

*Original Research*

# The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Employee Retention in Pakistan: Function of Job Embeddedness as Mediator

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## Abstract

This research studies the influence of transformative leadership (TL) on retaining employees (ER) in businesses, as well as the function of job embeddedness (JE) as a mediating factor. 428 individuals were surveyed for information from diverse firms using convenience sampling. Numerous associations were estimated using smart PLS structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). All of these criteria show a considerable positive connection, as hypothesized. This analysis contains a number of insights that will benefit the individual in the corporate sector. From the outcomes, transformative leadership and ER have a favorable and substantial relationship. Correspondingly JE and ER were found to have a significantly positive relationship. JE served as a stimulating mediator in the interaction between transformative leadership and staff retention. Leaders should employ transformational leadership traits include creating a vision statement for employees, emphasizing on desired outcomes, implementing challenge solutions, having a purpose and direction, and devoting time to team professional development to increase JE and ER.

**Keywords:** Leadership, transformational leadership, employee retention, job embeddedness.

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## Introduction

Leadership is a vital aspect that impacts employee and organizational well-being mostly as promoters of individual and group efforts. Transformational leadership is a well-known concept in the leadership literature among academics and practitioners over the last two and a half decades (Bass B. a., 1990). TL attracts recruits by appealing to higher moral standards and concepts (Burns, 1978). The model developed for this investigation is best explained by the TL theory. The hypothesis backs up the assumption that transformational leaders change their subordinates' behavior, resulting in a higher ER (Burns, 1978; Sow, 2016). Furthermore, TL improves employees' intellectual abilities (Fletcher, 2019). According to a previous study, the TL process has helped some of the world's most successful organizations accomplish their objectives (Dedaj, 2017; Jiang, 2017; Maaitah, 2018).

When it comes to achieving and maintaining success, employee retention is critical (Paul, 2018). ER has long been a major issue for businesses considering experienced individuals make critical contributions to an organization's performance (Das, 2013). Furthermore, even if it is difficult to work in this era of strong competition, ER has a significant influence on the long-term viability of companies (Sulamuthu G. A., 2018). As an outcome executive must eliminate the causes of poor ER with the help of the organizational team (Juneja, 2015). Some researchers believe that transformational leadership is critical for ER as well as achieving personal and organizational goals (Gyensare, 2017; Khan, 2015; Nasir, 2016). TL aspects which include "idealized influence, inspiring motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration" influence employee efficiency and turnover (Jiang, 2017).

JE refers to how deep professionals are engrossed in their work or cooperation (Sekiguchi, 2008). When people feel linked to their jobs, locations, cooperation, people, and challenges at work, they believe their careers to be more successful. "The combined forces that keep a person from leaving his or her employment" is what job embeddedness refers to (Yao, 2004). It assists people in integrating themselves into the framework of their workplaces, businesses, and communities. Employee embedding and retention are now a topic of increasing attention in organizational management (Aboobaker, 2019). TL can help individuals find motivation in their job, forecast their profession's prospects and the extent to which one's work has an impact hence individuals are more likely to stay put if they are engaged in a strong network. (Ng, 2005).

This research covers the literature on transformative leadership and employee retention before exploring the serial mediation function of JE in the link between TL and ER. The methods, data and measurement, and analysis are then presented, along with the relevant findings. The study's last portions are mostly devoted to examining the study's significance and findings.

## Theoretical Background

A leader who practices transformational leadership becomes an excellent listener who intends to recognize employee issues. Connecting with people may aid in the faster resolution of challenges. It can also assist to sustain organizational performance through

