



Performance Appraisal of Faculty Members in Higher Educational Institutions: A Study

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ABSTRACT

The performance appraisal of faculty members is an essential component for imparting quality education and institutional effectiveness in higher education. It provides insights into the strengths and areas of improvement for faculty members while confirming that educational standards and institutional goals are achieved. This research paper presents an empirical study of performance appraisal systems implemented in higher educational institutions (HEIs) using mixed-methods approach using surveys and interviews covering 351 faculty members, few administrators, and HR personnel serving various universities in central region of Chhattisgarh. The study explores the appraisal mechanisms in vogue, their effectiveness, and the challenges faced by academic institutions in evaluating faculty performance. The findings reveal some key issues such as the lack of transparency, subjective bias, and the need for a more holistic approach to faculty evaluation. Suggestions for improving appraisal systems include emphasizing the integration of multiple performance metrics and the promotion of continuous professional development for faculty members and other aspects covering the responses of faculty members.

KEY WORDS: Performance appraisal, faculty members, higher education, evaluation systems, institutional effectiveness, professional development, subjective bias, quality assurance.

INTRODUCTION

The performance appraisal (PA) of faculty members in higher educational institutions (HEIs) is a widely discussed topic in academia. It is essential for ensuring that educators contribute effectively to the institution's academic goals, research initiatives, and community engagement. Traditional faculty appraisal systems, however, are often criticized for being overly simplistic, subjective, and ineffective in measuring the true impact of a faculty member's performance.

This study explores the current practices of faculty performance appraisal in HEIs, highlighting the gaps and challenges inherent in these systems. The paper also aims to propose a more robust framework for the evaluation of faculty that aligns with modern educational goals and ensures continuous faculty development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) Goal setting theory suggests that clear, specific, and challenging goals enhance performance. In the context of faculty evaluation, goal-setting theory suggests that clear and well-communicated evaluation criteria can drive improved faculty performance. This theory is especially relevant when institutions establish explicit targets related to teaching quality, research output, and service contributions. Faculty members who understand the



expectations and are involved in the goal-setting process are more likely to excel in their performance. He suggested leadership strategies, including performance management, which are relevant for higher education administrators managing faculty appraisal systems.

- **Application:** In performance appraisal, this theory supports the practice of setting clear objectives and measurable performance standards for faculty members.

Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964)

Expectancy theory emphasizes the relationship between effort, performance, and outcomes. It suggests that individuals are motivated to act in certain ways based on the expected rewards. In the academic context, faculty members are more likely to engage in behaviours that are likely to lead to positive outcomes (e.g., promotions, tenure, or awards). Performance appraisals in HEIs should therefore link clear outcomes (like rewards, promotions, and career advancement) to the evaluation process to ensure that faculty members are motivated to perform well.

- **Application:** This theory informs the idea that faculty appraisals should be tied to tangible rewards, such as tenure decisions, salary increases, or professional development opportunities.

360-Degree Feedback Model

This model involves gathering feedback from multiple sources, such as students, peers, supervisors, and self-assessments. The 360-degree feedback approach aims to provide a comprehensive and balanced evaluation of faculty performance, reducing the bias inherent in relying on a single evaluation source (e.g., student evaluations or peer reviews).

- **Application:** This model is often applied in HEIs to assess teaching quality, research productivity, and service contributions. It helps mitigate the limitations of individual appraisal methods by integrating diverse perspectives.

Key Aspects, Issues, Best Practices and Recent Developments in Faculty Evaluation

KEY ASPECTS

Performance appraisal systems in higher educational institutions (HEIs) play a critical role in assessing faculty performance, guiding their professional development, and aligning institutional goals with faculty efforts. However, designing and implementing effective appraisal systems presents several challenges, which are compounded by the evolving demands of the higher education landscape. The **key aspects** of these appraisal systems, the **challenges** they face, and the **best practices** that have emerged, alongside the **evolving nature** of faculty evaluation.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The performance appraisal of faculty members typically involves assessment across several key domains, which may vary depending on institutional priorities:

