

Perception of Bachelor of Science Nursing Student Peer Mentees on Peer Mentorship in Universities in Western Kenya

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Abstract—Mentoring is a critical support of education attributable to positive clinical competences in students. Peer mentorship is understood as a peer-to-peer developmental relationship, founded on multiple mentor approaches that accords benefits from the various experiences encountered by the mentor and mentee. The objective of the study was to examine the perception of Bachelor of Science Nursing (BScN) student peer mentees on peer mentorship by examining the experiences of peer mentees with their mentors through the process of mentorship and evaluating the change perception from the peer mentee perspective. The study was quasi experimental adopting qualitative methods of data collection. Peer mentorship was the intervention applied to the study being conducted in the schools of nursing offering BScN in sampled universities in Western Kenya that included MMUST, UEAB, Uzima University and GLUK. The study targeted second year nursing students and out of the total 386 students random sampling was done to yield participants that were included in the FGD. Data was analyzed using themes that described the change expected as experienced by the peer mentees as conceptualized in hermeneutic phenomenology. Results indicated that majority of the respondents were aged 19 years and female. All the peer mentees had prior concerns about the university that included, the kind of friends they would get, whether or not they will be bullied, uncertainties about the nursing course, fear of failing examinations, whether or not they would adapt to the clinical environment among others. From the experiences shared, the peer mentees narrated how they were supported in planning and executing their studies in synchrony with the course outlines. This helped them align their expectations with their experiences enabling them take charge of their learning. Peer mentees developed positive self-esteem, leadership abilities, social connectedness and networking. Time management abilities on the side of the peer mentees was also developed as well as life skills. In conclusion, peer mentees perceived that peer mentorship was a positive activity that addressed their anxieties and fears while making them independent, strong and able to navigate challenges of the academic environment.

Index Terms— Experience, Nursing, Peer mentee, Perception, Student.

1. Introduction

Mentoring has been identified as a critical support of education attributable to positive clinical competences in students [1]. Through mentoring, student engage in thought provoking activities that turn learners into critical thinkers and

problem solvers [2]. Studies highlight big variances in ways goals of peer mentorship are experienced by different players as conceptions and applications of models of mentorship vary [3]. Peer mentorship is understood as a peer to peer developmental relationship, founded on multiple mentor approaches that accords benefits from the various experiences encountered by the mentor and mentee [4]. It entails utilizing others students as a resource to establish a state of win-win in the institutions where new students feel that they belong while older students are provided an opportunity to cultivate skills for success with a culmination of reduction in student attrition and improved progression rates [5].

Peer mentorship encompasses use of an institutions vital assets, which are the institutions own learners hence providing an opportunity for establishment of a true win-win state in which new students feel that they belong and older students and existing students cultivate new skills while the institutions experience minimal or no student attrition [6]. Mentees who enrolled in a study by Du Prez, *et al* [7] felt that through mentorship, they were likely to be supported to perform better in academics. Key themes that expressed lived experiences of participants were communication, connection, conversation and cohesion and through them, mentorship experiences provided positive outcomes in learners [8]. The objective of the study therefore was to examine the Perception of Bachelor of Science Nursing student peer mentees on peer mentorship by Examining the experiences of peer mentees with their mentors through the process of mentorship and evaluating the change perception from the peer mentee perspective.

A. Conceptual Framework

The study utilized Parse's theory of human becoming to explain the changes that occurred in the peer mentee guiding the mentor to focus on all-round perspectives of the mentee in the educational setting. Viewing the mentee from a totality paradigm, the holistic approach following the understanding of their uniqueness enabled mentors create an environment conducive for the desired change [9]. From the simultaneity paradigm, the mentee was allowed to freely interact in mutual interchange with the environment and therefore guided on appropriate alternatives available within reach to attain their

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goals [5], [10]. Eventually, the peer mentees constructed their own personal realities from their unique choices thus becoming the new person they envisioned [11].