collaboration. All managers should strive to put others first. This person should make a practical decision about whether or not to lead (Hassan, 2019). Job embedding and employee retention are intimately connected. (Liden, 2014). The idea that transformative leaders alter the outlooks of their people, aspirations, and beliefs is the basis of it (Bass B. M., 1985). Leaders' traits encourage change, and they link and build pathways for change to reach the desired outcomes (Burns, 1978). Burns' original concept states that leaders may influence their subordinates' lives by altering their objectives, insights, values, and expectations. The independent variable TL is connected to four components based on the (Bass B. M., 1985) theory which included individual consideration (IC) as it specifies the notion of focusing and prioritizing the requirements of coworkers. The leader serves as a role model and trainer to inspire employees to participate in group projects. Managers or leaders offering aid and encouragement to team members to produce new ideas on how to enhance existing processes or instructions to reach successful outcomes is known as intellectual stimulation (IS). This helps to raise ER. Idealized inspiration entails assisting individuals in achieving tasks. Leaders develop and communicate goals for the team and try to keep their team motivated to reach that goal. Leaders support and advise their employees in fulfilling their assignments. Setting a good example and demonstrating values such as rational thought, confidence, righteousness, optimism, appreciation, respect, and proper communication are all aspects of idealized influence (II) as a manager (Bass B. M., 1985). These elements have a big impact on ER in the workplace.

The foundation of transformational leadership is the replacement of ideas for leaders and subordinates that are relevant and new. Leaders assist subordinates in connecting with the business's goal by guiding them to recognize their strengths and shortcomings and giving duties to encourage them to take on more responsibility. TL is extremely beneficial in ensuring employee job embedding and retention across promising firms (Block, 2003). A considerable measure of study has been done on employee retention, emphasizing its relevance for all sorts of businesses. It is much more expensive to lose employees than it is to maintain them through incentives (Carter, 2019). Leadership benefits both employees and corporations. TL has an impact on ER both directly and indirectly (Nohe, 2017). TL enhances ER and decreases turnover intention (Abouria, 2017). Transformative leaders influence the implications which retains employees (Sulamuthu G. A., 2018). Furthermore, transformational leadership supports the association between TL and E R. Employee retention is better when leaders demonstrate aspects of TL. TL concept was employed to investigate the link between TL and ER in the prior investigations (Adekanbi, 2016).

JE will address the issue of retention more directly (Ghosh, 2013). In their study, (Ma, 2018) found that work embeddedness can boost ER. They also indicated that the effective strategy to reduce turnover is to increase workers' job embeddedness. Employees who have a stronger sense of belonging are less inclined to depart (Dechawatanapaisal, 2017). Moreover, (Coetzer, 2017) stated that job embeddedness considers a wide range of characteristics that motivate workers to stay. Labor turnover intentions are closely linked to JE (Shah, 2020). It is a critical aspect of employee retention, and transformational leadership may help in accomplishing it (Cohen-Charash, 2001). The newly coined notion of JE refers to the idea of retaining people in firms rather than having them leave frequently (Lee, 2012). Employee retention and turnover intentions may be determined

by job embeddedness (Harris, 2012). According to a previous study, employees with strong job embeddedness have a lower likelihood of quitting their jobs (Karatepe, 2014). Retention refers to an organization's ongoing and deliberate endeavor to keep informed, capable, and competent people. It involves taking initiatives to urge and convince staff to stay as long as feasible with the organization. Intention to leave refers to the process of people departing from their jobs or transferring inside a firm as well as any employment change, whether resigning or changing careers (Rust, 2012).

The research evaluation and requirements aided in the formulation of a retention analysis for employees who have a general tendency to jump from job to job throughout the world. Previous research has discovered the impact of important retention elements such as transformative leadership and job embedding. As a result, a retention analysis framework was created (Figure 1), focused on viable needs, underlying theories, and significances.

### Hypotheses Development

The goal of this study was to analyze the relation involving transformative leadership and employee retention. Job embeddedness was also introduced as a mediator to investigate if these two factors may mediate the association between TL and ER. Figure 1 depicts a conceptual framework.

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and job embeddedness.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between job embeddedness and employee retention.

H4: There is a mediating effect of job embeddedness in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention.