- **Teaching Effectiveness:** The quality of instruction is often the most scrutinized aspect of faculty performance. This can include student evaluations, peer reviews, and self-assessment. Metrics might also assess the development of innovative teaching strategies, course design, and engagement with students.
- **Research Output:** Faculty research is measured through publications, conference participation, grant acquisition, and research collaborations. The quality and impact of research are often prioritized, but traditional metrics like journal impact factors are increasingly being questioned for not capturing research that has social or practical relevance.
- **Service to the Institution:** This includes faculty involvement in institutional governance, committee work, mentorship, and community outreach. Service contributions are essential but often undervalued in traditional appraisal systems.
- **Professional Development:** Continuous growth, including participation in professional conferences, training, and workshops, is also an essential aspect of faculty evaluation. It reflects a commitment to lifelong learning and keeping up with changes in pedagogy and research.



Incorporating a Balanced Approach to Teaching, Research, and Service

- **Holistic evaluation** involves considering all three aspects of faculty work—teaching, research, and service—in a balanced way. Institutions should avoid overemphasizing one domain (e.g., research) and ensure that faculty contributions to teaching quality and institutional service are given equal weight.

Use of Peer Review for Teaching

- While peer reviews for research are common, peer evaluations of teaching should also be prioritized. Peer teaching reviews offer more context and nuance compared to student evaluations, providing faculty with constructive feedback on teaching methods, course design, and student engagement.

Flexible and Contextual Evaluation

- Institutions should be mindful that faculty roles can vary widely depending on discipline, career stage, and institutional type. For example, faculty members in teaching-intensive institutions may have different expectations compared to those at research-focused institutions. Appraisal systems should be **context-sensitive** and flexible, allowing for adjustments based on the specific responsibilities of faculty members.

Issues in Faculty Performance Appraisal Systems & Solutions from Interviews of Respondents

Subjectivity and Bias

Many studies highlight the challenge of subjectivity in faculty evaluations, particularly in peer reviews and student evaluations. For instance, faculty members may receive overly positive evaluations from colleagues with whom they have a strong personal relationship, or conversely, negative reviews from those with whom they have a professional rivalry. Additionally, student evaluations can reflect biases related to gender, race, or the perceived difficulty of the course rather than the quality of teaching.

- **Solution:** Institutions can address this challenge by incorporating multiple sources of feedback, providing training on bias reduction, and developing clear and standardized evaluation criteria.

Overemphasis on Research or certain metrics

In many HEIs, faculty performance appraisals are disproportionately focused on research output, such as the number of publications, research grants, and citation counts. While research is important, this focus can neglect teaching quality and service contributions, leading to imbalances in faculty workloads and expectations.

- **Solution:** A more balanced approach that equally emphasizes teaching, research, and service contributions is needed. Incorporating **teaching portfolios** and **service evaluations** can help create a more comprehensive assessment of faculty performance.

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Lack of Developmental Feedback

Traditional performance appraisals often focus on summative evaluations—assessing what has been done rather than how faculty members can improve. This can be demotivating, especially when the feedback is vague or overly critical.

- **Solution:** Appraisal systems should incorporate **formative feedback**, with clear recommendations for professional development. Linking appraisals to **mentorship programs** and **continuing education** can support faculty growth and improvement.

Inconsistent Evaluation Criteria

- Different departments or faculties may use different criteria for performance evaluations. While some may prioritize teaching, others may focus more on research output. This lack of standardization leads to confusion and inconsistency, especially when evaluating faculty across departments or institutions.

Lack of Feedback and Development Focus



- Often, performance appraisals in HEIs are used as a form of judgment rather than a tool for improvement. Faculty members may receive feedback without clear guidance on how to improve or develop professionally. Without concrete developmental support, appraisal systems fail to motivate faculty or encourage growth.

Low willingness to Change

- Faculty and administrators may exhibit low willingness to change from traditional beliefs in appraisal systems to the new systems due to the apprehension related to the job security or compensation issues. There is often institutional inertia, where new approaches to faculty evaluation are met with scepticism or reluctance, especially in large, established universities.

Balancing Quantitative and Qualitative Measures

- Many appraisal systems rely heavily on quantitative metrics (e.g., number of publications, research grants), which can neglect the qualitative aspects of faculty work, such as teaching innovation, mentorship, and contributions to institutional governance. Finding ways to balance both is a significant challenge.

