

Personality and Pathological Love among Young Adults

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The present research was a correlational study aimed at investigating the relationship of personality and pathological love among young adults. It was hypothesized that: (a) there is likely to be a relationship between personality and pathological love among young adults; (b) personality traits and sociodemographic variables like intimate relationships in the past, parental marital status etc. are likely to predict pathological love among young adults. The sample comprised of 120 males ($M=20.50$, $SD=1.60$) and 227 females ($M=20.50$, $SD=1.60$) from six different universities (three public, three private) with age range from 18 to 24 years. The participants were selected through convenience sampling. Urdu translated version of Big five personality Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999), translated by Dawood (2012) and Pathological Love Scale (Safdar & Dasti, 2014) were used to collect the data. Results indicated that extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism positively while, agreeableness negatively correlated with pathological love. Furthermore, extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism positively predicted pathological love whereas; intimate relationship in the past negatively predicted pathological love. The present research implicates that serious steps should be taken at societal level to address the rising problem of love pathology among the youngsters and at clinical level to develop sensitive indigenous interventions for the victim of pathological love.

Keywords: Personality, Pathological Love, Young Adults.

Young adulthood is an age when an individual has to make crucially important choices regarding marriage, family, work, and lifestyle (Levinson, 1994; Birch, 1991). It is a period of greatest energy and abundance as well as of greatest contradiction and stress (Levinson, 1994). According to Freud's (1905) psychosexual theory of personality development, young adulthood is a time of sexual experimentation; the individual develops a strong sexual interest in the opposite sex and as a result of its successful resolution individual settle down in a loving one-to-one relationship with another. The person's main concern during this age is forming a love relationship, starting family and acquiring adult responsibilities (Westen, Gabbard & Ortigo, 2008).

Erikson (1959) also believed that the dominant focus of this age is the development of intimacy – the ability to love and trust another person (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). Moreover, the developmental models such as Erikson's

(1959) and Levinson's (1978), young adults are developing a sense of personal identity along with a need for closeness to others. The young adult is eager and willing to fuse his identity with that of others i.e. to achieve intimacy, concrete affiliations and partnerships (Erikson, 1995). Thus, finding and developing relationships with an intimate partner, or series of partners, becomes a priority for many young adults (Erikson & Erikson, 1997; Erikson, 1973). Forming secure relationship in young adults is important as it enhanced their social skills, their coping strategies and results in lesser engagement in high risk behaviors and fewer mental health problems (Moretti & Peled, 2004).

All humans have an innate need to belong. In interpersonal relationships, this need is expressed differently by different people in different situations. Human orientation to love is a product of temperament and personality (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006). Therefore the aim of the present study was to find the relationship

between personality and pathological love in young adults. There is rudimentary evidence that there are certain personality underpinnings that might predispose an individual towards pathological love.

Pathological love can be defined as 'uncontrollable caring behavior for a partner which leads to abandoning all other and just focusing on self-development' (Sophia et al., 2009). Pathological Love is a multidimensional constructs. It comprises of domains like, uncontrollable caring behavior, dysfunctional social situations, possessions/power, insecurity and pity (Safdar & Dasti, 2014).

Personality and Pathological Love

The research suggests that dependent and submissive individuals are more inclined to engage and retain troubling relationships because of fear of alienation and abandonment (Sophia et al., 2009; Darcy, Davila, & Beck, 2005). Pathological love is positively correlated to positive regard for others (Hatfield, 1995). According to some researches, low agreeableness is positively related to passionate love (Lester & Philbrick, 1988; Middleton, 1993; Woll, 1989). Pathological love was also found in young teens having high feelings of control by others (Winter, Duncan, & Summerfield, 2008, as cited in Sussman, 2010).

Conscientiousness showed mixed correlation with pathological love. According to one research, pathological love positively correlates with passionate love (Engel, Olson & Patrick, 2001; Heaven et al., 2004). However, pathological love is negatively related to some facets of conscientiousness such as, reliability, integrity, and scrupulousness (Funder, 2001). Self-esteem and self-respect (facets of conscientiousness) seemed to be the key to stable love (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012).

