psychological well-being, benevolent leadership significantly increases employees' productivity, because of which employees in return feel obliged to respect their leaders (Farh *et al.*, 2006). Well-being is an imperative issue for employees and organizations. The more employees feel positive effects on their physical and emotional health; the more they maintain a close bond with their colleagues. To experience healthy emotional stability and high sense of satisfaction are essential components of psychological well-being (Kara *et al.*, 2013). Literatures witness that work atmosphere and personal lives are interrelated (Rife and Hall, 2015). Individuals who receive higher levels of leader support show a stronger sense of coping and reveal higher levels of psychological well-being (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2016). Put together, the purpose of the study is to investigate whether supervisors' benevolent leadership positively associates with subordinates' psychological well-being. With consistent to this approach, benevolent leadership holds the bright side of leadership styles, which could possibly be expected to enhance psychological well-being of employees, as the leader plays a parent-like role.

Another objective of the study is to analyse the mediating role of altruistic behaviour of supervisor and examine its effect on the relationship between supervisors' benevolent leadership and

subordinates' well-being. The Oxford Dictionary defines the meaning of the word 'altruism' as "*disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others*". On the contrary, with reference to social science, the term 'altruism' holds thoroughly a different meaning. The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences defined altruism as "*a motivational state with the goal of increasing another's welfare*". Also, altruism is considered to be prosocial behavior (Wu *et al.*, 2012). But, the study argues that altruism behavior diminishes the relationship between benevolent leadership and psychological well-being because, it could be possibly claimed that leaders exhibit benevolent behaviors not with a true concern of followers' well-being, but with the intention to have control over their followers. In other words, through their benevolent actions, leaders get the charge of complete attention and control of their subordinates and get the duties done. Therefore, the proposed relationship is weaker for supervisor with higher levels of altruistic personality.

## **Literature review**

### ***Benevolent Leadership and Psychological Well-being***

Benevolent leadership can be referred to as a state of individualized care which is expressed in the way of allowing chance to rectify mistakes, avoiding dishonor of employees, facilitating training, providing quality solutions to subordinates' personal and professional problems, and showing interest in employees' career progress. Apart from work-domain, benevolent leaders offer supporting hands even within the non-work domain, such as engaging subordinates as family members, timely response to subordinates' personal

emergencies, and sharing advices beyond professional relationship (Farh *et al.*, 2008; Wang and Cheng, 2010). Previous literatures provide consistent observations that benevolent leadership elevate employees' deference and loyalty with leader (Wu *et al.*, 2012). Studies related to paternalistic leadership also provide consistent evidence that there exist positive effect of benevolent leadership towards series of favourable follower outcomes, such as creativity, organisational happiness, organisational citizenship behavior, task performance, innovative behavior, affective commitment, ethical climate etc (Wang and Cheng, 2010; Al-Abedie and Al-Temimi, 2015; Ghosh, 2015; Karakas and Sarigollu, 2012; Chan and Mak, 2012; Gumusluoglu *et al.*, 2016).

The study proposes that supervisors' benevolent leadership positively influences subordinates' psychological well-being. First, the morality and self-awareness of benevolent leaders, helps to gain genuine relationships, thereby the leader securing the trust on the part of his/her followers. When a truthful bond is formed between supervisor and subordinate, it would eventually enhance the tendency of subordinates to share their self-concepts into the organisation by influencing subordinates' personal identity with the leader (Rempel *et al.*, 1985). This boosts the sense of empowerment within followers, as a result, they are impelled to perform better at work. Generally, subordinates will be less willing to openly exhibit their ideas and opinions if they knew that their supervisors would take advantage over them or gain personal benefit out it or suppress them for speaking out their thoughts. Such circumstances are never likely to happen under benevolent

supervision. Second, benevolent leaders value subordinates' well-being through respecting their emotions and also, build an ambiance brimmed of positive vibes, which, in return, influence subordinates' experience of well-being. Third, benevolent leaders serve the role of good coach and mentor to promote skill development and autonomy of their followers. Fourth, benevolent leaders possess the highest-quality of being personally expressive. Lastly, through social exchanges, benevolent leaders inspire and upraise employees (Erkutlu and Chafra, 2016).

