THE ROLE OF ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS IN ENHANCING THE WELL BEING AND SUCCESS OF TRANSGENDER ENTREPRENEURS

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ABSTRACT

The study examines how online support groups impact transgender entrepreneurs' success and their well-being. It addresses demographically heightened difficulties due to institutionalized discrimination and a lack of resources and empirical data, which is what this study aims to fill. Understanding the function of online networks is supported by the theoretical frameworks of the Social Support and Social Capital Theories. The study uses secondary data from online forums and academic surveys and adopts a quantitative methodology. Data analysis components include descriptive statistics, correlations, regression models and one-sample t-tests. Results show that social interactions, psychological well-being, and business success positively correlate with engagement. Regression analysis have highlighted the significance of engagement predictors. T-tests confirms participants' active participation and successful results. The study emphasizes the value of online support groups in fostering the success and well-being of transgender business owners. Cross-sectional data limitations and their effects on future research and policy are acknowledged.

KEYWORDS: transgender entrepreneurs, online support groups, well-being, business success, engagement, social interactions

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, entrepreneurship has been hailed as a key factor in economic expansion, technological advancement and job creation. Having the ability to create, start, and expand a business gives people career and personal goals & opportunities. Entrepreneurial activities are not restricted to any particular demographic or geographical segment in today's digitally world. Entrepreneurship offers a path to economic empowerment and personal growth but has its share of difficulties. Institutionalized biasness, societal prejudices and lack of resources frequently worsens the situation for transgender business owners (Neumeyer & Santos, 2018). This group faces particular challenges because of problems like stigmatization, difficulty accessing capital and a lack of networking opportunities. Online support groups have become essential venues for underrepresented groups, including transgender business owners to exchange experiences, get counsel and create alliances. These online communities frequently act as a valuable resource bank and emotional support network, easing some difficulties transgender business owners face.

Online support groups may be beneficial, but no concrete data exists to show how they affect transgender entrepreneurs' happiness and success. For the benefit of this demographic, there is a knowledge gap caused by the need for more comprehensive data and understanding. "How do online support groups enhance the well-being and success rates of transgender entrepreneurs?" is the research question this study seeks to address (Xheneti et al., 2021). To evaluate quantitatively the relationship between transgender entrepreneurs' success, well-being and their participation in online support groups.

It can have far-reaching effects to comprehend how online support groups influence the well-being and commercial success of transgender entrepreneurs. Firstly, it would offer factual evidence to enhance online platforms designed for this community. Secondly, it might help shape policies that work to build inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems, promoting social equity and economic growth. This study focuses solely on transgender business owners who participate in online forums. The study will use secondary data to calculate success and well-being metrics for this group (Venkataraman, 2019). The study may be constrained by the quantity and caliber of available datasets because it relies on secondary data. Furthermore, because the study is quantitative, it may need to fully account for various emotional and qualitative factors influencing success and well-being

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to the Social Support Theory, social networks provide people various supports and resources to help reduce stress and achieve goals. Social support can offer tangible and intangible benefits to entrepreneurs, such as financial support, business advice, and emotional support. According to the Social Capital Theory, social networks have their own 'capital' that can facilitate actions and provide advantages for those who are a part of those networks. Social capital, which transgender business owners may accumulate through online support groups, can be a valuable resource for overcoming obstacles in conventional business settings (Chen et al., 2019). The relational dynamics in online support groups can be understood using the Social Support Theory as a lens. It implies that social networks protect from the difficulties transgender business owners frequently encounter. Due to this group's distinctive socio-cultural challenges, such as stigmatization and discrimination, these support networks may be especially crucial. As a result, social support lessens emotional burdens and offers useful resources like connections, business advice, and financial guidance—all essential for entrepreneurship success.