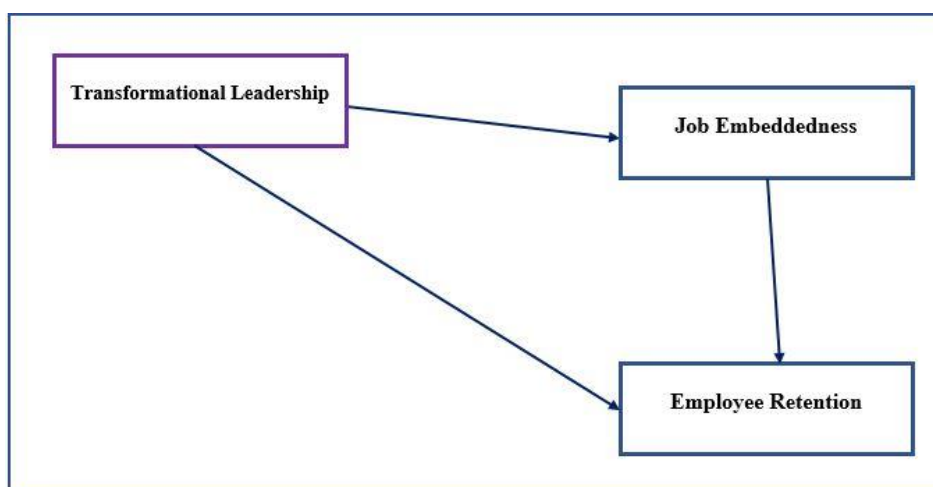


Figure 1. Research Model

## Research Methodology and Data Analysis

Employees from Pakistan's major private company groupings are represented in this survey. Several firms with distinct businesses are included under one group. A questionnaire-based survey was done among IT, educational institutions, banking, medicines, industry workers and participation was completely voluntary. The participants for the research were chosen using a structured random sampling approach. A total of 480 replies were collected from professionals at all levels, including entry-level, middle-level, and top-level. 428 valid data were selected for statistical analysis after the extreme values and missing instances were removed. The questionnaire's components were taken from existing research and rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The link between transformative leadership, job embeddedness, and employee retention was investigated using a quantitative research technique. Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to examine the data. The measurement model and the structural model

should be used to analyze PLS data (Barroso, 2010). The standardized regression coefficients for the model are meant to describe the interconnectivity of all variables examined (Götz, 2010). Preliminary tests and descriptive statistics using SPSS V26 were also used in the current investigation before using SEM. SmartPLS, a statistical tool, was used to examine the data.

## Demographic Profile

For further analysis, a number of 428 response rates were obtained. A total of 292 male and 136 female individuals made up 68.2% and 31.8 percent of the total participants, respectively. Participants in the 20–30 (385), 31–40 (37), 41–50 (5), and 51 & above (1) age groups accounted for 90, 8.6, 1.2, and 0.2%, respectively. There were 241 participants with bachelor's degrees, 122 with master's degrees, 27 with MSC degrees, and 38 with Ph.D. degrees, accounting for 56.3, 28.5, 4.4, and 6.5%, respectively. 367 people had 1 to 5 years of job experience, 53 had 5 to 10 years, 4 had 11 to 15 years, 1 had 16 to 20 years, 1 had 21 to 25 years, and 2 have a combined professional experience of more than 25 years, accounting for 85.7, 12.4, 0.9, 0.2, 0.2, and 0.5 percent of the sample population, correspondingly (Table 1).

Table 1 | Demographic information.

Controls		Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender	Female	136	31.8
	Male	292	68.2
Age	20-30	385	90.0
	31-40	37	8.6
	41-50	5	1.2
	51 & above	1	0.2
Experience	1-5	367	85.7
	5-10	53	12.4
	11-15	4	0.9

Controls		Frequency	Valid Percent
	16-20	1	0.2
	21-25	1	0.2
	25-above	2	0.5
Qualification	Bachelor	241	56.3
	Master	122	28.5
	MSC	27	4.4
	PHD	38	6.5

### Measurement Model Assessment

Five items each concerning transformational leadership (Bass B. , 1985), job embeddedness (Mitchell, 2001), and also five items on employee retention were extracted from (Markowitz, 2012). These items were chosen because of their high factor loadings and potential for employee retention in corporate companies. Cronbach's alpha (CA) test was used to verify the scales' reliability. The measurement scales' validity was determined to be considerable, with 0.853 for TL, 0.819 for ER, and 0.835 for JE.

