

Comparison of happiness training based on Islamic concepts and Qigong exercises effectiveness on happiness of mothers with handicapped children

Mir Hamid Salehian¹, Sepideh Sarvari², Parinz Ghanati³

¹ Department of Physical Education, Tabriz branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran; ² Department of Physical Education, Urmia University of Technology, Iran; ³ Department of Motor Behavior, University of Tehran, Iran

SUMMARY

Background

A child with a disability causes many psychological problems for the family members, especially for the mother. Considering the importance of maternal happiness in the family and society, the aim of the present study was to compare happiness training based on Islamic concepts and Qigong exercises effectiveness on happiness of mothers with handicapped children.

Methods

A Semi-experimental design was conducted (pre-test and post-test) with two experimental and one control groups. 45 mothers with handicapped children Welfare of Tabriz (Iran) who had lower scores in the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by Argyle (1990), were selected by convenience sampling and randomly divided into two experimental groups (15 people in each group) and one control group (15 people). For the first group, Happiness training based on Islamic concepts (8 sessions; a week 2 sessions in one hour) and for the second group, Qigong exercises (8 sessions; week 2 sessions, 30 to 40 minutes) was applied and the control group did not receive any training. Prior and after the training, the subjects completed Argyle Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (1990). Univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze the data.

Results

The results showed that the mean scores of happiness of mothers with handicapped children increased significantly in the group of Happiness training based on Islamic concepts comparison to Qigong exercises group and in the Qigong exercises group comparison to the control group in the post-test ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions

The results showed that happiness training based on Islamic concepts is more effective in increasing happiness in mothers with handicapped children than Qigong exercises.

Key words: happiness, qigong, mothers, physically disabled

Introduction

The birth of a child is one of the most pleasant and enjoyable events for a family. But if the child is not born with the desired mental and physical health and is so-called disabled, this pleasant event becomes an unpleasant event ¹. Physical disability is one of the major disabilities of children in many countries ². The World Health Organization uses disability as a general term for injuries, functional and participatory limitations that lead to dysfunction of the body and deprive the individual of participation in daily personal and social activities ³. The presence of a disabled child makes important changes in the normal life cycle of families ⁴.

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Correspondence

Mir Hamid Salehian

Department of Physical Education, Tabriz branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran
E-mail: m_salehian@iaut.ac.ir

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Meanwhile, mothers often experience more stress than fathers due to their special role in the birth and care of a disabled child. Fathers usually do not express their feelings as much as mothers, while mothers show a wide range of emotions such as anger, sadness, crying and grief⁵. Studies have shown that mothers with handicapped children have lower levels of general health (physical symptoms, depression⁶, anxiety and social dysfunction)⁷ and less happiness⁸, lower quality of life and psychological capital⁹ compared to mothers of healthy children. Have lower levels of life satisfaction¹⁰ and higher levels of stress and lower psychological well-being¹¹. Happiness is the repeated experience of pleasant emotions, the relative absence of unpleasant feelings, and the general feeling of life satisfaction¹².

According to figures released by the World Health Organization, there are 650 million people with handicapped living in the world, of which nearly 70% are in developing countries. In Iranian society, according to the Welfare Organization, about 7% of the population suffers from some kind of disability and annually about 25,000 handicapped children are born in the country with severe physical and motor disorders¹³. People are of special importance. Researchers believe that happiness education based on Islamic concepts^{14,15} and Qigong exercises¹⁶ are among the interventions that can play a significant role in reducing depression, anxiety and happiness in stressful life situations. Happiness based on positive psychology is a feeling that is characterized by happiness, satisfaction, joy and pleasure and has existed in the world since ancient times and the goal of every human being is to achieve it¹⁷.

Today's world is full of anxieties, including mental anxieties and psychological tensions, and full of serious human problems in the age of technology and communication, which has led to a decrease in his sense of happiness. In fact, one of the basic human needs is to live happily, in the light of which a person can pay attention to his spiritual balance and the dimension of his society. One of the issues that psychologists have been studying for the last two decades is happiness and well-being and its influential and related factors¹⁸. Given that we live in a religious country and religious beliefs and practices based on religious teachings are of particular importance in our culture, one of the factors influencing happiness is religiosity¹⁹.