Anxiousness correlated positively with pathological love (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993; Levy & Keith, 1988; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1989; Sophia et al., 2009; Heaven et al., 2004; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Bowlby, 1973; Eisikovits, Durta & Westen, 2002; Hatkoff & Lasswell, 1979; Lasswell & Lasswell, 1976). As described by Jantz and McMurray in their book, the anxious person needs to know where

the other person is, what they're doing, who they're with. The anxious person bleeds that worry into the relationship, becoming suspicious about the other person, concerned about their fidelity, their commitment to the relationship. The anxious person needs ongoing reassurance that everything is okay. It is crucial for everything to be okay, for them, the relationship is everything (Jantz & McMurray, 2011). Furthermore, pathological love was found in young teens having high anxiety level (Hatfield, Brinton & Cornelius, 1989, as cited in Sussman, 2010).

Pathological love is positively correlated to neuroticism (Fehr & Broughton, 2001; Davies, 1996; Lester & Philbrick, 1988; Mallandain & Davies, 1994; Richardson, Medvin & Hammock, 1988; Wan, Luk & Lai, 2000; Woll, 1989), machiavellianism (A person's tendency to be unemotional and thus being able to deceive and manipulate others) (Jonason & Kavanagh, 2010), unhappy childhood (Lee, 1976), emotional instability, negative emotions and cautiousness (Heaven et al., 2004). It is also positively correlated to lack of confidence, leisure, feelings of vulnerability, unrecognized worth in world, inflated opinion of self (Hodgkinson, 1991), dependency, insecurity (Hatfield, 1995) and low self-esteem (Hatkoff & Lasswell, 1979; Lasswell & Lasswell, 1976; Hatfield, 1995).

Individuals suffering from pathological love usually show higher impulsivity and bizarreness (Sophia et al., 2009; Woll, 1989). According to one study done on 40 female stalkers, 45% stalkers seek greater intimacy and 50% display personality disorders (primarily dependent, borderline or narcissistic types) (Purcell, Pathe & Mullen, 2001).

In his book, Arterburn (1991) described the personality of pathological lover as having low self-esteem and often extreme fear of abandonment. He suggested that pathological lovers are over-controlling and can be manipulative. They usually think of everyone else as superior and most of the times deny the obvious deficiencies in their loved one. Arterburn further explained that pathological lovers can also experience anger problems, but usually don't allow others to express their anger. Furthermore, such people can become

the ultimate people pleaser and often clings to guilt and apologize for anything whether or not they are responsible for it. They often demand unconditional love and frequently remain depressed and express multiple compulsive behaviors, doubt and insecurity (Bowlby, 1973; Hatkoff & Lasswell, 1979; Lasswell & Lasswell, 1976).

People having pathological love can have their pre-morbid personality been variously described as shy and awkward (Krafft-Ebing, 1879, as cited in Mullen & Pathe, 1994), hypersensitive (Kretschmer, 1918, as cited in Mullen & Pathe, 1994), proud and rebellious (Crambault, 1942, as cited in Mullen & Pathe, 1994), narcissistic (Enoch & Trethowan, 1979, as cited in Mullen & Pathe, 1994), schizoid (Munro et al, 1985, as cited in Mullen & Pathe, 1994), lacking in confidence, extremely lower self-directedness, cooperativeness, suspicious and socially avoidant (Retterstol & Opjordsmoen, 1991, as cited in Mullen & Pathe, 1994), and timid and withdrawn (Seeman, 1978, as cited in Mullen & Pathe, 1994). These people tend to be described as living socially empty lives, often working in menial occupations and being, or feeling themselves to be, unattractive (Segal, 1989, as cited in Mullen & Pathe, 1994). Pathological love shows higher frequency of anxious-ambivalent attachment. They have dissatisfactory romantic relationships. They have high score in self-transcendence (Sophia et al., 2009).

Pathological love is found to be positively correlated to openness to experience (Heaven et al., 2004). Extraversion (Ahmetoglu et al., 2010; Watson et al., 2000; White, Hendrick & Hendrick, 2004) and assertiveness (facet of extraversion) (Engel, Olson & Patrick, 2001) is positively related to passionate love. Openness (Engel, Olson & Patrick, 2001; Middleton, 1993; Ahmetoglu et al., 2010) and extraversion generally showed no significant relationship with pathological love (Middleton, 1993).