Similarly, when leaders serve in line with much morality and integrity, subordinates are more likely to be proud and pleased, as a result, they would look upon them as role models, therefore developing an emotional connection with their superiors. Furthermore, one of the main drivers of psychological well-being is 'sense of belongingness'. The need to belong is a vital and powerful emotion that individuals persistently strive to satisfy (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). When one's sense of belongingness mitigates (i.e., become lesser than desired), this can lead to reverse reactions like high-interpersonal deviance (Thau *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, benevolent leadership encourages engagement and commitment inside the organisation. It is fundamental that followers need to belong, or form positive relationships, which, in back would lead to lower interpersonal deviance and higher psychological well-being. hence, it is anticipated that benevolent leadership will elevate well-being.

*H01: Supervisors' benevolent leadership is positively associated to subordinates' well-being.*

### ***Supervisors' Altruistic Behavior as a Mediator***

Altruistic personality can be defined as 'a tendency to empathize with others, to care for the well-being of others, and to act in a way that is beneficial to others'. Altruistic personality has been largely considered as a prosocial behavior (Batson *et al.*, 1986; Krebs, 1970) specifically in organisational settings. Since altruistic behavior is measured as a prosocial behavior, it only stimulates more of benevolent actions in the organisations. In the present study, we propose that altruistic behavior considered as a mediator between supervisors' benevolent leadership and subordinates' well-being.

Altruistic behavior is the wisdom of caring for others because of a true concern for others' well-being, rather than for a selfish or self-centered motive (Romer *et al.*, 1986). Leaders who exhibit higher levels of altruistic behavior may display it merely for employees' well-being rather than for reasons of status or control. Thereby, we can expect that leaders' altruistic behavior will only reduce their motive to attain power and status in their relationship with employees. As such, the positive association between 'differential benevolent leadership' in response to followers' psychological well-being might be lesser for leaders with high altruistic behavior. That is, according to Aycan's (2006) typology, he differentiates paternalism into two ways: *benevolent paternalism and exploitative paternalism*. In *benevolent paternalism*, leaders' genuinely care about followers' well-being. In *exploitative paternalism*, leaders reveal benevolent behaviors but, with the motive of scheming complete control over subordinates (Aycan, 2006; Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008). In other words, supervisors make use of benevolent

leadership as an object in the aim to acquire power, respect, and status from the followers, thus they are not truly concerned about well-being.

Consistent with Aycan's approach, we infer that leaders with high altruistic behavior will treat every follower with concern for the benefit of followers (benevolent paternalism). These supervisors never use 'differential treatment' to cause followers to perceive higher levels of psychological well-being. Contrarily, leaders with low levels of altruism will treat their followers with concern, not for the reason they consider and care about them, but in order to obtain power, status and control over them (exploitative paternalism). That is, these leaders may use their benevolent actions as a 'control tactic' (i.e., differential treatment) to cause followers to perceive higher levels of psychological well-being. Taken together, benevolence emerged from the grassroots of paternalism; the existence of exploitative paternalism in benevolent leadership is probable. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H02: Supervisors' altruistic behavior mediates the positive relationship between supervisors' benevolent leadership and subordinates' psychological well-being in such a way that the relationship is weaker.*

### ***Statement of Problem***

Psychological well-being is not just an imperative issue in organizational settings, but also a national concern. It is at the strength of manpower relies the progress of the country. Therefore, it is necessary to study about their well-being. According to Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India comprises a workforce of 400 million citizens, which constitutes 39.1% of the population of the country. As per the

reports, India holds 70<sup>th</sup> rank among 145 countries in Gallup's 'well-being' index (Business Line, 2015). In Social Progress Index, India holds 113<sup>th</sup> place out of 133 nations, which indicates the country is progressing adversely low in foundations of well-being (The Hindu, 2015). Subsequently, India ranks low in happiness quotient ranking 118<sup>th</sup> place among 156 nations, as per reports from UN's world happiness index. From the above mentioned facts, it can be clearly understood that India lacks in psychological well-being contingent. Subsequently, in lieu with Power Distance Index, India ranks 77<sup>th</sup> place, which means there exists higher levels of inequality between the members of organisations and institution (like the family). The following sources indicate there prolongs disparity between leader-follower relationship; also, psychological well-being among followers is considerably low.

### **Methodology of the study**

#### ***Participants***

Cluster based random sampling was adopted for the study. Coimbatore has more than 80 hotels of budget class, one, two, three, four, five star hotels. The population of the research was limited to the employees of five star hotels located in Coimbatore district. There are seven five-star hotels currently operating in this district. The total population accounted to 2400 employees. In accordance with Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size was framed to 331 employees. Questionnaires were distributed to employees working in functional areas such as food and beverage departments, room side, and other areas such as sales and marketing, accounting, purchasing.

