Original Article

An Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Mothers with Successful Female Children to Develop a Native Parenting Style

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Abstract
Background: Numerous studies have investigated parental influence, especially the influence of parenting styles on children's development. Accordingly, the present study aimed to identify the components of a native parenting style by exploring the lived experiences of mothers with successful female children.
Methods: This qualitative study was conducted using a descriptive phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of the mothers of female students in the second year of high school in Najafabad, Isfahan, Iran, in the academic year 2018-2019. The participants were selected using purposive sampling. Thus, successful girls were identified from among the students who had a GPA of at least 18 and based on their responses to the items in the Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff, 1989), Keyes Social Well-Being Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and Diener Satisfaction with Life Scale. Finally, 14 students with success criteria were selected. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the students' mothers. The collected data were analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step approach.
Results: A total of 93 primary codes identified in this study were categorized into 23 categories and six main themes: 1) Disciplinary practices (encouragement, punishment, control, and authority), 2) valuing the child (delegating responsibility, paying attention to the child's interests, giving independence, and giving character to the child), 3) positive emotional interactions (intimacy, mature interactions, educational flexibility, acceptance, and recreation and fun activities), 4) establishing boundaries in applying childrearing practices (maternal role, parental agreement, and the central role of parents in childrearing), 5) understanding (family cohesion, family respect, and fair treatment) and 6) parenting dynamics (serving as a role model, gathering information, guiding the child, and fixing parental problems in the child).
Conclusion: In the present study, a component-based model was developed, which seems to be effective in improving parenting styles and children's conditions.
Keywords: Parenting style, Success, Lived experience

Introduction

The family has more influence on a person's development than other environments. Parenting styles are among the factors that affect personal development and refer to a set of parent-child behaviors in different situations (1). Parenting styles are the most important factor in effective child development (2) and affect not only physical health but also all aspects of physical, social, and psychological health and children's success (3).

Many definitions have been proposed for success. For example, Hill (4) argued that successful people are skilled in their work and enthusiastic about doing things, show initiative, and have clear goals, strong thinking, self-confidence, and a pleasant personality. They focus on goals, are resilient, cooperate with others, and learn from failures. Success has various dimensions that include health, good relationships with others, freedom,

emotional stability, well-being, and peace. Besides, success is an internal matter that depends on the individual (5).

Some studies have addressed the characteristics of successful parenting. For example, Einipour and Shabahang (6) considered the characteristics of successful parenting in education to be discipline, stimulation of curiosity, study, counseling, goal setting, reasonable expectations, having information, a calm family environment, and giving independence. Asadi et al (7) also considered the indicators of successful parenting to be appreciation, encouragement, intimacy, positive communication, guidance, responsibility, justice, supervision, control, and serving as a role model.

Despite the disagreement about success, raising successful children is the cultural ideal of every family. Although this concept can be accounted for in the cultural context of each society, it is possible to find

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commonalities in addressing success and, thus, explore parent-child interactions by identifying successful people and exploring their experiences. The insights from these experiences can guide other parents to choose the best parenting practices and strategies for raising their children. Furthermore, given rapid changes, expectations, and conditions, one of the main challenges faced by parents and professionals is to identify the most effective parenting style. Accordingly, this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of mothers with successful female children and identify the components of native parenting.

Methods

This qualitative study was conducted using a descriptive phenomenological approach to describe human experiences in a given context (8). The participants were selected from parents of successful female students who were completing their senior high school studies in the academic year 2017-2018 in Najafabad, Isfahan, Iran. Following a review of the literature and a survey of subject-matter experts, the successful girls were selected based on some criteria including psychological well-being, satisfaction with life, self-esteem, social well-being, GPA of at least 18 out of 20, and the opinions of the school officials. After administering the questionnaires to 150 students, a list of those who scored above the minimum required score on several tests and whose GPA of the previous year was at least 18, was prepared as successful people. The data in this study were collected using the following instruments:

Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Short Form)

his is an 18-item instrument developed by Ryff in 1989. The scale measures six aspects of wellbeing and happiness (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance) on a six-point scale (1 = totally disagree to 6 = totally agree). A respondent's minimum and maximum scores vary from 18 to 108, with higher scores indicating better psychological well-being. The reliability of this scale was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha of 0.79 (9).