This is the mission of Islam and in this regard, there are many emphases for a person to live happily and be cheerful. Since Islam is the religion of happiness, vivacity and mobility. The believer, in terms of living happily, does his work well and achieves more success in his physical, mental and intellectual endeavors, as well as in social communication and interaction with people in the community and work environment. Who helps his

fellow man and has a good presence²⁰. Accordingly true happiness and the Islamic model of happiness is a cognition that arises from the level of human perfection and is associated with an infinite server, which has stability and stability²¹.

Factors affecting the creation and increase of components of Islamic happiness include patience, recognizing the reality of hardships, having skills to deal with stress, sugar, material and spiritual vitality. In general, the teachings of patience and gratitude create happiness by changing the mind and cognition in human beings, but in the areas of material and spiritual vitality, it is necessary to perform behaviors in order to complete happiness in the individual. Physical factors (appearance, play, recreation, proper nutrition, sleep and bathing), economic (work and contentment) and social (marriage and uterine reconciliation) as enhancing material vitality and moral factors (good mood, humor, anger management, Forgiveness, piety, social support of others, self-discipline, proper planning in life and wise words) and emotional-spiritual factors (remembrance of God, prayer and supplication) cause spiritual vitality¹⁵. Lyubomirsky et al.²¹ believe that in general, happy people respond to situations and events in a more positive and adaptive manner and have lower stress levels and a stronger and more creative immune system than unhappy people²².

Aghaei²² showed spirituality training in promoting happiness in postmenopausal women is affectiveness²³. Shokoohi Yekta et al.²³ in a quasi-experimental study on mothers with mentally disabled children, concluded that anger management training reduces anger intensity in anger-provoking situations and increases the use of control strategies and improve parent-child relationships²³. Zarrin Kolah²⁴ showed that humorous styles play a significant mediating role for psychological well-being and happiness²⁴.

In recent years, people have increasingly used mind and body exercises (such as qigong, taichi, and yoga) as complementary and alternative therapies to control stress, depression, and anxiety²⁶. Mental exercise is a type of exercise that focuses on self-awareness and interpersonal and mental alignment, along with low and moderate muscle activity and meditation²⁷. Qigong as a mental exercise is an ancient Chinese exercise for health, vitality and longevity with a history of several thousand years. Today, about 60 million people do it daily in China. The three main teachings of qigong are mind regulation, body regulation and breathing regulation; all of which are designed to enhance Chi function, that is, by using natural forces to optimize and balance energy within, through deep attainment of concentration and relaxation²⁸.

An overview of the domestic Qigong research literature provides more than a dozen forms that have been

studied for their effects on health outcomes, including Guo-lin, Chun-do-Sun-bap, -Do-Sun-Bup), Vitality, Bu Zheng Qigong, Eight Brocade, and Medical Qigong²⁹. Qigong is rooted in the concepts of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and its emphasis on qi (vital energy) and yi (power of intention), which is considered as an effective intervention to manage moods and increase the well-being of body and mind. It distinguishes other treatments³⁰. In fact, when people practice Qigong regularly, their minds gradually reach peace and tranquility, and they generally feel that their existence has become more balanced.

However, the most important effect of regular Qigong training is to discover the inner world of their body energy. By touching, feeling and receiving their inner experiences, they enter a new stage of mental cognition in addition to their physical cognition. This can be very effective in helping people, especially mothers with handicapped children, and help them deal with life-threatening and confusing life. Qigong general exercises reduce the mental stress that is common in the community helps those who are not balanced. Qigong balances internal energy and can cure many diseases. In addition, it helps people overcome depression and fear and achieve true peace, tranquility, happiness and bliss³¹.

It has been shown to treat depression, improve quality of life and increase physical and mental well-being³², reduce adrenocorticotrophic hormone, cortisol and aldosterone levels, norepinephrine and epinephrine and improve mood³³ and strengthen the immune system³⁴. Accordingly, Tsang et al.³⁵ examined the effect of the Qigong exercise program on 82 depressed seniors in Hong Kong and concluded that 16 weeks of regular Qigong exercise can relieve depression and improve self-efficacy. Welfare in the elderly is depressed and has a chronic physical illness³⁵. Oh et al.³⁶ stated that qigong plays an important role in the treatment of depression as a physical-mental exercise. The results of a systematic and meta-analysis of Wang et al.³⁷ show that Qigong has a positive effect on psychological well-being and reduces depression and anxiety.