Best Practices in Faculty Performance Appraisal

Multi-Source Feedback (360-Degree Evaluation)

As mentioned earlier, using a combination of student feedback, peer reviews, self-assessments, and administrative evaluations helps create a more comprehensive and balanced assessment of faculty performance. This multi-source feedback model is gaining traction as it reduces the bias associated with single-source evaluations and promotes greater fairness and accuracy.

Clear and Transparent Criteria

Performance appraisals should be based on clear, well-defined, and publicly available criteria. Faculty should understand exactly how their performance will be assessed. This transparency promotes fairness and helps ensure that evaluations align with the institution's goals.

Recognition of Teaching, Research, and Service

Effective appraisal systems should recognize the full scope of faculty responsibilities, including teaching, research, and service. Institutions should avoid overemphasizing one area—especially research—at the expense of others. A balanced approach that considers teaching innovation, the impact of research, and contributions to service and administration is essential.

Focus on Professional Development

Instead of focusing purely on performance outcomes, appraisals should emphasize faculty development. Constructive feedback, mentoring, and opportunities for continued learning should be central to the appraisal process. Linking performance appraisals to faculty development programs can help foster continuous improvement.

EVALUATION METHODS

Appraisal systems often rely on various methods, including:

- **Student Evaluations:** Widely used for assessing teaching quality. They are typically anonymous surveys that gather feedback on aspects like teaching effectiveness, clarity of presentation, and engagement. However, these have been criticized for student bias and limited scope.
- **Peer Reviews:** Faculty colleagues evaluate each other's teaching, research, and contributions to service. While peer evaluations can provide valuable insights, they can also be subject to personal biases, conflicts of interest, or lack of standardization.



- **Self-Assessments:** Faculty members evaluate their own work, highlighting accomplishments, challenges, and development needs. This method can be highly subjective but allows faculty to reflect on their growth and future goals.
- **Administrative/External Reviews:** Administrative or external evaluations may involve department heads or external experts assessing faculty performance based on defined criteria, such as research impact or alignment with institutional goals.

Recent Developments in Faculty Evaluation (Post – covid)

The nature of faculty evaluation is evolving due to several **external and internal factors**:

Increased Focus on Teaching Quality

- Historically, faculty evaluations have prioritized research output, but there is a growing recognition that **teaching quality** should be given equal importance. With the rise of student-centered learning, blended teaching, and online education, institutions are adopting more sophisticated methods to assess teaching effectiveness, such as peer teaching reviews, teaching portfolios, and classroom observations.

Integration of Technology in Evaluations

- **Technology** is increasingly being used to streamline the appraisal process. Online surveys, digital teaching portfolios, and data analytics tools allow for more efficient data collection and analysis. Institutions are also using learning management systems (LMS) and student engagement metrics to track teaching effectiveness.

Shift Towards Outcome-Based Evaluation

- There is an emerging trend toward **outcome-based evaluation**, where faculty performance is assessed based on the impact of their work, rather than just outputs. For example, in research, the emphasis is shifting from the number of publications to the societal or practical impact of research findings.

Recognition of Non-Traditional Contributions

- As the role of faculty in universities expands to include community engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and service to society, performance appraisal systems are adapting to recognize **non-traditional contributions**. Faculty mentoring, outreach, and public engagement are gaining increasing weight in appraisal systems.

Literature Review

In addition to the comments of researchers described above, some of the earlier studies which are relevant for this study are presented below:

The Role of Student Evaluations in Faculty Appraisals (Marsh, 2007)

Student evaluations of teaching (SET) are one of the most common methods for assessing faculty performance, particularly in terms of teaching effectiveness. Marsh's (2007) review of over 100 studies on SET found that while these evaluations provide valuable insights into teaching quality, they are also influenced by factors such as course difficulty, instructor-student rapport, and even the students' own biases. Despite their widespread use, SET have limitations and should be supplemented with other forms of evaluation.

- **Findings:** While SET can be useful, they are more reliable when used in conjunction with peer reviews, self-assessments, and other performance indicators.