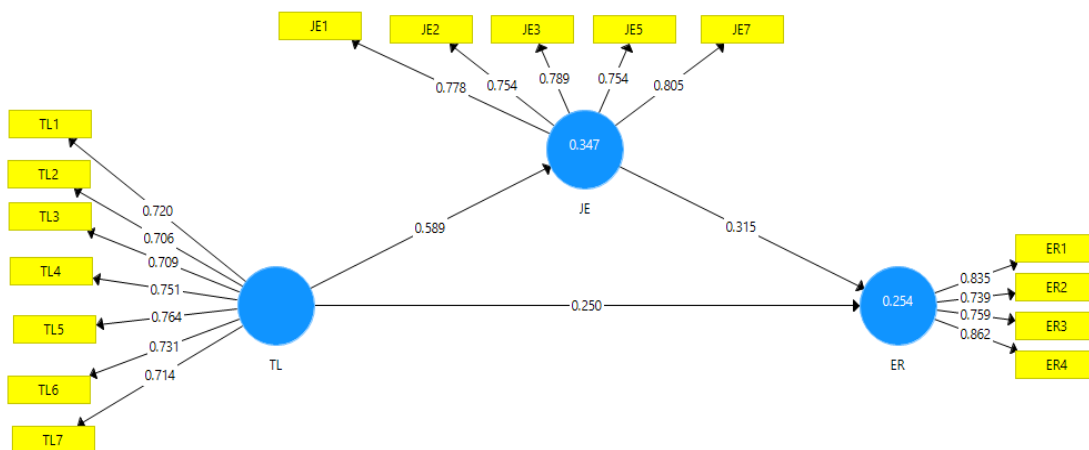


Figure 2 | Partial Least Square SEM model

As revealed by the results, in this investigation, sufficient CR or internal consistency reliability was determined to be between 0.876 and 0.888, which is comparable to or higher than 0.7 (Hair J. F., 2011). Likewise, the current study satisfied a minimum convergent validity (AVE) criterion of 0.50 (Fornell, 1981) (Table 2).

Table 2 | Measurement Model

Construct	Item Code	Loading	VIF	CA	CR	AVE
Transformational Leadership				0.853	0.888	0.53
	TL1	0.72	1.611			
	TL2	0.706	1.648			
	TL3	0.709	1.679			

Construct	Item Code	Loading	VIF	CA	CR	AVE
	TL4	0.751	1.726			
	TL5	0.764	1.732			
	TL6	0.731	1.643			
	TL7	0.714	1.568			
Employee Retention				0.819	0.876	0.64
	ER1	0.835	1.757			
	ER2	0.739	1.642			
	ER3	0.759	1.746			
	ER4	0.862	1.749			
Job Embeddedness				0.835	0.883	0.602
	JE1	0.778	1.775			
	JE2	0.754	1.622			
	JE3	0.789	1.767			
	JE5	0.754	1.605			
	JE7	0.805	1.912			

The discriminant validity findings are shown in Table 3, with a significant value of 0.8 for ER, 0.776 for JE, and 0.728 for TL. According to the findings, TL has a significant association with ER (0.435), TL with JE (0.589), and JE with ER (0.462). Correlation coefficients exist between TL, JE, and ER, with values of 0.435, 0.462, and 0.8, correspondingly.

Table 3 | Discriminant Validity: Fornell Larcker

Dimension	ER	JE	TL
Employee Retention	<b>0.8</b>		
Job Embeddedness	0.462	<b>0.776</b>	
Transformational Leadership	0.435	0.589	<b>0.728</b>

**Note:** AVE stands for average variance extraction. The square root of AVE, which is greater than the correlation in the latent variable, is shown in italics.

According to academics, the HTMT should not exceed 0.9 when assessing multicollinearity in data (Gold, 2001). These findings show that the model's measurement is appropriate for structural analysis (Hair J. J., 2017) (Table 4).

Table 4 | Discriminant Validity: HTMT (heterotrait–monotrait ratio).

Dimension	ER	JE	TL
Employee Retention			
Job Embeddedness	0.519		
Transformational Leadership	0.486	0.695	

## Structural Model Assessment

We applied the instructions provided by (Hair J. J., 2017; Ringle, 2020) to examine the structural model. First, we looked for any collinearity in the structural model that may affect the route coefficients. Table 2 reveals that all predictor components. The VIF measurements are much below the acceptable standard of 5 (Hair J. J., 2017). As a result, our structural model has no collinearity issues. The reciprocal of tolerance is defined as VIF. This research was considered bias-free with no values equal to or lower than 3.3 (Hair J. F., 2011; Kock, 2015) (Table 5). Similarly, Harman's single factor test indicated that a single measure could account for 38.4% of the variance (Podsakoff, 2003). As a result, we may infer that this dataset is free of common method bias (Kock, 2015).  $R^2$  is a metric that assesses a model's predictive capability (Sarstedt, 2014). Table 5 presents the  $R^2$  value of endogenous variables at 0.254 and 0.347. The findings of this study, as shown in Table 5, imply that there was an effect.