Since mothers with handicapped children face a lot of stress, problems and difficulties in life and also they play an important role in creating and maintaining the balance of the relationship system in the family and according to studies, it seems that happiness education is based on Islamic concepts and Qigong exercises are very important as basic skills to promote mothers' happiness. Due to the importance of this issue, research gap and lack of empirical research in comparing the effect of these trainings on increasing parents' happiness with disabled children, especially mothers with physically and mentally handicapped children, this study aims to compare the effect of happiness training

based on Islamic concepts and exercises on happiness of mothers with physical handicapped children.

Materials and methods

The method of the present study was quasi-experimental (pre-test-post-test) using two experimental groups and one control group.

Statistical society

The statistical population included all mothers of children with physical and mental disabilities, covered by the welfare of Tabriz (Iran) in 2020-2021. The sample consisted of 45 mothers with handicapped children and welfare in Tabriz who had lower scores in the Oxford Argyle (1990) Happiness Questionnaire. They were divided into three groups as Qigong exercises (15 people), happiness training based on Islamic concepts (15 people) and one control group (15 people).

Data collection tools

The following tools have been used to collect information: Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: The instrument of the present study is the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire developed by Argyle in 1990. This questionnaire has 29 four-choice items that are scored from 0 to 3, respectively. Strongly disagree (0), disagree (1), agree (2), strongly agree (3). So the higher the scores, the happier people will be. The minimum score of each subject is 0 and the maximum is 87⁴⁰. The validity of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire has been confirmed in various studies and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for evaluating the reliability of this tool has been calculated between 87-93% in studies³⁸.

Intervention methods

Happiness training based on Islamic concepts: For the first group, happiness training based on Islamic concepts was taught in 8 sessions and each session lasted for one hour. This treatment method has been developed by Hosseinpour Najjar et al.⁴⁰ and its effectiveness on depression, anxiety and happiness has been confirmed.

Qigong exercises

The total duration of the exercises was 10 sessions, two sessions per week and each session lasted 30 to 40 minutes. Traditional Chinese qigong is all about the coordination of body, breath and mind through a series of movements and has been shown to have mental benefits (reducing anxiety and stress) and physical health (lowering blood pressure, better sleep, increasing endurance, improving kidney function). Is the relief of low back pain).²⁵ These Qigong exercises are part of the Qigong movements that affect mental happiness, health, and stress reduction, adapted from Yang's book Health

and Martial Arts, and can be seen in Figure 1 (left to right, respectively).

How to collect information

After receiving permission from Tabriz University, coordination with the officials of the General Department of Welfare of East Azerbaijan Province and obtaining informed consent from mothers with handicapped children, it was decided that the selected mothers at the appointed time in the amphitheater of Tabriz University, which had the necessary facilities, including computers, video projectors, etc., to be present. In the introductory meeting, after establishing the researcher with the participants, the mothers' questions were answered and the questionnaires were completed. After performing the pre-test (Oxford Argyle Happiness Questionnaire, 1990), agreement was reached on the date of the next sessions and 45 mothers with handicapped children who met the inclusion criteria were randomly divided into 2 experimental groups of 15 (Group 1: Happiness Training). Basis of Islamic Concepts and group 2: Qigong exercises and a group of 15 witnesses were divided.

After selecting the test groups, in the introductory session of the experimental groups, a summary of the goals and methods of happiness training based on Islamic concepts and Qigong exercises for the experimental groups was given and the experimental groups were asked not to talk about the content of the sessions with other mothers. Mothers were assured that they would not be under any other educational or medical program. Experiment 1 students in groups in sessions, happiness education based on Islamic concepts (8 sessions; 2 weeks, one and a half hour sessions) and experimental group 2 students, Qigong exercises training (8 sessions: two sessions of 30 to 40 minutes per week) One group received and the control group did not receive training. All educational materials in the Happiness Education group were presented based on Islamic con-

cepts in powerpoints format and with pictures. At the end of the training sessions, post-test (Oxford Argyle Happiness Questionnaire, 1990) was measured in all 3 groups (2 experimental groups and one control group). It should be noted that in order to comply with the ethical principles of the research, after all three post-test groups (Oxford Argyle Happiness Questionnaire, 1990), the mentioned trainings were performed for the control group.