Social Well-Being Scale

This 20-item tool was developed by Keyes in 1988. It examines social actualization, social integration, social coherence, social acceptance, and social contribution on a five-point scale ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5). To score each dimension, the total scores of all items related to that dimension are added together. Moreover, the total score of the questionnaire is calculated as the sum of the scores for all items. A higher score indicates higher social health. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 (10).

Diener Satisfaction with Life Scale

The scale was developed by Diener et al. It contains 5 items that are scored on a seven-point scale ranging from totally disagree to totally agree (1 to 7). Higher scores show higher levels of satisfaction with life. The questionnaire is used extensively in studies due to its easy implementation and good psychometric properties (11).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

This scale was developed by Rosenberg in 1989. It contains 10 general statements scored on a four-point scale ranging from totally agree (0) to totally disagree (4). The maximum score on this scale is 30. A score above 25 indicates high self-esteem, 15 to 25 indicates moderate self-esteem, and a score of less than 15 indicates low self-esteem. The Cronbach's alpha value for the scale was reported to be 0.79 (12).

The data in this study were saturated after interviewing 14 mothers of successful girls who met the success criteria. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 70 minutes, and the participants' statements were recorded with their permission. Each interview started with a general question about the story of the participant's life with the child and was followed up by probing questions. Examples of interview questions were as follows:

1. What things have you emphasized the most in raising your child?
2. How much have you agreed with your wife about raising children?
3. What have been your incentives and punishment tools in raising the child?

The researcher provided additional information to further clarify the questions for the participants if they have difficulty understanding the questions. Moreover, when the participants gave a general answer, they were encouraged and asked again to give more details.

After conducting each interview, its content was transcribed. The collected data were then analyzed using a phenomenological approach and Colaizzi's seven-step data analysis method. In the first step, the data were collected through in-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews continued until the data were saturated, i.e. when no new information was obtained with more interviews. In the second step, the content of the interviews was transcribed and reviewed carefully several times to come up with a general understanding of it. The significant statements were extracted and underlined in the fourth step, and they were reviewed to understand their meaning. In the fifth step, the researcher merged the related meanings into a theme. The extracted themes were then matched with the corresponding statements to ensure their accuracy. In the sixth step, the extracted themes were merged into a thorough description of the phenomenon in question. Finally, in the seventh step,

the findings were checked by the participants to ensure their trustworthiness (13-15). In addition, the credibility of the data and the findings were confirmed by subject-matter experts. To comply with ethical considerations, informed consent was obtained from the participants, and their statements were recorded with their permission. Furthermore, the participants' data were kept confidential.

Results

As shown in Table 1, the students were 15-18 years old. Most of them were eleventh-grade high school students. The fathers of most of the children were self-employed. Three mothers were teachers and 11 were housewives. Moreover, one father had a master's degree, five fathers had a bachelor's degree, one had an associate degree, five had a high school diploma, and one father had a middle school degree. The data for maternal education showed that one mother had a master's degree, six had a bachelor's degree, six had a high school diploma, and one had a middle school degree. Most of the children were the first child of the family and none of them was the only child of the family. Furthermore, seven participants stated that they had good socioeconomic status and seven had a moderate socioeconomic position.

As stated earlier, the collected data were analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step approach. Table 2 shows the themes and categories extracted in this study:

Disciplinary practices

Disciplinary practices included the methods used by parents for encouraging, punishing, controlling, and imposing authority on children.

Encouragement

Most of the participants stated that they used verbal

Table 2. The themes and categories extracted in the study

Main themes	Categories
Disciplinary practices	• Encouragement • Punishment • Control • Authority
Valuing the child	• Delegating responsibility • Paying attention to the child's interests • Giving independence • Giving character to the child
Positive emotional interactions	• Intimacy • Mature Interactions • Educational flexibility • Acceptance • Recreation and fun activities
Establishing boundaries in applying childrearing practices	• Maternal role • Parental agreement • The central role of parents in childrearing
Understanding	• Family cohesion • Family respect • Fair treatment
Parenting dynamics	• Serving as a role model • Gathering information • Guiding the child • Fixing parental problems in the child

encouragement and support according to the child's age and needs, and gave gifts to them. For example, one of the participants stated, "*I used to give gifts, but I'm not the type of mom to spoil the child. For example, I didn't buy an Apple phone for the child. I would get something that they need. Now I try to verbally encourage them or give them positive energy*" (Participant 10).