Employee retention and job embeddedness had  $Q^2$  values of 0.147 and 0.205, accordingly, computed using the blindfolding process.  $Q^2$  values larger than zero for a reflecting endogenous latent variable in the SEM demonstrate that the route model is predictive for a certain dependent construct. According to (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974), this study's findings have a medium predictive value (0.02 means minor, 0.15 means medium, and 0.35 means tremendous). The standardized root means square residual is an absolute measure of fit, with a value of zero indicating a perfect fit. "The root mean square difference between the observed correlations and the model-implied correlations" is how SRMR is defined. A significant value of 0.066 is shown in Table 5, and if the SRMR value is less than 0.08, it is usually considered a valid fit. (Hu, 1998). The quality of fit is satisfying and ensured in this study.

Table 5 | Structured model results

Construct	$R^2$	Adj. $R^2$	$Q^2$	SRMR
ER	0.254	0.25	0.147	0.066
JE	0.347	0.346	0.205	

Eventually, the relevance of path coefficients was determined. We employed a bootstrapping technique that included 10,000 iterations, no significant changes, and 95% confidence bias-corrected confidence intervals to test hypotheses. The findings of structural path analysis are shown in Table 6 and Figure 2.

H1 projected that transformative leadership is favorably associated with employee retention. The statistics show a significant, clear, and positive correlation among TL and ER ( $\beta = 0.25$ , 95% CI=0.146, 0.358). As an outcome, H1 is encouraged. H2 investigates if TL has affected JE. TL had a substantial influence on JE ( $\beta = 0.589$ , 95% CI=0.514, 0.647), according to the findings. As a result, H2 was accepted. H3 determines whether JE is associated with ER in a good way. According to the data, JE had a noticeable effect on ER ( $\beta = 0.315$ , 95% CI=0.205, 0.424). As an outcome, H3 is approved. The results are presented in Table 6.



The study's main goal was to explore the mediating mechanism of JE between the relationship of TL and ER as proposed by Hypotheses 4. Table 6 concludes with a summary of the mediator test, which shows that the hypothesized indirect linkage, H4 is validated. The analysis shows that job embeddedness notably mediates the association among transformative leadership and employee retention ( $\beta = 0.185$ , 95% CI=0.119, 0.252).

Table 6 | Results of structural model evaluation

Relationships	$\beta$	Mean	STDEV	t-value	p-value	BC 95% CI	Decision
Direct Effects							
TL -> ER	0.25	0.253	0.063	3.987	0.000	[0.146;0.358]	Supported
TL -> JE	0.589	0.592	0.041	14.413	0.000	[0.514;0.647]	Supported
JE -> ER	0.315	0.319	0.066	4.738	0.000	[0.205;0.424]	Supported
Indirect effects							
TL -> JE -> ER	0.185	0.188	0.04	4.628	0.000	[0.119; 0.252]	Supported
Total effect							
TL -> ER	0.435	0.441	0.045	9.77	0.000	[0.354;0.498]	Supported

## Discussions

Subordinates of all demographics seek creative leadership, such as transformational leadership, to help them become more motivated. It is leadership's obligation. The leader's focus must be on the needs of his or her colleagues. Leaders should communicate their innovative ideas with their subordinates at worth to motivate them. The leaders must strike a balance between their own and their followers' perspectives. Job dis-embedding is reduced when subordinates believe their leaders can do for them what they can't. The leader should deliberately resolve the problems over which he has authority and ensure that these appropriate circumstances seek retribution. It will serve as a powerful motivator for the workers. The ultimate precept for leaders should be to lead by example. It will boost leaders' interaction and involvement with their subordinates. It might be the most efficient technique to close the gap between superiors and followers. If managers of a company can build and maintain a healthy working environment, employees will be allowed to properly and effectively carry out their obligations. It will considerably improve job embedding across all employees. For job embedding, leaders require motivation as well. Lower-level workers will be able to devote themselves to executing their tasks once they have confidence in the Organization's ability to provide their material demands. As a result, more interaction between leaders and employees will be possible. It will increase the leadership's credibility in the eyes of their employees, and the employees will have more faith in their leaders. Delegating power to lower-level workers will improve job embedding.