In total, with consideration to gender, 48.3 percent were *male* and 51.7 percent were *female*. With reference to age, 41.8 percent were *below 25 years*, 21.4 percent were between the age group of 26-30, 17.3 percent were between the age group of 31-35, 13 percent between the age group of 36-40, 6.5 percent of the employees were at the age of *above 41 years*. With regard to educational qualification, 41.2 percent were *diploma holders*, 17.6 percent were *undergraduates*, 30.3 percent were *postgraduates*, 10.8 percent were *others*. Simultaneously, in line to designation, 27.2 percent were in the *senior level*, 37.9 percent were in the *middle level*, 34.8 percent were in the *junior level*.

#### ***Measures***

***Benevolent leadership:*** Cheng *et al.* (2000) BL scale was adopted. In total, it consists of 11 items. On a five-point scale, that ranges from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree", followers reported the frequency of perceiving their leaders' benevolence.

***Psychological well-being:*** It was measured by Schwartz *et al.* (2005). In total, it consists of 12 items. On a five-point scale, that ranges from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree", followers reported the frequency of perceiving their leaders' psychological well-being.

***Altruistic behavior:*** To measure the supervisors' altruistic personality, followers responded to 6-item Altruistic subscale under the Agreeableness dimension in the Revised NEO Personality Inventory. On a five-point scale, that ranges from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree", followers reported the frequency of perceiving their leaders' altruistic behavior.

**Results**

***Results Summary for Reliability and Convergent Validity***

Constructs	Indicators	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE (Convergent Validity)
Benevolent Leadership	BL_1	0.746	0.883	0.904	0.613
	BL_2	0.712			
	BL_3	0.623			
	BL_4	0.669			
	BL_5	0.727			
	BL_6	0.531			
	BL_7	0.668			
	BL_8	0.749			
	BL_9	0.633			
	BL_10	0.719			
	BL_11	0.676			
Psychological well-being	PWB_1	0.481	0.939	0.951	0.634
	PWB_2	0.842			
	PWB_3	0.888			
	PWB_4	0.786			
	PWB_5	0.938			
	PWB_6	0.900			
	PWB_7	0.864			
	PWB_8	0.915			
	PWB_9	0.871			
	PWB_10	0.901			
	PWB_11	0.481			
	PWB_12	0.579			
Altruistic behavior	AL_1	0.549	0.782	0.845	0.650
	AL_2	0.628			
	AL_3	0.773			
	AL_4	0.656			
	AL_5	0.764			
	AL_6	0.758			

From the above, it can be identified that all the indicator loadings shown in the table are above the threshold value 0.4 (Wold 1998). Hence they are acceptable. As all the indicator loadings in the table are above the threshold value of 0.4 the indicators of the constructs are accepted. The Cronbach's alpha scores for all the constructs shown in the table are above 0.7 which indicate that internal consistencies of the constructs are reliable. The above estimations are very well above the threshold values. Hence it is confirmed

that the constructs of the measurement model are reliable. For validity assessment, convergent validity and discriminant validity are checked.

***Convergent Validity***

The computed AVE values of each construct holds the scores of above 0.5; benevolent leadership (AVE= 0.613), psychological well-being (AVE= 0.634); altruistic behavior (AVE= 0.654). Thus, the convergent validity of the constructs in the measurement model is confirmed.

**Discriminant Validity for the Constructs of Measurement Model**

	AL	BL	PWB
AL	<b>0.806</b>		
BL	0.788	<b>0.783</b>	
PWB	0.610	0.445	<b>0.796</b>

\*Square root of AVE values are shown in bold diagonally

\*values shown in the other boxes are correlation matrix value

The discriminant validity is estimated by taking the square root values of AVE for each construct of benevolent leadership, psychological well-being and altruistic behaviour. All the correlation values between the constructs are shown in the table. The corresponding square root of AVE value of each construct is

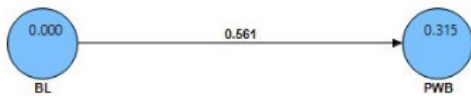
given diagonally. The square root of the AVE values, shown on the diagonal for each construct is higher than the correlated values. To strength further the discriminant validity for the constructs of measurement model it is proved based on the Cross loading values.