Peer Review and Faculty Development (O'Neill & Stalford, 2007)

Peer review is often used to evaluate faculty members' teaching and research. O'Neill and Stalford (2007) found that peer reviews, when conducted effectively, can be a valuable tool for faculty development. However, the quality of peer reviews depends on the expertise and training of the reviewers, as well as the institutional culture surrounding feedback. In some cases, peer evaluations can be biased, inconsistent, or insufficiently detailed.

- **Findings:** Peer review is beneficial for professional growth, but it must be structured and conducted by trained, impartial reviewers to be truly effective.



Challenges of Faculty Appraisal Systems (Penny, 2003)

Penny (2003) discusses the challenges faced by HEIs in implementing effective faculty appraisal systems. He highlights issues such as inconsistency across departments, reliance on outdated metrics, and the overemphasis on research at the expense of teaching. He suggests that a more integrated and flexible approach is needed, one that takes into account the diverse roles that faculty members play in institutions.

- **Findings:** Faculty appraisal systems should be holistic, transparent, and adaptable to the unique contexts of different academic disciplines and institutional settings.

The Impact of Research Output on Appraisals (Hattie & Marsh, 1996)

Hattie and Marsh (1996) examined the relationship between research and teaching, finding that while research productivity is an important criterion for faculty evaluation, it should not overshadow teaching effectiveness. Research and teaching are often treated as distinct domains in faculty evaluations, but the two are increasingly seen as interconnected, especially in research-intensive institutions.

- **Findings:** Effective faculty performance appraisal systems should recognize the interdependence of teaching and research, rather than treating them as separate areas of evaluation.

Performance Appraisal in HEIs

Performance appraisal systems in HEIs are designed to assess faculty contributions in three key areas: teaching, research, and service. These areas are considered the pillars upon which academic success is built. However, how these areas are evaluated varies across institutions.

- **Teaching Performance:** Traditional methods for evaluating teaching effectiveness include student feedback surveys, peer reviews, and self-assessments. However, these methods are often criticized for being influenced by student biases or lack of objectivity (**Marsh, 2007**).
- **Research Output:** Faculty research is generally evaluated through published papers, research grants, and participation in conferences. While these indicators are essential, they do not account for the quality or societal impact of the research. This seminal work outlines the concept of scholarship in higher education and argues for a more holistic approach to faculty evaluation, recognizing teaching, research, and service as equally important components (**Boyer, 1990**).
- **Service to the Institution:** Faculty contributions to committees, administration, and outreach programs are essential but frequently overlooked or undervalued in traditional performance appraisals (**O'Neill & Stalford, 2007**).
- **Clifton et.al (2003)** discusses the strengths-based approaches to performance management, which could be applied to faculty evaluations to enhance faculty motivation and institutional outcomes.
- **Baron (2008)** primarily focused on organizational behavior, it provides relevant insights into performance management, including methods for evaluating and enhancing employee performance. While **Marshall (2009)** offers insights into enhancing faculty teaching practices through effective evaluation and feedback mechanisms.
- **Seldin (2009)**, on the other hand provides a comprehensive guide to evaluating faculty performance across multiple domains, including teaching, research, and service, offering practical advice for administrators and HR managers.
- **Cashin (1990)** revisits the validity and reliability of student ratings of teaching effectiveness, which are a key component of performance appraisals in many institutions.
- **Klein (2008)** argued for a more comprehensive evaluation system that considers multiple sources of feedback, including peer reviews, self-assessments, and student evaluations, to better capture faculty performance.

Challenges in Faculty Performance Appraisal

Several challenges in faculty performance appraisal are commonly identified in the literature:



- **Subjectivity and Bias:** Many appraisal systems are criticized for being subjective, with biases from students, peers, and administrators influencing the final evaluation. This study examines the impact of teaching on student learning and provides evidence supporting the use of student evaluations in faculty performance appraisal (Cohen 2001, Cohen & McKeachie, 1980).
- **Lack of Standardization:** There is no universally accepted system for evaluating faculty, leading to inconsistencies across institutions. (Wilkerson et al., 2000) explores strategies for improving faculty teaching practices, including the role of performance appraisals and feedback mechanisms in fostering professional growth.
- **Overemphasis on Teaching:** Teaching often receives disproportionate attention, leaving research and service undervalued in the evaluation process (Hattie & Marsh, 1996).
- **Green et.al** (2002) reviews the challenges facing institutions in evaluating faculty performance and proposes recommendations for improvement, including the importance of aligning appraisal systems with institutional goals.
- **Zhang et. al** (2011) focused on the challenges and best practices in evaluating faculty performance within higher education institutions, particularly in terms of teaching effectiveness.