Data analysis

Finally, the data were analyzed using SPSS-20 statistical software. In the description section, mean and standard deviation and in the inferential section, univariate analysis of covariance with assumptions of normal distribution of scores through Shapiro-Wilk test, assumption of homogeneity of regression slope using group interaction * Pre-test and Levin test for homogeneity and error of dependent variable was used in the groups.

Results

According to the Table I, it is concluded that happiness training based on Islamic concepts have a significant positive effect on increasing happiness of mothers with handicapped children.

According to the Table II, it is concluded that Qigong exercises have a significant positive effect on increasing happiness of mothers with handicapped children.

According to the Table III, it is concluded that the effect of happiness training based on Islamic concepts on increasing happiness of mothers with handicapped children is significantly greater than the effect of Qigong exercises.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to compare the effect of happiness education based on Islamic concepts and Qigong exercises on happiness of mothers with children with physical disabilities. The results of univariate analysis of covariance showed that happiness scores of mothers with handicapped children in education According to Islamic concepts it has increased significantly compared to the Qigong training group compared to the control group in the post-test. There is no report in the research literature on comparing the effectiveness of these trainings on increasing the happiness of mothers with handicapped children; but the result obtained with the results of studies of Ekrami et al. ¹⁴, Hosseinpour Najjar et al. ⁴⁰ Jafari and Bagheri ²⁰. Cognitive-behavioral and Islamic happiness education has a great effect on increasing happiness, positivity, psychological well-being, improving quality of life and stress tolerance. Religion plays a significant role in increasing happiness in the face of stress.

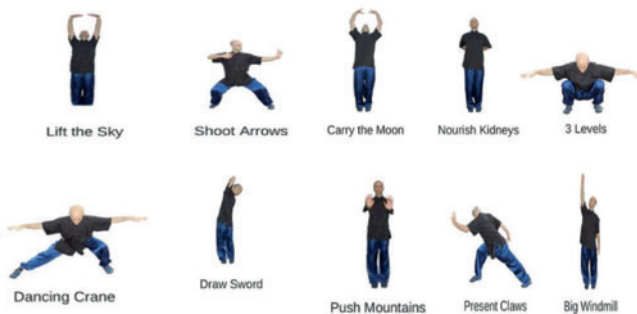


FIGURE 1. Qigong movements performed in the training protocol.

TABLE I. Results of differences between happiness of mothers with handicapped children in post-test of control and happiness training based on Islamic concepts.

| Source of change | Sum of squares | df | Average squares | F | P | Eta |
|------------------------|----------------|----|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| The effect of pre-test | 442.15 | 1 | 442.15 | 1489.1 | 0.001 | 0.988 |
| Group effect | 315.21 | 1 | 315.21 | 1319.4 | 0.001 | 0.768 |
| Error | 7.372 | 27 | 0.362 | | | |
| Total | 5213 | 30 | | | | |

TABLE II. Results of differences of happiness training based on Islamic concepts in the post-test between the two control groups and Qigong exercises.

| Source of change | Sum of squares | df | Average squares | F | P | Eta |
|------------------------|----------------|----|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| The effect of pre-test | 547.16 | 1 | 547.16 | 1581.6 | 0.001 | 0.982 |
| Group effect | 123.24 | 1 | 123.24 | 392.5 | 0.001 | 0.762 |
| Error | 8.347 | 27 | 0.381 | | | |
| Total | 5431 | 30 | | | | |

TABLE III. Results of differences in happiness of mothers with handicapped children in the post-test between happiness training based on Islamic concepts and Qigong exercises groups.