**Discriminant Validity - Cross Loadings Values of All Factors**

	AL	BL	PWB
AL_1	<b>0.549</b>	0.464	0.467
AL_2	<b>0.628</b>	0.391	0.403
AL_3	<b>0.773</b>	0.529	0.234
AL_4	<b>0.656</b>	0.515	0.163
AL_5	<b>0.764</b>	0.627	0.528
AL_6	<b>0.758</b>	0.666	0.581
BL_1	0.459	<b>0.746</b>	0.323
BL_2	0.513	<b>0.712</b>	0.330
BL_3	0.382	<b>0.623</b>	0.163
BL_4	0.613	<b>0.669</b>	0.162
BL_5	0.621	<b>0.727</b>	0.158
BL_6	0.394	<b>0.531</b>	0.132
BL_7	0.640	<b>0.668</b>	0.381
BL_8	0.611	<b>0.749</b>	0.455
BL_9	0.452	<b>0.633</b>	0.113
BL_10	0.613	<b>0.719</b>	0.486
PWB_1	0.319	0.411	<b>0.481</b>
PWB_2	0.520	0.245	<b>0.842</b>
PWB_3	0.428	0.309	<b>0.888</b>
PWB_4	0.334	0.222	<b>0.786</b>
PWB_5	0.482	0.345	<b>0.938</b>
PWB_6	0.371	0.184	<b>0.900</b>
PWB_7	0.423	0.307	<b>0.864</b>
PWB_8	0.510	0.349	<b>0.915</b>
PWB_9	0.425	0.221	<b>0.871</b>
PWB_10	0.450	0.281	<b>0.901</b>
PWB_11	0.502	0.566	<b>0.487</b>
PWB_12	0.346	0.448	<b>0.579</b>

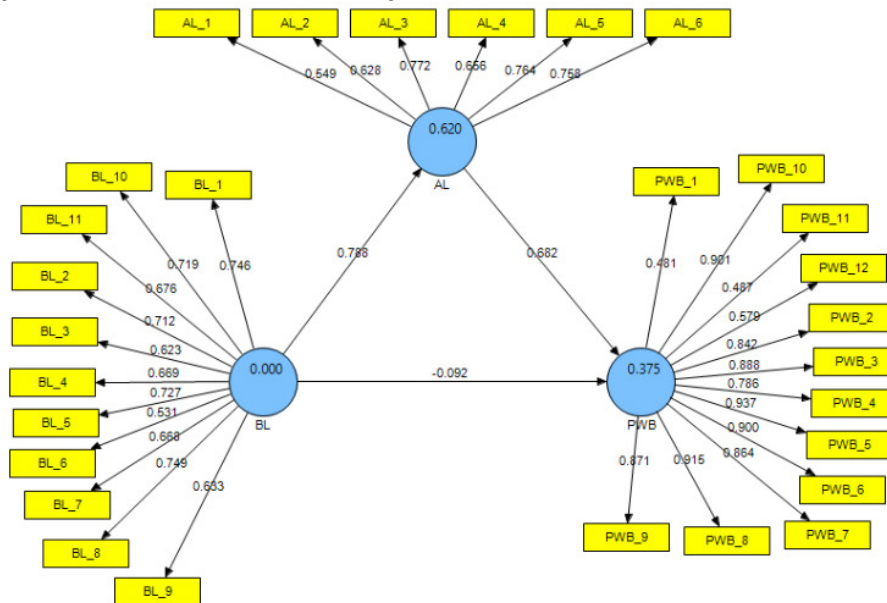
It is observed from the table that the cross loadings of each item shown (in bold) under a construct are higher than the loadings of the respective items in the other constructs. Hence it can be inferred that discriminant validity of the constructs of the measurement model is confirmed. This implies that the measurement model for all the factors is reliable and valid.

**Direct Effect of Exogenous and Endogenous Variables**



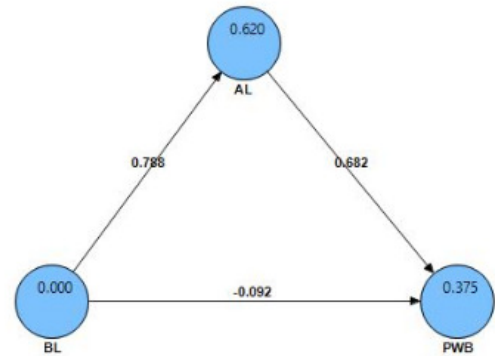
From the above model it can be inferred that there exist a positive association between supervisors' benevolent leadership and subordinates' psychological well-being. There is 56.1% of relationship between BL and PWB. Also, benevolent leadership forms an impact upto 31.5% towards psychological well-being. Hence, H1 is supported.

**Values of Indicators and Constructs of Path Model**



From the SEM model it can be understood that the positive relationship between benevolent leadership and psychological well-being becomes significantly less, when altruistic behavior intrudes the relationship.