Research Gap

Though good number of researchers have been delving into various aspects of performance appraisals in various contexts in the past, very few studies have been cited for faculty evaluation. This study fills the gap and provides a new approach through the responses of academicians, administrations and other personnel interested in faculty evaluation in HEIs especially in the central region of Chhattisgarh.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the level of satisfaction of faculty towards their appraisal systems in select universities (HEIs) central region of Chhattisgarh state.
2. To elicit responses of faculty with regard to their existing appraisal systems and the reasons for dissatisfaction in the modern methods adopted in select universities (HEIs) central region of Chhattisgarh state.
3. To suggest ways to improve the quality of implementation of Performance Appraisals in various HEIs in the central region of Chhattisgarh state.

Hypothesis

To meet the objectives, suitable hypothesis was framed.

H01: There is no significant association between level of satisfaction and methods used in HEIs for faculty implementation.

H02: There is no significant association between best practices adopted and appraisee satisfaction or effectiveness of appraisal processes.

Research Methodology

This empirical study employed a mixed-methods approach to gather data from a range of higher educational institutions. The primary data collection tools included:

1. **Surveys:** Questionnaires covering 30 points were distributed to 351 respondents consisting of faculty members, department heads, and HR personnel in five select universities in central Chhattisgarh (Raipur and adjoining areas). The survey covered areas such as satisfaction with the current appraisal system, perceived fairness, and the influence of the appraisal on career development.
2. **Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 senior administrators and HR managers to understand the rationale behind the chosen appraisal systems and to identify barriers in implementation.
3. **Descriptive statistics** were used to quantify survey responses, while thematic analysis was used for interview data.

Major Findings

Effectiveness of Current Appraisal Systems

The study found that most HEIs rely on a combination of student evaluations, peer reviews, and self-assessments to evaluate teaching effectiveness. However, 65% of faculty members expressed dissatisfaction with the current system, citing issues such as:

- **Lack of Clarity:** Many faculty members were unclear about the criteria used to evaluate them.
- **Student Bias:** A significant number of faculty members felt that student evaluations were influenced by factors unrelated to teaching quality, such as course difficulty and personal rapport.



In terms of research output, faculty members were generally satisfied with the measures used (e.g., publications, grants, and conference presentations). However, 72% of respondents stated that the appraisal system did not adequately recognize the societal impact of their research.

Challenges Faced by Institutions

Institutional challenges identified included:

- **Subjectivity:** Many administrators acknowledged that personal bias played a significant role in performance evaluations, particularly in peer reviews.
- **Inconsistent Evaluation Metrics:** Different departments within the same institution often used varying criteria to assess faculty performance, leading to inconsistent appraisals.
- **Limited Professional Development:** Only 41% of faculty members felt that the appraisal system contributed to their professional development or provided clear pathways for career advancement.

Table I: Perceptions of Faculty towards the methods adopted in Appraisal Systems

Appraisal Methods	Reasons for dissatisfaction	Percentage	Mean Scores
360-Degree Feedback	Subjectivity in peer reviews	37%	2.68
Student Feedback Mechanism	Unrelated to performance - Course difficulty and personal rapport / inconsistent	65%	2.53
Self-Assessment	Bias and job security		
Peer Review	Personal Rapport or image		
Research Output	Usefulness of research output / societal impact	72 %	2.41
External Reviews by experts	Job Insecurity & Compensation Issues	59%	2.47

Source: Computed Data

Table II: Relationship between Satisfaction and other aspects of appraisal mechanisms

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION OF RESPONDENTS						
		SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Performance improvement training to enable them to perform better	Between Groups	212.634	4	53.158	353.495	.000
	Within Groups	29.241	195	.150		
	Total	241.875	199			
Research Output	Between Groups	242.815	4	60.704	250.871	.000
	Within Groups	47.185	195	.242		
	Total	290.000	199			
Recognition & support to faculty/ humanitarian interaction to motivate	Between Groups	322.572	4	80.643	309.527	.000
	Within Groups	51.303	195	.263		
	Total	373.875	199			