Punishment

Most of the mothers stated that they used verbal punishment and were against physical punishment. Some

Table 1. The participants' demographic data

Row	Age	School grade	Father's job	Mother's job	Father's education	Mother's education	Birth order	Number of siblings	Socioeconomic status
1	18	Twelfth	Retired	Housewife	Bachelor's degree	High school diploma	Third	One brother and sister	Moderate
2	15	Tenth	Retired teacher	Retired teacher	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Second	One brother	Good
3	17	Eleventh	Self-employed	Housewife	High school diploma	High school diploma	Second	One brother	Good
4	18	Twelfth	Self-employed	Housewife	Middle school	Master's degree	First	Two brothers	Good
5	18	Twelfth	Self-employed	Housewife	High school diploma	High school diploma	First	Two brothers	Moderate
6	16	Tenth	Dustman	Housewife	High school diploma	High school diploma	First	One sister	Moderate
7	16	Eleventh	Accountant	Teacher	Master's degree	Bachelor's degree	First	Two sisters	Moderate
8	18	Eleventh	Teacher	Housewife	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	First	One brother	Good
9	17	Eleventh	Self-employed	Housewife	High school diploma	High school diploma	Second	One brother	Moderate
10	15	Eleventh	Self-employed	Housewife	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	First	One sister	Good
11	16	Eleventh	Self-employed	Housewife	Middle school	Middle school	First	Two sisters	Moderate
12	17	Eleventh	Self-employed	Housewife	High school diploma	High school diploma	First	One brother	Moderate
13	17	Eleventh	Self-employed	Housewife	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	First	One brother	Good
14	18	Twelfth	Self-employed	Teacher	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Second	One brother and sister	Good

participants also said that they tried to punish the child for their behavior: "*When I get angry, I give her a cold shoulder. I give her the silent treatment. For example, I make the food but I don't talk to her to make her understand her mistake. I think if I talk about her misconduct, I will make it appear as something plausible. I behave in such a way to make her notice her mistake*" (Participant 3).

Control

The participants stated that they often tended to control their children inconspicuously, and they were aware of their child's activities, knew their friends to some extent, and monitored them: "*I control her unnoticeably. She knows how free she is. For example, she knows how long she is allowed to be in the coffee shop and with whom. She knows that if I lose my trust in her, I will not allow her anymore. She also has three close friends whom I know and she explains everything to me*" (Participant 4).

Authority

The participants stated that exercising authority was one of their parenting practices: "*It's wrong to spoil a child. For example, when my children wanted a doll, I would buy them, but sometimes I refused to do what they wanted. But I knew what they needed at any age and I accepted their reasonable demands. Strictness is effective along with friendliness and empathy. Being assertive is important. But it's not good to be stubborn. I do what I promise and I keep my word. Surrendering to a child is a mistake*" (Participant 10).

Valuing the child

The second theme that emerged in the interviews was giving value to the child, which covered four categories:

Delegating responsibility

Most mothers cared about giving responsibility to their children. According to them, the child should be given responsibilities, even small ones, according to their conditions, so that they get used to accepting responsibility in their life. They also tried to improve their child's social skills by involving them in social situations: "*I even give responsibility to my sons to get used to it. If they work from the beginning, they will get used to it and the work will be easier for them*" (Participant 5).

Paying attention to the child's interests

The participants stated that they tried to treat their children according to their interests and not impose anything on them: "*I try to respect her wishes and interests. But first of all, I try to find out what she wants. If she wants something that is not in her interest, I will talk and convince her, but I will not force her to do what I say*" (Participant 4).