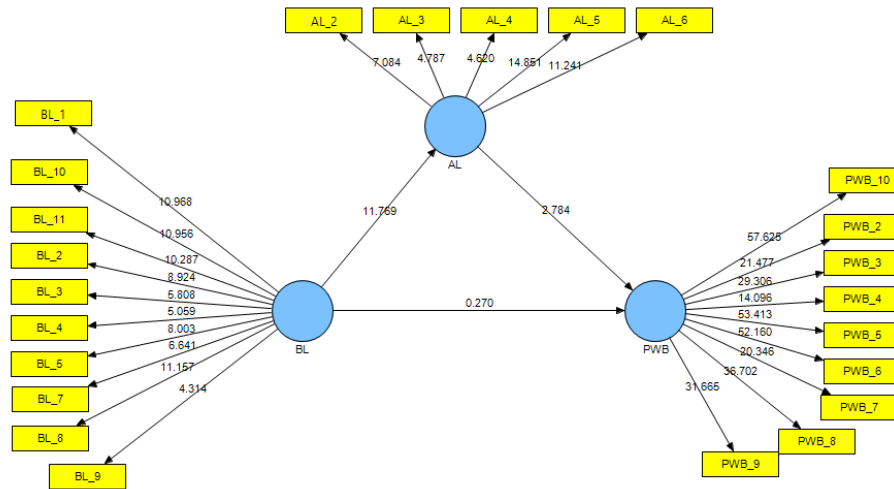
**Indirect Effect of Exogenous and Endogenous Variable**



From the above table it can be inferred that the direct effect between benevolent leadership and altruistic behavior holds a positive relationship of 78.8%. On the other side, direct effect between altruistic behavior and psychological well-being possess a positive relationship of 68.2%. Contrarily, when supervisors' altruistic behavior mediates the relationship the BL and PWB, the association becomes significantly less. Thus, H2 is supported.



**Bootstrap Model**



**Results of Bootstrap Model**

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	Standard Error (STERR)	t- Statistics (O/STERR)
AL -> PWB	0.46	0.4939	0.1675	0.1675	2.7457
BL -> AL	0.7675	0.7669	0.067	0.067	11.4556
BL -> PWB	0.3142	0.3422	0.0979	0.0979	3.2083

From the results obtained from bootstrap model, it can be analyzed that the model is of good fit as the t-statistics beholds the value of above 1.96. Therefore, the purpose of the study has been proved.

**Discussions**

The findings of the study disclose that supervisor’s altruistic behavior mediates the positive relationship between supervisors’ benevolent leadership and subordinates psychological well-being. In this research, the relationship with supervisors’ benevolent leadership was positively associated with supervisors’ psychological well-being. This means, to improve employee’ well-being, leaders have to be well cautious of employees’ expectation, concentrate on building integrity and loyalty and make ways to develop communication. Furthermore, leaders’ should identify and reward those

employees for their successful contributions to the organisation and should give them more opportunities to participate during problem solving and decision making tasks.

The study demonstrated that supervisors instrumentally display benevolent leadership so that subordinates would percieve psychological well-being. In doing so, supervisors can gain power status and control over the subordinates. Our results support the prediction that altruistic personality decreases supervisors’ intention to acquire power and status in their relationship with subordinates, which has led to the reduction in the relationship between supervisors’ benevolent leadership and subordinates’ well-being. That is, when leaders exhibit higher levels of care towards followers (altruistic personality), leaders intention to gain power and status

(exploitative paternalism) is diminished, thereby differential leadership in response to psychological well-being becomes less significant.

### **Conclusion**

The current study investigated the association between benevolent leadership and psychological well-being in Indian hospitality sector. The results revealed that benevolent leadership is positively correlated to subordinates' well-being. However, this relationship was significantly weakened by the supervisors' altruistic behaviour. Subordinates' well-being is not always a prerequisite for supervisors' benevolence. When a leader has high tendency of benevolent behaviours, he/she still provide benevolent treatment to employees.

### **Managerial implications**

The results keenly prove that leaders need to be cautious on followers' expectation, focus on building trust and honesty. The present research puts forward the implication that psychological state of the subordinates is an important component in determining their behaviour and responses at work. Leaders, managers, supervisors should realize that making followers more contented would increase their productivity. Also, India is adversely low on the Power Parity Index which measures the "degree to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally". India reportedly ranks 77th position in Power Distance Index (PDI), which means that this score indicates a higher level of inequality of power and wealth in the society. The researcher finally concludes that such issues needed

to be cautiously investigated to eradicate such relationship gaps. More studies in benevolent leadership needed to be encouraged to educate benevolent paternalism in the society.

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