2. Material and Methods

1) Study Design

The study was quasi experimental while adopting qualitative methods of data collection. Human becoming was the change required to be seen in the mentee, thus a transformed individual from what they were to what they became following mentorship. Change was examined at mid period and at the end period of study with time period being applied as a marker as illustrated by Wang *et al* [12]. Peer mentorship was the intervention applied to enable the researcher estimate causal contributions of intervention to population as expressed by Handley *et al* [13]. The researcher then used hermeneutical Phenomenology, utilizing vital experiences of peer mentees in attempting to bring meaning to the experiences and therefore aided interpretation, comprehension and re-establishment of educational attention [14]. In the study, the change phenomena were explored from the perspective of experience and the meaning of what the mentees experienced followed by the interpretations of the phenomena basing on the concept of human becoming. The researcher inquired on the mentee perceptions of the lived experiences with the aim of examining how the experiences connect with their adjustment in university and understanding of the human becoming and events coalescing around the human becoming. Different stages of the peer mentorship.

2) Study Area

The study was conducted in the schools of nursing offering bachelor of science in Nursing (BScN) in sampled universities in Western Kenya for the past five years which was after completion of a curriculum cycle. This included MMUST, UEAB, Uzima University and GLUK.

3) Target Population

The study targeted second year nursing students drawn from the universities and out of the total 386 students in the sampled universities were included in the sample through random sampling following a successful mentorship period.

4) Sampling Technique

Simple random sampling was used to select universities to be included in the sample and therefore four out of seven universities were selected. Purposive sampling was used to select second years to be included in the study while third year nursing students were used as peer mentors. Participants for FGD we randomly sampled and assigned into the groups in the different institutions.

5) Procedure

The process begun with selection of peer mentors through an elaborate process that entailed invitation to willing peer mentors, determination of suitability of peer mentors and training of peer mentors. the peer mentors were there paired with mentees and allowed to proceed for mentorship for a period of six months. Data collection was then conducted for analysis.

6) Data Collection

In this study, a hermeneutic phenomenology approach uses themes revolving around specific content in collecting information about lived experiences of peer mentees on what their perceptions were concerning peer mentorship. Similarly, it provided capability to get rich insights on the phenomenon. Focused group discussions of between 10 to 15 participants were conducted as well as individual interviews at the end of and 6 months. The sixth FGD formed the point of saturation and the process terminated. Besides the FGDs, six individual respondents were randomly selected, interviewed and information used to corroborate the FGD results. Individual interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 45 to 90 minutes while FGD lasted 90 to 120 minutes. Data was then transcribed into verbatim

7) Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analyzed using themes that described the change expected as experienced by the peer mentees as conceptualized in hermeneutic phenomenology. This aimed at presenting shared lived experiences of the peer mentees. Steps employed in this thematic analysis include data logging where raw data was recorded followed by anecdotes that involved streamlining data to generate comprehensive notations of what was collected. Subsequent steps involved vignettes in which in-depth description of research setting, participants and themes was done to enable representation of the narrative story of the interpretation. This was then followed by data coding where fragmentation and classifying was done to form explanations and comprehensive themes in data. At the end, thematic networking was conducted where exploration of understanding of denotation was done to avoid contradictory explanation of the problem establishing thematic analysis. Findings provided insight on how peer mentors made meaning of their experiences and how mentorship had changed them.

3. Results

1) Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of 68 participants were enrolled in the discussions. Majority of the respondents were aged 19 years accounting for 32% of the population. The mean age of the participants was 19.50years with a median of 19 years and a standard deviation of 1.02. Regarding gender, a total of 40 (62.5%) participants were female while the rest were male.

2) Prior Concerns about the University

All the peer mentees had prior concerns about the university that included, the kind of friends they would get, whether or not they will be bullied, uncertainties about the nursing course, fear of failing examinations, whether or not they would adapt to the clinical environment, if really, they would be accepted as nurses, whether they would finish their education in time and what next among many others. They were also concerned about their ability to settle in the university and form good networks of friends. One respondent said...

"I feared everything about university... I was told people pretend to be your friends ...then...they drug you....um...some rape others...and a lot of bad stuff happen. In fact, I didn't know how I was going to make friends with the people I feared."

(PMM4f)

PMM 4 b, a mentee on the other hand said.....

... *"I feared being bullied.....you can imagine how I kept dreaming of..... running away from the university and not completing my course because I could not stand being bullied."*

PMM2e, adding to the other voices said...