Employee retention is a product of transformational leadership, which motivates employees and restores JE among subordinates by creating an ethical atmosphere. Although leaders are willing to surrender control to individuals, subordinates like the freedom to work at their speed. It would be feasible to train team members and guide them in the proper direction through practical and transformative leadership. Team

members will become more self-assured as a result of good leadership. The majority of studies reveal transformative leadership can boost employee retention. Transformational leadership may encourage retention through JE. To successfully integrate TL changes, factors such as managing coworkers, making knowledgeable assessments, incorporating goals, practices, affiliative progress, increasing employment opportunities, and commending team members for doing excellent work were prioritized.

## **Conclusions**

The goal of a retention plan is to include not just the organization's financial metrics, but also employee sentiments and other factors. One of the great draws for employees is transformational leadership. As a result, giving strategies to eliminate this imbalance will resolve the issue and raise everyone's level of integration. Whatever the situation may be, meeting the goals of employees will increase their interconnection, allowing them to keep their important personnel. Unfortunately, only a few studies have looked at the topic of private job turnover and presented an approach based only on the private sector's perspective in mature markets. Employees from the new generation sometimes believe that their superiors do not offer them enough assistance, and as a result, they do not love their jobs. As a result, effectively motivating employees will affect and increase job embedding and retention. In conclusion, TL is essential to establish employee JE and retention as per the findings of this study. JE has also been found to have a mediating function in the interaction among transformative leadership and employee retention. The current study, on the other hand, was not without limitations. Future research will be guided by a focus on these limits.

## **Implications**

The research also demonstrates previously unknown useful connections between transformative leadership and job embeddedness. When JE and TL are combined as management techniques, the company's purpose, goals, and visions are reflected. Overall retention tactics will be visible as a result of this endeavor. Finally, as a result of research, TL and JE will encourage employee retention by organizational job embedding. A great deal of research is often beneficial to a certain group of individuals. Nonetheless, the study's findings are beneficial to all partners because they reduce costs associated with employee embedment. It will also ensure that corporate organizations' productivity and prosperity are guaranteed. In summary, the current study conceptually added to knowledge by showcasing an impact among TL and JE as a predictor of employee retention. The importance of employee job embeddedness as a mediator for TL and ER was also underlined in this study.

## **Research limitations and future research directions**

Most of the studies have certain limits and this research also contains several faults that might be exploited by future researchers. For a better outcome, future research might employ longitudinal analysis with experimental or longitudinal designs, rather than cross-sectional data. The source of the data is also one of the study's limitations. Data from several sources may be collected in future investigations, making them more objective and reducing the risk of biases. The study only surveyed entry-level and mid-level

personnel. As a result, a comparative study on employees at various levels and from a wider range of businesses might be conducted. In multinational and cross-national viewpoints, the model's causal connection may change. As a result, future researchers should consider designing a longitudinal study, which might provide more thorough and long-term outcomes in the private sector. Finally, because turnover results in significant internal and external losses, job embeddedness needs transformative leadership to assure the retention of talented workers. In the end, both explicit and subtle losses will be reduced for all parties involved.

External variables that may impact the outcomes at the individual or administrative performance, when traditional characteristics are significantly different from those seen in Pakistan, are a constraint. Males and females may have varying levels of job retention, which is not covered in this study. As a result, future studies may look into this disparity and compare male and female employees based on these parameters. Future research, focused on subsequent generations, may be done to examine other predictions and frameworks. Future cross-national and international studies might be conducted to ensure that important employees are happy in their jobs.

### **Author Contributions**

The first author generated the idea of this research, developed research design, collected part of the required data, analysed the data, compiled the whole work, and reviewed the paper several times.

The second author supervised the whole work gone through the whole work several times, and made many important corrections.

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