Giving independence

Most of the participants emphasized giving their children autonomy and independence. They did not limit their child and gave them freedom of action in line with the family rules. They also believed that their children had some emotional attachment, but there was no dependence: "*My husband cares a lot about our daughter's independence. He says let her do her work so she can become independent and when she will get married and become a mother she must know what to do*" (Participant 8).

Giving character to the child

The participants stated that they did not physically punish their children, did not call them bad names, tried to keep their child's character and respect them in the presence of others, and did not humiliate them when they wanted to correct their child's wrongdoing by talking about their mistakes individually: "*I always call my children with respect and call them dear. I have never said bad things about my children in public or told them about their mistakes. I always talked to them when we were alone*" (Participant 3).

Positive emotional interactions

The third theme that emerged from the interviews was "positive emotional interactions", which were divided into five categories.

Intimacy

Most of the participants stated that they cared about having a warm and intimate relationship with their children. They also caressed, hugged, and kissed their children. They did not get angry with their child and were always honest with them. Moreover, the mother stated that they tried to make all family members have warm relations with each other and they knew that good relations, love, and affection between parents affect the relationship with their children. Fathers were also friends with their daughters: "*We are very close together. My daughter tells me everything. If she makes a mistake, she confesses it. I listen to her well and do not judge her. That's why she has friendly relationships with me*" (Participant 1).

Mature interactions

The participants reported that they considered their children's age and needs when dealing with them. They would spend time with the child and talk to each other. They also tried to understand each child and treat them according to their needs: "*I tried to support her at any age. For example, she became very aggressive during puberty. I worried about her. I went to a counselor and they told me her aggressive behavior was normal at this age. I endured her until she got better*" (Participant 11).

Educational flexibility

Most of the participants believed that they were flexible with their children and apologized to them if they did

something wrong. If the child's opinion was reasonable for an issue, they would accept it: "*Because I get angry quickly, I will say later that I made this mistake. But she was also wrong. When she says something wise, I will get along with her*" (Participant 8).

Acceptance

The participants reported that they tried to accept their child's feelings and listen to them without judgment: "*My daughter is very emotional. For example, I hug her and confirm her. Maybe later I will say that I can change the situation. Otherwise, I had better take it easy*" (Participant 13).

Recreation and fun activities

Most of the participants stated that they cared about recreation and fun activities in the family as well as special amusement activities for their children: "*We go out a lot. I tell her that she had better come so that her mind is recovered and she can do her school assignments better*" (Participant 11).

Establishing boundaries in applying childrearing practices

This theme included maternal role, parental agreement, and the central role of parents in childrearing:

Maternal role

Most of the mothers believed that they played a more important role in childrearing than their husbands: "*I raised my three children alone. My husband was on the battlefield when our first two children were very young. He also went to work and was not home much to take care of our third daughter*" (Participant 1).

Parental agreement

A majority of the participants stated that parental agreement and empathy are essential for childrearing: "*Both parents play an important role in childrearing. I can't do it alone. My husband can't do it alone. We are more effective together. We may have had minor differences of opinion, but at that moment, I would stay on my husband's side. Then, I would tell him that it would have been better not to do this in front of the children. If parents want to have a good child, they must join forces*" (Participant 14).

Central role of parents in childrearing

Most of the participants stated that they did not allow anyone to interfere in raising their children and decided on their own: "*I did not allow anyone to interfere in our lives. My husband and I have always managed our lives. We raised our children together*" (Participant 4).

Understanding

The fifth theme extracted in this study was understanding

which covered three categories including family cohesion, family respect, and fair treatment:

Family cohesion

The participants stated that to maintain peace in the family, they tried to resolve the disputes between themselves and their husbands without the presence of children, resolve misunderstandings in the family, and have a good mood. They also refrained from favoritism and unfair treatment and tried to keep the whole family together to create a calm and tension-free environment in the family: "*I tried to teach the children to respect older people in the family. There was no favoritism in the family. Whenever I argued with my husband, I told the children that they didn't have the right to interfere*" (Participant 1).