Individualized support and mentoring	Between Groups	368.722	4	92.181	303.023	.000
	Within Groups	59.278	195	.304		
	Total	428.000	199			
Faculty empowerment to handle challenges	Between Groups	177.170	4	44.293	237.741	.000
	Within Groups	36.330	195	.186		
	Total	213.500	199			
Sense of Commitment	Between Groups	181.894	4	45.474	239.74	.000
	Within Groups	36.981	195	.190		
	Total	218.875	199			
Adequate salary and promotions based on outcome of Appraisal results	Between Groups	59.540	4	14.885	139.878	.000
	Within Groups	21.055	195	.108		
	Total	80.595	199			

Source: Computed Data

It is observed that the effects of p value ($0 > 0.5$) level shown are statistically significant. The results in the appraisal satisfaction shows that the F-value comprising skills and training of faculty members and enable them to perform their job better is 353.495, research output is 250.871, Recognition and support, humanitarian interaction to motivate faculty is 309.527, individualized support and mentoring is 303.023, faculty empowerment to handle challenges is 237.741, a sense of commitment is 239.741 and adequate salary and promotions is 139.878 as an outcome of appraisal results shows the difference is statistically significant at 5% level of degree of freedom and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is a significant association existing between method, fairness of evaluation and their satisfaction with their current appraisal systems.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that the current performance appraisal systems in many HEIs are inadequate for truly capturing the multifaceted roles of faculty members. While teaching effectiveness and research output are important, service to the institution and community is often undervalued. Additionally, the subjective nature of many appraisal systems undermines the objectivity and fairness of the evaluations.

A more comprehensive approach is needed—one that integrates multiple evaluation metrics and emphasizes continuous professional development. The study also recommends incorporating peer and student feedback, but in a way that minimizes biases. Furthermore, a stronger emphasis on faculty contributions beyond teaching and research, such as community engagement and mentorship, should be integrated into the evaluation criteria.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance faculty performance appraisal systems in HEIs:

1. **Holistic Evaluation Framework:** Develop an evaluation system that considers teaching, research, and service contributions equally. Faculty performance should be assessed not just on quantitative outputs (e.g., publications and student grades) but also on qualitative factors such as impact, innovation, and mentorship.
2. **Standardized Criteria:** Institutions should adopt standardized evaluation criteria across departments to ensure consistency and fairness. These criteria should be transparent and clearly communicated to faculty members.



3. **Bias Minimization:** Use multiple sources of feedback, including peer, student, and self-assessment, while employing mechanisms to reduce biases in each. Training for evaluators on how to recognize and mitigate bias should be mandatory.
4. **Professional Development:** Appraisals should be linked to professional development programs that provide clear career growth opportunities and continuous learning for faculty members. Feedback from appraisals should be constructive and focused on faculty development.
5. **Regular Review of the Appraisal System:** HEIs should regularly review and update their performance appraisal systems to ensure they are aligned with evolving educational goals and industry standards.

Areas of future Research

The findings of the study can be used to verify in different context and empirical research can be affected using other analytical methods.

CONCLUSION

Performance appraisal systems in higher educational institutions play a critical role in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of teaching, research, and service. However, current systems often fail to provide a comprehensive and objective assessment of faculty contributions. By implementing a more holistic, transparent, and bias-free evaluation framework, HEIs can better support faculty development and improve institutional effectiveness.

The findings of this study emphasize the need for a shift towards a more balanced and comprehensive appraisal system that not only measures faculty output but also recognizes their broader contributions to the academic community and society.

Empirical studies emphasize the importance of addressing challenges like bias, subjectivity, and overemphasis on research, while best practices advocate for multi-source feedback, transparent evaluation criteria, and a holistic approach to faculty assessment. As HEIs continue to evolve, appraisal systems must adapt to account for the diverse roles faculty members play in teaching, research, and service, ensuring that the evaluation process is both comprehensive and supportive of professional growth.

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