| Source of change | Sum of squares | df | Average squares | F | P | Eta |
|------------------------|----------------|----|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|
| The effect of pre-test | 474.25 | 1 | 474.25 | 2743.1 | 0.001 | 0.967 |
| Group effect | 78.42 | 1 | 78.42 | 412.3 | 0.001 | 0.545 |
| Error | 5.12 | 27 | 0.145 | | | |
| Total | 6345 | 30 | | | | |

It is also consistent with the findings of Zarrin Kolah²⁴ that religiosity, religion, and humorous styles (one of the components of Islamic happiness education) play a significant role in mental health (reducing stress, depression, and anxiety) and happiness. In addition, this research finding is in line with the results of studies by Tsang et al.³⁵, Oh et al.³⁶, Chow et al.³⁴ and Wang et al.³⁷ that Qigong has a positive effect on psychological well-being, quality of life and reducing negative emotions (depression, anxiety and stress).

Explaining this research finding, it can be stated that families with disabled children are under more stress than families with healthy children. In addition, the first person who has direct contact with the child is the mother. While constant maintenance and the need to provide special conditions for growth and exposure to pressures such as, stereotyped behaviors and lack of self-care skills in these children weaken the normal functioning of the mother and also mothers react negatively to their child's behaviors. Factors cause high levels of stress and marital conflicts, separation, divorce, low

self-esteem, decreased happiness and life satisfaction in mothers with handicapped children¹⁰. Evidence suggests that feelings of happiness produce energy, passion, vitality, movement and dynamism, and as a shield can protect a person against stress and problems and ensure mental health. There are many factors that can affect happiness, including wealth, health, education, gender, religious status, age, leisure activities, cognitive processes, and personality traits²⁵.

In religious societies, including Iran, religious elements are mixed with cultural elements and culture not only takes on a religious form but also has religious content and criteria. Elements of Islamic culture can protect society from the harms and tensions of life. Prevention and treatment of mental disorders helped. It is necessary to localize therapeutic methods today because there are significant differences in behavior between individuals and groups that grow in different ecological and cultural conditions and behavioral similarities between those that are in similar environmental and cultural conditions attract attention¹⁹. In fact, happiness based on Islam-

ic concepts is a kind of psychological activity and a positive emotional state that arises after seeking divine pleasure, achieving goals, real success, the absence of negative emotions and general satisfaction with human life and strengthens faith, expands social relationships. Good information processing, life expectancy, dynamism and more effort make a person happy²¹.

Lyubomirsky et al.²¹ believe that people with religious affiliations are more likely to consider them very happy. During training sessions, by teaching patience, which is familiarity with the true meaning of patience, the importance of its necessity in life and ways to gain patience in the face of various situations, mothers can be helped not only not to give up but also to try to solve it; because people in the face of stress and life crises need to learn how to cope with problems to be able to maintain their mental health¹⁹. The results of the study by Lashani et al.⁴³ showed that the application of gratitude strategies has a significant effect on the development of positive emotions and happiness, as it is related to awareness of the blessings of life, possessions or acquisitions⁴³. Things that may always happen to us, but we look at them as very ordinary things and do not take their role and place seriously or ignore them. In the wake of such awareness and positive attention, we also pay attention to the source of this matter, a source which we may have so far, more limited, or less, viewed from this perspective. During the next sessions in this study, the factors of spiritual and material vitality in mothers were studied. Accordingly, one of the most important ways to live happily is to be active. Planning for enjoyable activities such as games, outings, attending friendly gatherings, engaging in moral and spiritual matters can enhance our activities. Pleasant activities are among the most effective ways to reduce negative emotions and increase happiness¹⁴.

People who have a sense of humor (one of the spiritual and moral issues) also deal with problems in a more fun way, experience less stress, thus improving their well-being and mental health, and have lower levels of happiness²⁵. Also, the research of Paster et al.⁴⁴ showed that social support as a source of coping plays a very important role in predicting the mental well-being of parents in the face of stressful events such as the birth of exceptional children. In fact, people feel happier when they know they are being supported by family, friends, and loved ones, and they act more logically and effectively in the face of adversity. Obviously, all human beings need the support of those around them and their friends in times of trouble to feel safe. In fact, the more social support others have, the more hope they have⁴⁶. In the final sessions, anger management training as well as remembrance, prayer and supplication were taught. Anger management is a negative emotion that if one becomes accustomed to expressing oneself over time, one