Beyond the immediate, personal advantages of social networks, the Social Capital Theory takes a more structural stance. It claims that the connections fostered within these support groups create a pool of collective capital that can be strategically used for various entrepreneurial endeavors. Social capital can provide enhanced access to market opportunities, investor relationships, and collaboration in the context of transgender entrepreneurs, potentially redressing some of the systemic imbalances they frequently experience (Risman, 2018). Because systemic biases may make traditional avenues for capital accumulation less accessible for transgender people, building social capital through online platforms may be especially crucial. Both theories provide a solid conceptual foundation for investigating how online support groups affect the material and psychiatric facets of success and well-being for transgender entrepreneurs. They lay the groundwork for a nuanced understanding of how online social networks support marginalized entrepreneurs as they negotiate the frequently treacherous business landscapes.

2.2. EXISTING RESEARCH ON TRANSGENDER ENTREPRENEURS

The existing literature highlights several challenges faced by transgender business owners. Systemic discrimination, restricted financial access, social stigmatization, and underrepresentation in conventional business networks are a few of these. On the other hand, research also shows that transgender business owners uncover distinctive opportunities, such as niche markets and various viewpoints that promote business innovation (Aly et al., 2021). According to some studies, transgender people may possess distinctive abilities and viewpoints useful in an entrepreneurial setting due to their lived experiences. The body of research on transgender business owners tells a complicated story.

On the one hand many layers highlight the obstacles they face. Not only do overt acts of discrimination occur but also more subdued institutional biases like lending policies and venture capital allocation (Hallquist et al., 2021). The transgender business owners frequently navigate a landscape devoid of mentors or role models, exacerbating their isolation and limiting their access to networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

Research shows that transgender business owners enjoy particular benefits. They operate in niche markets frequently ignored by mainstream business owners, resulting in less competition and, occasionally, higher profit margins. Their first-hand knowledge offers a special perspective that can encourage creativity and innovation, which has a noticeable impact on the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Studies have also found that transgender business owners exhibit greater resilience and adaptability (Kanadlı et al., 2018). These traits, developed through overcoming societal biases, can be extremely helpful in the frequently rocky process of starting and maintaining a business.

2.3. IMPORTANCE OF ONLINE SUPPORT

Online support groups have been shown to provide several psychological advantages, such as diminished feelings of loneliness, increased self-esteem, and enhanced mental health. Online forums can provide a secure environment for exchanging experiences and getting guidance because of their accessibility and anonymity. Online support groups can be a crucial business resource, offering knowledge, opportunities for collaboration, and even partnerships. These stages can act as an information base of industry-explicit information and as a setting for participation between business people who share comparative objectives (Allameh, 2018). Both as practical business resources and as psychological bulwarks. These virtual environments can be empowering psychologically. They provide a haven for transgender business owners to interact, benefit from one another's experiences, and find the emotional support necessary for mental toughness. Online platforms' anonymity frequently promotes candid conversation free from social prejudices, fostering an environment of acceptance and collective knowledge. Business information and networking opportunities abound in online support groups. These platforms frequently feature a wide range of experts, from venture capitalists to lawyers, who can provide insightful counsel and financial support (Zhang et al., 2022). They empower the scattering of business patterns and regulative changes and open doors for coordinated effort, giving the individuals who effectively take part an upper hand. Online care groups can be a compelling substitute for

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conventional business networks for transsexual business people who might experience foundational hindrances to acquiring the assets, contacts, and aptitude vital for business achievement.

2.4. GAPS IN EXISTING RESEARCH

Even though a growing body of literature examines the opportunities and difficulties faced by transgender business owners, there is a notable lack of studies examining the function of online support groups in this setting. The scope for quantitative analysis and generalizability is constrained by the qualitative nature of much of the currently conducted research (Hoffmann et al., 2021). The current body of literature has some notable gaps, even though it offers insightful understandings of the particular circumstances of transgender entrepreneurs. In particular, studies examining the effects of online support groups, a platform increasingly used by entrepreneurs in the digital age, must be more conspicuously present. This gap is especially problematic given the potential for online platforms to function as empowering spaces that could lessen this group's systemic challenges.