"My brother had really been stubborn while at the university that I thought...if that is the case...I rather go to a medical training college. In fact, it's my aunt...who told me that I can still make it and be different.... I...I...also feared seeing sick people...I did not know if the training would help me change my perception of the sick people and the hospitals"

PMM3d on the other hand said...

"I was told that nurses read big books... that I will not have time...as much I had wanted medicine...and now was to join nursing ...this thing kept disturbing my mind...I thought ..uh..I would not finings my training. In fact, at one point...I thought of looking for money...I start a business ...forget about university business"

On the same note, PMM 6e said...

"I was very nervous and uncertain concerning the programme and my abilities...I feared everything...and every one when told about the university...yet I was very eager to be a nurse....i feared failing examinations...having bad friends...going to the hospitalum...and just everything."

PMM 3c said.....

"I was told there are so many examinations for nurses...that people fail...so.. was not sure of myself. I was afraid of taking care of myself...doing my own shopping...and...and just being independent...I.. was not just sure of own capabilitiesand so I was afraid of self."

Examining the above responses, it was clear that even as students' transit into the university, their mind is clouded with a lot of fears. It was evident that what the student's fears traversed both academic and non-academic or social spheres with some having many issues while others had few. In fact, there was a respondent who literally feared everything concerning university and one can only imagine how such a student can transit without help.

Socially, the peer mentees had fears of having friends who would not be true or would influence them negatively, being bullied, being drugged among many others. The academic aspects that were highlighted included the fear of inability to comprehensively read big books, issues of a squeezed timetable that stood out as a hindrance for completing studies in an event any other issue arose. Examinations for nursing as well as the consequences of the results was another threat to respondents while to others was the clinical placement that provoked anxiety. Some students could not stand the thought of how they would be interacting with patients in the complexity of nursing. It was unimaginable thought that they really would think through how that transformation would eventually happen with a lot of fear. There was another aspect of the intrapersonal capabilities that was also exhibited as an area of fear with respondents saying that they feared they may have not been able to exercise self-control or may have succumbed to peer pressure.

A documented story by PMM 1k was sought and revealed the following dilemmas.

"within me ...I knew that I was an out shiner in academics.... however, I had a lot of reservations and fears concerning university life and more so my programme...nursing. I did not fear making new friends because I had been in boarding school since my primary education and far from my parents...however, I had a lot of internal battles and conflicts within me that made me fear university... life. I ..felt a lot of worthlessness I had never experienced before in my life... I felt weak... that I would not fit in the system. A strange feeling ...that I would not pass my exams kept cropping in my mind ... and so I feared rejection... by friends... teachers"

Basing on the above documented narration, the study was able to elicit internal battles that go unnoticed among students that could be anxiety pathways leading to depression and its aftermath. This was demonstrated by the feelings of worthlessness and negative self-image and though process deficits evidenced by one participant stopping the discussion in the middle of explaining the fears and concerns.

To crown it all, the need for support was highly evident in the participants for positive academic performance as well as social adjustment.

3) Experiences of the Peer Mentees on the Process of Mentorship

Almost all the peer mentees reported that their experiences were good and helpful throughout the process. The structure of the program allowed them easily blend with their mentors making the process a pleasant activity.

One respondent said...

"The process was quire helpful for me... actually I can confidently say I received more than I anticipated." (PMM6d)

This sentiment was echoed by another mentee who said...

"From the beginning, I did not conceive the seriousness of the exercise until I saw and felt the commitment of my mentor in supporting me and I was like...uh!!... you mean this is how serious we should be?" (PMM4f)

Similarly, another mentee said...

"I found the process to be really useful for me especially in terms of knowing what was coming up and what to expect as my mentor adequately prepared me on how to use the course outline as a guide to my study.. guys ...it was just cool" (PMM3c)

Talking about examination preparation, one mentee said...

"One problem I had from the beginning was planning...understanding the expectation from lecturers was one area I was really helped...at the same time, I was helped on how to plan and prepare for examinations ...I can tell you...for the first time...I found examination a manageable task." (PMM5a)

Correspondingly, another respondent said...

"Just getting that advice from someone who has and is going through similar challenges...and finding out that they are this approachable was quite an unexpected development for me" (PMM2g)

Another respondent said...

"... For me the experience was good and one I will live to

cherish... my great appreciation to the mentors.” (PMM3e)

In the same way, another mentee said...