Family respect

The participants stated that they respected their husbands; they did not allow their children to interfere in their quarrels. They also tried to preserve their husbands' dignity as a role model for the children so that they maintain respect for their parents. They considered it essential for the children to visit their grandparents. In addition, they also respected their children: "*My children respect us very much. They have never behaved aggressively or talked loudly. We also have almost respect for them, and we set limits for them*" (Participant 8).

Fair treatment

Most of the participants stated that they did not discriminate between their children and did not compare them. They did not also interfere in the children's arguments and allowed them to solve the problems themselves: "*I treat my three daughters equally. They have not had any complaints yet. For example, they know that their sister did not come with us today, instead she can go out with her aunt another day*" (Participant 7).

Parenting dynamics

Parenting dynamics were divided into four categories in this study including serving as a role model, gathering information, guiding the child, and fixing parental problems in the child:

Serving as a role model

The participants acknowledged that they were the first and best role model for their children. Therefore, they did their best to fulfill this role: "*I tried to be a role model for my children with my behavior. If I ever behaved wrongly, I would explain that my behavior was wrong and they should avoid acting like this*" (Participant 6).

Gathering information

The participants in this study stated that they were aware of the importance of reading and getting help from a

counselor. They also reported that they would accept reasonable and wise advice and suggestions from others: "*During puberty, my daughter was aggressive for a while. I said, well, she's undergoing puberty changes. Thus, I tried to read a lot and search for possible causes of aggression. I didn't say anything when she was nervous. I used to talk to her when she got back in the good mood. I read many books and I realized that I should be careful when the child falls, but let her get up on her own. I was always looking for someone who knew more than me to learn things about raising my children*" (Participant 11).

Guiding the child

Almost all mothers stated that they used verbal guidance and training to help their children. They informed the child of all the issues and told them the existing facts. While respecting the child's opinions, they helped them in making important decisions and explained to them why some actions or behaviors committed by them were wrong: "*Most of the time I guide her and talk. If I find a suitable book, I will tell her to read it*" (Participant 2).

Fixing parental problems in the child

The participants stated that they tried to raise their children in such a way that they do not have their problems and weaknesses: "*I tried to help my daughter not develop my weaknesses and problems. For example, I would ask her father to take her to the bank so that she could get familiar with banking affairs as I was not good at handling my banking affairs*" (Participant 9).

Discussion

The present study aimed to identify the components of the native parenting style of mothers with successful female children. The main themes that emerged in this study were disciplinary practices, valuing the child, positive emotional interactions, establishing boundaries in applying childrearing practices, understanding, and parenting dynamics, as discussed below:

The first theme identified in this study was disciplinary practices which was further subdivided into encouragement, punishment, control, and authority. Similarly, previous studies in Iran have shown that one of the components of successful parenting is discipline. Besides, encouragement and control are other indicators of successful parenting in adolescence (6,7,16,17). The disciplinary practices adopted by parents play an important role in shaping the child's behavior. If parents seek to raise successful children, they should react reasonably and consistently to the child. Effective supervision/control is also one of the important principles of parenting and child mental health. When children understand that they are supervised and controlled by their parents, they feel that they are secure and valued. Of course, supervision should be reasonable and not lead to restrictions. Moreover, assertive parents have children with higher self-confidence because the children know that the rules are clear and must act according to them. Therefore, they do not resist their parents (18).

The second theme identified in this study was valuing the child, which was categorized into delegating responsibility, paying attention to the child's interests, giving independence, and giving character to the child. This finding was consistent with the results reported in previous studies (6,7,17,19-21). Giving responsibility to the child makes them consider the work as their duty and enjoy doing it. As a result, the children do not expect others to do their work. They also feel that they can do things well for themselves or others. Paying attention to the child's interests is also important. If parents determine the child's life path based on their opinions, the child will not be satisfied with life because she does all her work out of compulsion and without interest (18).

Giving independence to children is also a significant indicator of successful parenting. Children are born with motivations such as growing and developing independence. Sometimes parents' behavior causes this natural tendency to disappear and the child sees themselves as dependent on others. Hence, parents must give independence to the child so that she learns to rely on herself and accept responsibility for the tasks assigned to her. Independence should increase with age. In such a way a person can form a unified identity in adolescence and achieve satisfaction with life (22).