Qualitative research dominates the field and frequently uses case studies or interviews. These provide rich, nuanced insights but need more quantitative methods' empirical rigor and generalizability (Kossek et al., 2021). Additionally, there is a geographical gap in the existing research, which largely ignores the experiences of transgender entrepreneurs outside of Western contexts.

2.5. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Hypothesis 1: Involvement in online support groups is positively correlated with the mental health of transgender business owners.

Hypothesis 2: Participation in online support groups positively impacts transgender entrepreneurs' ability to succeed in business

3. METHODOLOGY

This study evaluates how joining online support groups affects transgender business owners' happiness and success. Given this goal, a quantitative research strategy is used to produce data that backs up the theories in the literature review. The study makes use of a quantitative methodology to impartially assess the variables under investigation, namely the mental health and commercial success of transgender business owners who take part in online support groups (Newman et al., 2019). The research hypotheses can be empirically supported and statistically validated using this method. This study uses a secondary data analysis strategy in light of the accessibility of existing data. This design enables a quicker research process and uses previously gathered data to address the research question and goals.

Data will be gathered from several online forums for transgender business owners. These forums are the targeted demographics' main discussion, experience-sharing, and support platforms. The study will also use information from earlier academic studies investigating the success rates and general well-being of transgender entrepreneurs (Ahuja et al., 2019). Integrating multiple data sources improves the validity and reliability of the research findings. This study uses the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 21.0) for data management and statistical analysis. Academic research ethics are strictly followed in this study. No personal information is violated because all secondary data are readily accessible to the public. By withholding any information that could be used to identify the participants in the forum, the study also aims to protect their anonymity. Any cited studies will be properly cited per academic guidelines to acknowledge the original authors.

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Engagement Hours	200	1	20	9.86	5.815
Connections Made	200	1	100	49.86	29.191
Discussions Participated	200	1	50	26.27	13.855
Psychological well-being Score	200	48.300000000000000	100.00000000000000	74.424499999999970	11.252334196706567
Business Success Score	200	53.400000000000000	100.00000000000000	77.814000000000050	12.975531824578647
Valid N (listwise)	200				

Participants engaged in the study for an average of 9.86 hours, with a standard deviation 5.815, indicating significant variation. This suggests that individual engagement hours varied widely, from a minimum of 1 hour to a maximum of 20 hours (Black & Babin, 2019). The "Connections Made" metric displays the participants' average number of connections, which is 49.86. However, the wide standard deviation of 29.191 indicates a significant range of