will lose happiness. In this regard, Imam Ali (AS) says: "Anger destroys its owner and reveals ugliness. Therefore, what God advises is to control anger and consider it as a characteristic of the pious who have been promised paradise and forgiveness⁴¹. Accordingly, the results of Salehian et al.⁴⁶ showed that anger management training can change the psychological characteristics of individuals including self-esteem and happiness⁴⁴. Also, believing that there is a God who controls situations and oversees the servants greatly reduces situation-related anxiety; as most believers believe, the effect of uncontrollable situations can be controlled through reliance and recourse to God through remembrance, prayer and supplication. Also, people who are at a higher level in terms of religion, solve their problems in a problem-solving manner and with social support⁴⁸.

In fact, happiness education based on Islamic concepts, which includes a positive view of life and gratitude, as well as resilience and effort against life problems and material and spiritual vitality can increase happiness in the lives of mothers with handicapped children. On the other hand, one of the most important, simplest and least expensive therapeutic approaches is physical activity and exercise. Qigong exercise is a form of complementary medicine and as a non-pharmacological and uncomplicated treatment that does not require special equipment; Along with other common therapies, it is used to reduce stress⁴⁹. Studies have shown that mothers with disabled children have lower levels of happiness than mothers of healthy children¹⁸. Happiness, on the other hand, strengthens the immune system through the secretion of the hormone oxytocin⁴⁹.

However, having a child with a physical disability is a source of stress for parents, especially mothers⁵¹ and stress or tension is a phenomenon that can affect almost all neurological and endocrine activities, so that the effects of stress-induced changes can Disrupts the balance of homeostasis and leads to disorders in the immune system. The effects of stress on the sympathetic nerves and the hypothalamic nerve branch stimulate the pituitary gland and increase the secretion of glucocorticosteroid hormones. These hormones play an important role in reducing the immune system's responses⁵¹.

Accordingly, previous studies have shown that qigong may have beneficial effects on society in a wide range of psychological well-being, including mood, anxiety, depression, general stress management, quality of life, and athletic self-efficacy. Qigong movements are relatively easy compared to other traditional mind-body techniques. Hence, people practice qigong for various reasons, including sports, recreation, well-being, happiness, maintaining health, meditation, cultivating martial arts³⁸. Psychological benefits of qigong practice

include relaxation, movement demonstration, desensitization, automatic movement enhancement, and breathing. Researchers speculate that regulating breathing and structural movements during qigong exercise leads to long, deep diaphragmatic, rhythmic breathing that can affect the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and endocrine system, stabilize mood, and increase mood. Control and restore the homeostatic state, cardiac output, oxygen consumption, exhalation of carbon dioxide and the flexibility of the autonomic nervous system⁵². Researchers have also proposed three psychological pathways (monoamine neurotransmitters in the brain, hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, and brain-derived neurotropic agents) to explain the effects of qigong exercise on maternal stress and depression²⁸.

Therefore, in the present study, by examining the effect of Qigong exercises and happiness education based on Islamic concepts, in fact, the physical and psychological dimensions of affecting the happiness of mothers with handicapped children are combined as the strength of this research. One of the limitations of the present study is that it is unisexual and it is not possible to implement follow-up programs in order to pursue effectiveness over time.

Besides, as the present study is a quasi-experimental study with limited participants care should be taken in predicting the results in general.

Conclusions

In general, it can be concluded that happiness education

based on Islamic concepts is more effective in increasing the happiness of mothers with handicapped children than Qigong exercises. According to the results of this study and its confirmation through previous studies, the use of happiness education based on Islamic concepts along with Qigong exercises is suggested as an effective program to increase the happiness of parents with disabled children, especially mothers with handicapped children. A move by all welfare centers, counseling and treatment in the country with the aim of guiding and helping the parents of exceptional children for better and faster adjustment and increasing the mental health of parents should be considered by the authorities.

Ethical consideration

This research has been conducted in compliance with ethical standards and participants' satisfaction.

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Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest for the Authors of this article.

Author contributions

Both Authors had a common share.

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