“I will start by saying that I am a winner...smiles...these sentiments I had never thought before that it could come out of my mouth...throughout my life, I always felt deficient and would give up at the shortest instance of an uphill task...uh!...this one thing my mentor kept rebuking me about...was the word “..I cannot”. And every time she told me to repeat after her and say... “I can” ...even when I did not believe her. One day, I scored some high marks in a subject I knew I was very weak at...wue! I tell you... it was a celebration. I learned to persist and never give up and indeed the persistence works for me.” (PMM1b)

From the experiences shared, the peer mentees narrated how they were supported in planning and executing their studies in synchrony with the course outlines. This helped them align their expectations with their experiences enabling them take charge of their learning. They were able to effectively revise for their courses since the structure for revision was developed in collaboration with their mentors.

4) The ‘Change’ From the Peer Mentee Perspective

Basing on the human becoming concept, the study was interested in understanding the change that happened as perceived by the peer mentees. How each individual felt had been impacted by the peer mentor whether positive or negative would provide insight into future decisions concerning peer mentorship and the models that could be relevant in addressing the pressing challenges. Several themes emerged from the discussions as being consensually held by majority of the respondents in all the FGDs. These included the development of reading culture, better performance in class and clinical as compared to the previous periods as well as improved intrapersonal and interpersonal communications.

Similarly, peer mentees developed positive self-esteem, leadership abilities, social connectedness and networking. Time management abilities on the side of the peer mentees was also developed as well as life skills.

One of the participants said...

“I was a very poor communicator prior to the experience I had in mentorship. I came to learn that I can open up, speak and address issues that were affecting me... through communication.” (PMM2d)

Similarly, another respondent said...

“For me...my mentor was the best gift I received in my life... he was the game changer in my academics... I now have confidence in my studies... I simply stick to my plan.” (PMM4b)

Talking about collaboration, another respondent said....

“I am able to work with others... I find no challenge with connecting and networking. This has also opened my eyes to opportunities for now and for the future ...because I never underrate anybody...all have a potential...my mentor helped me... I promise... I can also help others.” (PMM6f)

Another respondent said...

“I have gone through the process... and all I can say... I am a better time keeper.” (PMM1g)

One participant said...

“Since meeting my mentor...my life has revolved...I have

developed leadership skills...my self-esteem has grown, I have developed internal strengths and resilience... I feel that I can do ...much more than I ever felt before.” (PMM3j)

Individual Responses on Experiences and Change Following Peer Mentorship

Individual respondents were also interviewed and shared similar experiences captured in the themes shred from the FGD. They were documented as participants’ stories that enriched the experiences and change desired. One of the respondents narrated as below.

“Even though I was dedicated to ensuring that I excelled academically....a flood of questions and self-inadequacies mugged my mind and body until when I stopped and asked myself if I was the only on going through this...I even reached out to my classmates...sharing my experiences, we discovered that we share a lot and supported each other. This gave the impression that things were better until one time I met a third year student who came looking for me...she said that she was looking for me...she wanted to help me as I navigated through my nursing education because I had been assigned to her and also because she felt a strong desire to help.”

“Actually, I doubted her intentions but decided to give it a benefit of doubt and accepted the friendship. The following week, she called me so that we could meet and discuss a few things. She arranged a venue and told me that I would meet other people with her. Actually, I went hesitantly and on reaching I found four of my classmates with her. That day we just talked about us, who we are and our aspirations in the college. I can tell you I learned a lot from the group. For the first time since I joined college, I felt accepted, respected, and valued by my classmates, there by relieving some of my early uncertainties. However, inspiring a new group of students to work together and trust each other can never be a one-day event. We actually felt hat we needed to bond more if we were to overcome what was “us”.

Our leader encouraged us to do a lot of meetings together so that we can become real friends that can comfortably support one another and at this point I felt my heart accepting her.” PMM 4’s story

From the documented story of participant four, it’s clear that prior to the peer mentorship, the mentees were already experiencing challenges that were not clear to them how to go about. This is a scenario expected by the institutions but mostly assumed that with time the learners will be able to cope. However, the need to understanding that some may not cope necessitates planned support for all students. With the introduction of the peer mentor to the scene, we also see a process of bonding that was not a one-day event necessitating the need for adequate peer mentor preparation for the peer mentorship activities as well as mentee preparation for the same. There was need for support from the institution at this level of bonding to enhance a smooth process. Once the process picked, the participant expressly explains the outcome that includes the feelings of acceptance, being respected and valued. Such feelings increase social connectedness among students while providing them with opportunities to settle and concentrate on their studies. The respondent explains how their

uncertainties were relieved which was key to relieve of anxiety.