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connections made, from 1 to 100. Participants took part in 26.27 discussions on average, with a standard deviation of 13.855 for discussion participation. This demonstrates the range in the number of discussions that people participated in, from a minimum of one to a maximum of fifty. The average psychological well-being score was 74.42, with an 11.25 standard deviation. These scores indicated various psychological states among participants, with a minimum of 48.3 and a maximum of 100. The average score for business success was 77.81, with a standard deviation of 12.98 (Holmgren, 2020). The scores, ranging from 53.4 to 100, showed that respondents' perceptions of their business success varied widely.
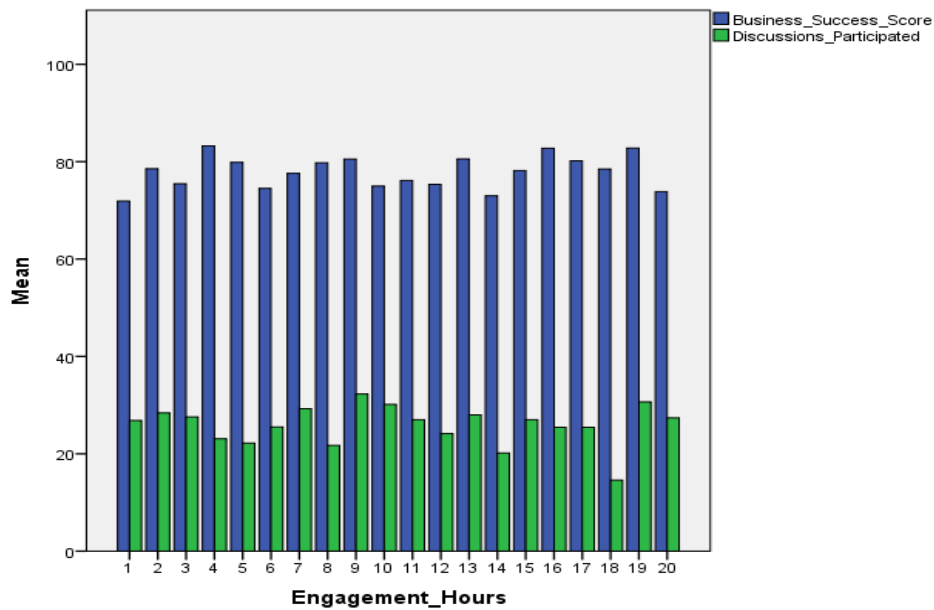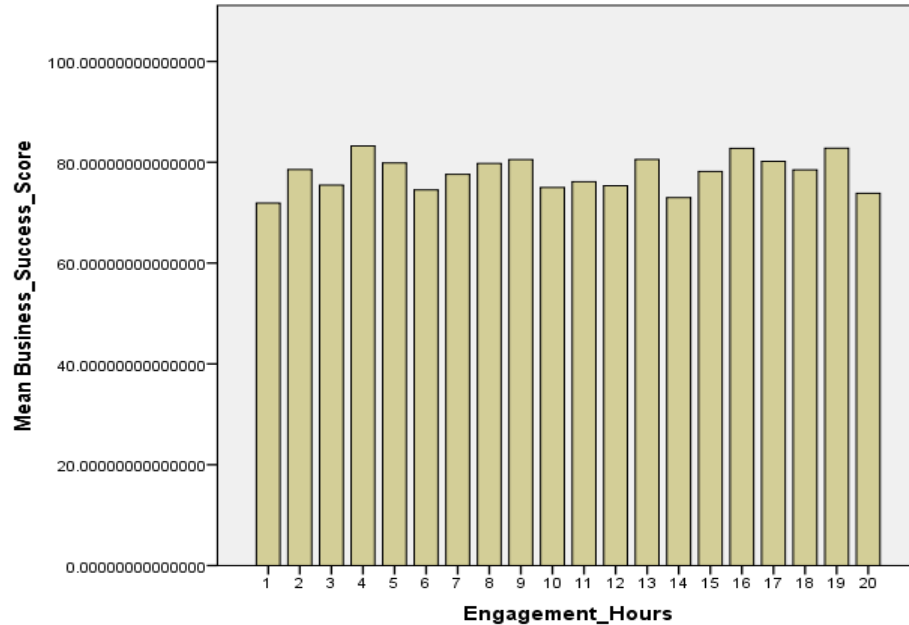
The provided correlation matrix shows the relationships between the various variables in the dataset. Each correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to 1 and expresses how strongly and in which direction two variables are related (Pyka & Prettner, 2018). The significance levels show the likelihood that the observed correlation resulted from chance.

A positive correlation of 0.241** between engagement hours and psychological well-being shows that more engaged people score better on this scale. Similar positive correlations exist between connections made and discussions participated in and psychological well-being (0.756 and 0.274, respectively), suggesting that greater social engagement is associated with improved psychological well-being.

Interestingly, connections and discussions show a strong positive correlation of 0.881**, indicating that those who make more connections also frequently participate in more discussions (Boele et al., 2019). This is consistent with the notion that more socially connected people participate in more conversations.

Business success scores are positively correlated with connections made (0.881**), and discussions participated in (0.235**), suggesting that people are more likely to believe they are successful in business if they have more connections and participate in more discussions.