The third main theme extracted in the present study was positive emotional interactions including intimacy, mature interactions, educational flexibility, acceptance, and recreation and fun activities, as was indicated in previous studies (7,16,17,21,23,24). Expressing positive emotions and feelings creates a secure bond between parents and children. Receiving attention and positive emotions is one of the basic needs of children. Thus, establishing a relationship through the expression of positive feelings is one of the easiest ways for creating a strong bond between parent and child. In addition to making parents more confident, this also allows the child to easily talk to her parents and feel relaxed during adolescence (25). The quality of parents' marital life has a direct effect on parenting. If the parents' relationship is full of conflict, the child loses a sense of security. Parents who are constantly involved in conflicts, often do not have a good mood and cannot establish positive relationships with their children (25).

The fourth theme identified in this study was establishing boundaries in applying childrearing practices with three categories of maternal role, parental agreement, and the central role of parents in childrearing. This finding was consistent with the data reported in previous studies (17,26). Mothers spend more time with their children and, naturally, they are responsible for most of the child's

education. Although fathers spend less time with their children, they can have a lasting impact. Cooperation between parents also increases their influence. When the child receives the same messages from the parents, she realizes that she has only one way forward. As a result, she can easily make the final decision. However, if the parents are not in harmony, the child becomes ambivalent, and making decisions becomes difficult (27). It is also better for parents not to allow others to interfere in raising the child. If the child has many caregivers constantly commenting on her upbringing, parents lose their position in raising the child. In this case, the parents are also dissatisfied with the current situation and use ineffective strategies to control the child. As a result, the child's growth may be disturbed (28).

The fifth theme extracted in this study was understanding, which was subdivided into family cohesion, family respect, and fair treatment, as highlighted in previous studies (6,7,16,21). A peaceful family environment is a vital factor in ensuring the health of its members. If the members are together, respect opinions, and have good relationships, they can grow well and achieve their goals by relying on a safe family environment. On the other hand, if there are constant conflicts in the family, the members become negatively affected by these conflicts, and the family cannot fulfill its duty, which is the effective upbringing of children (22). Moreover, since each child has their characteristics, parents should behave toward each child according to their conditions. Of course, the behavior should not be such that the children think that parents discriminate between them as it causes jealousy between children and disrupts their emotional bonds (27).

Finally, the sixth theme extracted in this study was parenting dynamics which covered categories such as serving as a role model, gathering information, guiding the child, and fixing parental problems in the child. This finding was consistent with previous studies (6,7,16). Children spend most of their time with their parents. They are, thus, influenced by their characteristics and assimilated with them. Considering the current social conditions and the development of mass communication devices and technologies, parents need to continuously update their information and seek more knowledge. Such parents are better able to use effective strategies in any situation. They also know better in which situations to seek help from experts. As a result, they can protect their health and sense of self-sufficiency as they find an efficient way to solve problems. They also ensure their children's health because their problems are solved effectively and systematically (28).

The present study was conducted with some limitations. First, the study was performed only on female students. Thus, care should be exercised when generalizing the results to male students. Second, this study employed a qualitative approach. Therefore, its findings have limited generalizability. The researcher had no control over the participants' honesty and whether they disclosed their information frankly, and this probably affected the results. Accordingly, future studies are required to identify successful boys and explore parenting styles. Other studies can also investigate lived experiences of parents of successful children and develop a more comprehensive model.

Conclusion

Overall, the data in this study indicated that positive emotional interactions, disciplinary practices, understanding, valuing the child, parenting dynamics, and establishing boundaries in the application of childrearing practices are indicators of successful parenting. Thus, since parenting style has lasting effects on children and parents can raise successful children by knowing effective parenting practices, a parenting model was developed based on these indicators.

Since the proposed model was based on the indicators extracted from interviews with mothers of successful female children, it seems that the model can improve the parenting style and enhance childrearing practices. The insights from this study can also be used by counselors and psychologists to provide services to parents to adopt effective parenting practices. The developed model can even be incorporated into training programs for parents.

Competing Interests
The authors reported no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval
This study was approved by the ethics committee of Isfahan University (ethics code: IR.UI.REC.1398.044).

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