Another respondent narrated...

"For me, the experience was quite different from what I hear people say. I don't know if it was by coincidence but the mentor I was assigned to was a friend who had welcomed me to college when I came. Though we didn't know each other prior, we found ourselves attracted to each other from the beginning and she helped me a lot to settle in the college. The moment we were introduced to one another on the pairing day it was as if we were dreaming. So... we did not have to start afresh, we continued from where we had reached although now being guided and of course... The experience was nice. We did our assignments together, and my mentor supported me so much in the practical area. Because we could not carry the procedure manual to the wards, she used to tell me to write the procedure on a paper, and then once we finish our individual work, she could pick a patient and we practice the procedure with her following the steps. The only challenge we had was that our wards did not have most equipment for doing procedures that made us not be able to carry out ideal procedures. For class work, actually did assignments together as much as we didn't belong to the same class. My mentor loved reading aloud... and so I learned even things I had never heard from her. To me, I will stick to her as a friend even after the mentorship period. Another thing I can say about my mentor is that we have known each other's families and are now family friends. She introduces me to her family as her younger sister while the mother refers to me as her daughter. This has made life so easy for us." PMM 2's story

Participant 2's story was quite encouraging as it demonstrated how easy and lovely peer mentorship can be. It presented a concept of rich mentor-mentee relationship that was built on an existing relationship. The information presented portrayed Levy Vygotsky's concept of constructivism where the researcher was able to identify the concept of working on uncharted tasks and developing through the zones of proximal development (15). This was seen as the peer mentee narrates how they did activities together both in the clinical area and classroom assignments as well as social activities. It is clear that such an environment elicited by this particular peer mentor is able to lead to a positive academic performance in both the peer mentor and the peer mentee in as well as building social connectedness and social capital among the students which is a recipe for social adjustment.

PMM 5's story documented

"I was given a mentor that I had never interacted with before but after the introductions, she encouraged me to be free, allow us to relate as mentor-mentee and support each other. Our first meeting saw a lot of apprehension from both of us. I was actually afraid that she would put a lot of the lady's pressure on me and therefore made up my mind to lock her out of my life. However, on our second meeting, we shared the objectives of our mentor-mentee relationship and her expectations from me of which made me feel relaxed and ready to work with her."

During the very second meeting she asked me to list down the things I find difficult and would wish to be supported. I told her a lot of academic topics as she listed them down. Then we went

through them discussing why I think I needed help in the areas and by the end of the session, we had removed some items and added others that both of us were satisfied with. We finalized by working out a workable work plan of which we agreed to review after every two weeks.

In our third visit, after going through our experiences of the day we decided to embark on our activities as per the work plan. The work entitled going through our week's activities and checking through our assignments. It was such an interesting thing to discover that when you go through the things you have learned; you understand it in a totally different way from the initial time. Then come to assignments and I discovered that I had missed out a lot on then, so I started doing them one by one and ticking on my assignment score card. The assignments were many till we agreed that I could carry over to the next day. The whole exercise made a lot of sense because by the end of the second day doing assignments, I discovered that I had not earlier been keen on my assignments and small quizzes given by my lecturers in class.

By the time we reached our fourth session with my mentor I was really appreciating the role she was playing in my life. I felt for the first time serious with our education yet this day we started by doing yoga which she said is her hobby, then reflected on some of the challenges in normal social life that can affect our learning. I discovered we don't need to be genius at all, all we need are the right people in our lives. I can attest to you that indeed I am changing and not just changing but changing for the better."