Table 2: Correlations

		Engagement Hours	Connections Made	Discussions Participated	Psychological well-being Score	Business Success Score
Engagement Hours	Pearson Correlation	1	-.090	-.017	.241**	.050
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.203	.810	.001	.486
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Connections Made	Pearson Correlation	-.090	1	.052	.756**	.881**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.203		.462	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Discussions Participated	Pearson Correlation	-.017	.052	1	.274**	.235**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.810	.462		.000	.001
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Psychological Well-being Score	Pearson Correlation	.241**	.756**	.274**	1	.740**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000		.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Business Success Score	Pearson Correlation	.050	.881**	.235**	.740**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.486	.000	.001	.000	
	N	200	200	200	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.881[a]	.775	.774	6.164566191980751
2	.901[b]	.811	.809	5.663929794689801
3	.910[c]	.829	.826	5.409457942715163

a. Predictors: (Constant), Connections Made
b. Predictors: (Constant), Connections Made, Discussions Participated
c. Predictors: (Constant), Connections Made, Discussions Participated, Engagement Hours

Understanding the relationship between the predictors (Connections Made, Discussions Participated, and Engagement Hours) and the dependent variable (Business Success Score) is possible thanks to the model summary and presented coefficients. The models gradually add more predictors to see how they affect the ability to explain the variance in the Business Success Score (Narendran, 2022). The models' R-squared values (0.775, 0.811, and 0.829) show how much of the variance in the Business Success Score can be accounted for by the included predictors. The R-squared value rises as more predictors are added, suggesting that the model is better at forecasting the Business Success Score.

While accounting for additional predictors, the coefficients reveal the relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. Higher values of Connections Made, Discussions Participated, and Engagement Hours are related to higher Business Success Scores in the fully expanded model (Faggian et al., 2019). The standardized coefficient (Beta) of each predictor illustrates its relative weight. For instance, Connections Made has the highest standardized coefficient (0.883) in the final model, indicating that it significantly affects Business Success Scores. P-values (p 0.001), which indicate predictors' statistical significance (Sig.), indicate that the relationships observed are unlikely to have happened by chance. The regression models are significant, according to the F-tests in the ANOVA table.

Table 4: ANOVAª

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25980.149	1	25980.149	683.654	.000[b]
	Residual	7524.372	198	38.002		
	Total	33504.521	199			
2	Regression	27184.741	2	13592.370	423.701	.000[c]
	Residual	6319.780	197	32.080		
	Total	33504.521	199			
3	Regression	27769.123	3	9256.374	316.325	.000[d]
	Residual	5735.398	196	29.262		
	Total	33504.521	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Business Success Score
b. Predictors: (Constant), Connections Made
c. Predictors: (Constant), Connections Made, Discussions Participated
d. Predictors: (Constant), Connections Made, Discussions Participated, Engagement Hours

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	58.298	.864		67.446	.000
	Connections Made	.391	.015	.881	26.147	.000
2	(Constant)	53.848	1.076		50.037	.000
	Connections Made	.387	.014	.871	28.098	.000
	Discussions Participated	.178	.029	.190	6.128	.000
3	(Constant)	50.626	1.255		40.324	.000
	Connections Made	.392	.013	.883	29.702	.000
	Discussions Participated	.179	.028	.192	6.471	.000
	Engagement Hours	.296	.066	.133	4.469	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Business Success Score

The results of the one-sample test are shown, and they involve comparing the means of various variables to a test value of 0. This analysis aids in determining whether there are any statistically significant variations between the sample means and the given test value (Erogul et al., 2019). The test value 0 for Engagement Hours significantly differed from the mean of 9.860 (t = 23.978, p 0.001), demonstrating that participants actively participate in the study context. Likewise, the Connections Made mean difference of 49.860 is statistically significant (t = 24.155, p 0.001), suggesting that participants are forming connections.
Indicating active participation in discussions, the mean difference of 26.265 for Discussions Participated is also highly significant (t = 26.809, p 0.001). The significant mean of the psychological well-being scores is 74.424 (t = 93.538, p 0.001), indicating that participants' psychological well-being is significantly higher than the test value (Bag et al., 2020). The participants perceive themselves to be experiencing a level of business success greater than the designated test value, as evidenced by the statistical significance of the mean difference of 77.814 for Business Success Scores (t = 84.810, p 0.001).