Similar to participant 4's story, the necessity for faculty support to ensure that peer mentorship picks up and the bond between the peer mentor and the peer mentee developed was demonstrated to be very key. The experiences of the different participants on the initial moments of peer mentor, peer mentee interaction pointed to a need for strong faculty support at the beginning of the peer mentorship process. However, it was noted that the relationship was able to thrive after second or third interactive session between the peer mentor and the peer mentee. From participant 5's experience, the team demonstrated their abilities set objectives and expectations together which was key to mentor-mentee relationship development. Their abilities to develop a plan of activities also exhibited the abilities for academic preparation both in the peer mentor and the peer mentee. We were also able to appreciate the concept of peer mentor-mentee team working on uncharted tasks as demonstrated in the experiences of participant 2. The role of the peer mentor was highly appreciated by the peer mentee as transformational when the mentee appreciated that indeed they were changing. It is from this perspective that the researcher appreciated the concept of human becoming fronted from Parse's theory (16). These human becoming therefore, was able to be appreciated in the eventual social adjustment and positive academic performance exhibited by the peer mentee.

5) Negative Aspects of Experience of a Peer Mentee

In as much as the researcher would desire to see positive experiences of peer mentorship, allowing the participants to interact in a mutual environment conceptualized by Parse [16]

as human universe was very key. Therefore, majority of the respondents in the focused group discussion reported positive experiences from the peer mentorship programme. However, some respondents reported some aspects of negative experiences especially in the initial stages of engagement. Mentees perception of the peer mentors appeared to play a role in the experiences they had especially in the initial stages of the relationship. Despite the negative experience, the mentee was able to develop abilities of social connectedness through introspection and finally present a harmonious mentor mentee relationship. However, this did not come by itself but with development of resiliency in the peer mentor.

“Coping with new friend was not easy” ...said one respondent. I thought that I was being imposed to someone I didnt like. I also perceived that my mentor was not sharp enough as compared to my friend’s mentor and she was also not of my social status. At one point my mentor felt that I was undermining her and she talked to me harshly in front of my friends. I actually felt so bad that I left the room and went out crying. The following day, she came to me and asked me if I think that the way I was treating her was right and if so we discontinue the mentorship the following day and left. When I gave it a thought, I actually realized that I had not behaved right towards her and when she came the following day to terminate our relationship, I asked her forgiveness. (PMM6b)

When the peer mentees were questioned if they could recommend peer mentorship to any other learner, they all said yes. One of the respondents said....

“It is worth doing it over and over again. In fact, I wish that the school adopts it as a way to go.” (PMM4c)

Another respondent said.....

“Before the process, I don’t think I would have recommended to anyone but for now I believe it is worthy people doing it in schools both for clinical and class work”. (PMM2c)

Another respondent said....

“...Let them start with us, we are ready to also mentor others. It is good”. (PMM5e)

From the responses, it was clear that the respondents felt the impact of peer mentorship. It was agreeably a worthy venture that peer mentees felt would benefit other students if continued the way they had felt the benefit. The readiness expressed by one of the respondents to be trained as mentors also indicate the value and worth of the programme as experienced by the peer mentees.

B. Discussion

Prior concerns about university life revealed a myriad of issues that caused concern among the participants until the time of mentorship. Nevertheless, following mentorship, they deeply appreciated the experience, recalling areas where they received immense help. The findings relate with those of Bagaka’s *et al* [17] in whose study the peer mentees narrated how good their experience with mentorship was.

The perception that peer mentorship had elicited change in the mentee in several dimensions was also shared by Metcalfe [18]. Similarly, the findings of Morales *et al* [19] exhibited change in the ability to plan and seek help as well as courage to

conduct practical’s in the clinical area and therefore reporting satisfaction with the program.

Unanimously, the respondents wished that the program was continued, a similar response echoed in the study by Du Prez, *et al* [7] where respondents wished that the programme would be expanded to other disciplines. Dale *et al* [20], in their study reported that respondents felt that peer mentorship provided a good beginning which was congruent with the findings of this study while Tenenbaum *et al* [21] reported it a rewarding experience.

The participants in this study expressed confidence following the mentorship, similar to the findings of Kapachtsi & Papavasiliou-Alexiou [22] in whose study, the participants gradually gained independence and confidence. Resonating with the findings of Tenenbaum *et al* [21] the peer mentees were able to adapt to new situations, read and undertake deep learning, communicate and convey information effectively and so many other positive attributes.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, peer mentees perceived that peer mentorship was a positive activity that addressed their anxieties and fears while making them independent, strong and able to navigate challenges of the academic environment.

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