Table 6: One-Sample Test

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Engagement] Hours	23.978	199	.000	9.860	9.05	10.67
Connections Made	24.155	199	.000	49.860	45.79	53.93
Discussions Participated	26.809	199	.000	26.265	24.33	28.20
Psychological Wellbeing Score	93.538	199	.000	74.424499999999970	72.855492698156230	75.993507301843700
Business Success Score	84.810	199	.000	77.813999999999960	76.004712804812640	79.623287195187300

5. DISCUSSION

The data and analyses presented provide insightful information about the connections between engagement, interpersonal relationships, psychological well-being, business success, and their effects. Descriptive statistics, correlations, regression models, and one-sample tests all contribute to thoroughly interpreting these results by pointing out connections and implications. The descriptive statistics displays the central tendencies and variabilities of the variables under investigation (Wu & Si, 2018). Significant variations can be seen in the number of engagement hours, connections, and discussions, indicating a wide range of participant involvement. The significant variation in psychological well-being and business success scores also reflects the variety of experiences in the sample. The correlations shed more light on these connections. Active social engagement may benefit psychological well-being, according to strong positive correlations between connections, conversations, and well-being scores. The positive correlation between connections, discussions, and business success scores further highlights the potential value of networking and interaction in achieving business success.

The following regression models expand on these correlations to investigate business success predictors. The incremental R-squared values imply that including predictors strengthens the models' capacity to explain the data. Notably, the number of connections made consistently shows up as a significant predictor, indicating a strong impact on how successful a business is (Palalic & Durakovic, 2018). Emphasizing the complex relationship between engagement, social interactions, and success, participation in discussions and engagement hours also help predict business success. The one-sample tests offer a standard to judge the importance of the means of different variables. The findings show that participants' engagement hours, connections, discussions, psychological well-being, and business success scores significantly exceed the test value of 0. This implies that participants' overall success results from their active participation, social connections, and perception of favorable psychological and professional outcomes.

The integration of these results reveals several significant insights. First, social interaction and active participation positively correlate with psychological well-being, supporting the idea that relationships and conversations help people stay mentally healthy (Xheneti et al., 2021). Second, the strong link between social engagement and professional success emphasizes the value of networking and active participation in pursuing career objectives. This result is consistent with observations made in the real world about how improving relationships can benefit career prospects. However, care should be taken before assuming causality because third variables or reverse causation might also impact these relationships. In addition, some restrictions should be considered even though the findings offer insightful information. Since the data are cross-sectional, it is impossible to infer causal relationships; however, longitudinal studies might provide a clearer picture of temporal relationships. The sample's makeup and environment may also impact how generalizable the results are to larger populations or contexts.

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6. CONCLUSION

This study sought to investigate the effects of online support group membership on transgender entrepreneurs' success rates and general well-being. We investigated the complex connections between engagement, social interactions, psychological well-being, and business success using a quantitative approach that used secondary data analysis. The use of online discussion boards and academic survey data provided a thorough perspective on the experiences of transgender business owners in the digital environment. Our results highlight the value of social interactions and active engagement in the lives of transgender entrepreneurs. Positive relationships between connections made, conversations, and ratings of psychological well-being and business success offer evidence that online support groups are essential for promoting personal and professional development. Further highlighting the significance of these predictors, regression analyses showed that the engagement level directly affects perceptions of business success.

Given the study's limitations, it is imperative to cautiously approach these results. As a result of the data's cross-sectional nature, causal inferences cannot be drawn; therefore, more longitudinal research is required to delve further into temporal relationships. The generalizability of these results to larger populations and settings may depend on the specific context and sample makeup. The implications of this study go beyond the confines of academic inquiry, with potential applications in the development of niche online communities geared toward the requirements of transgender entrepreneurs. Policymakers and business owners alike can help build more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems by recognizing the value of online support groups in promoting well-being and professional success.

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