A number of studies have been conducted on non-Westren cultures on love style, these studies reveal that Asian population mostly show storge (based on similar interest and commitment to others rather than passion) and pragmatic (partners that can share common goal) love

styles (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; Goodwin & Findlay, 1997; Dion & Dion, 1993). Some other studies have described the Asian love style to be less ludus (see love as desiring fun with each other) and more agape (unbreakable commitment and unconditional self-less love) (Dion & Dion, 1993; Gupta, 1976). Moreover, mania love style (a facet of pathological love) has been found to be more prevalent in individualistic cultures rather than the collective ones (Schmitz, 2009). There is a dearth of research on pathological love in the non-western cultures as per the researcher's knowledge so therefore, there is a need to explore the manifestation of pathological love-styles in non-western cultures like Pakistani culture.

In conclusion it can be seen from the above discussion that presence of personality factors like dependent and submissive personality, low self-respect/self-esteem, anxiousness, impulsivity, emotional instability, feelings of insecurity and other neurotic factors, prone an individual to pathological love. All in all pathologies of love occur in men and women, the homosexual and the heterosexual, in both Western and non-Western cultures and can develop with more than one object of love. The onset can be abrupt or gradual. Most of the people had not achieved their potential, socially or occupationally and they maintain their behavior despite being aware of its harmful effects (Sophia et al., 2009).

Hypotheses:

There is a relationship between personality traits and pathological love among young adults.

Various domains of personality traits and sociodemographic variables differentially predict domains of pathological love among young adults.

Method

Research design:

In this study, correlation research design was used to study the relationship of personality traits and pathological love among young adults.

Sampling strategy:

In the present study, convenience sampling strategy was used to collect data as only those

participants were included who were easily available and consented to participate.

Participants:

Thirty individuals from different universities in Lahore were recruited for the pilot study. The pilot study was done to check if the participants can understand the items of the questionnaire and to estimate the administration time. For main study, young adults falling in the age range of 18 – 24 years belonging to different universities of Lahore city were included as participants. The 400 university students (both male and female) were approached and the final sample consists of 348 students (120 males, 227 females and 1 with unspecified gender). The mean age of the sample was 20.59 (SD = 1.715).

Data collection was done from six different coeducation universities; three government universities including, University of the Punjab, Government College University and University of Engineering and Technology, and three private universities that includes Beaconhouse National University, COMSATS and University of Central Punjab. Three departments i.e. one science, one social sciences and one arts department, were randomly selected from each university.

Inclusion criteria:

Individuals having a knowledge and understanding of Urdu language.

Individuals who will report in the demographic form that they are in an intimate close relationship with someone.

Individual reporting no other diagnosed psychological problem.

Measures:

Demographic questionnaire: First questionnaire used in this research was socio-demographic questionnaire. It was made during this research by the researcher. It includes questions related to personal information like age, education, socioeconomic status, family environment of the participants, needed for this research.

Big Five Inventory: Second questionnaire that used was 'Big Five Inventory- Urdu version' developed by John & Srivastava (1999) and translated in Urdu by Dawood (2012). It consists

of 44 items that measures personality on five factor model. Participants rate each BFI item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). α -reliability of BFI ranges from .75 to .90 (John & Srivastava, 1999). For present research, the Cronbach's alpha reliability of Extraversion scale is .67, for Agreeableness scale it is .62, for conscientiousness it is .71, for Neuroticism validity is .74 and for Openness it is .53.

Pathological Love Scale: 'Pathological Love Scale' was developed by Safdar and Dasti (2014). It comprises of fifty items that measures the domains of pathological love. Its responses were given on a five-point scale with categories ranging from 1 being never to 5 being always. The reliability of its first domain i.e. Obsessive Preoccupation is .96, for second domain i.e. Manipulation it is .93 and for third domain, Possessiveness, it is .75.

Procedure:

Permission for using Big Five Questionnaires was asked from the author. Pilot study was conducted on thirty individuals selected from different universities. Understanding of the statements, conceptual clarity and time required to complete the questionnaire was noted during the pilot study. Remarks were also taken from the students regarding any further improvement or change in the questionnaire. The students found the questionnaire easily comprehensible and clearly stated. The average time required to complete the questionnaire was reported to be twenty five minutes.

The main study was done in the light of information got from the pilot study. Previously mentioned population was reached for main study, they were given questionnaires along with the instructions on how to fill it. The questionnaires were administered independently on 400 students from six different universities. Final response consists of 348 students. Rest of the questionnaires were discarded; twenty forms were wasted due to non-serious approach of the participants (those who replied the questions without reading them), 12 questionnaires were rejected due to incompleteness and 20 questionnaires were thrown away due to non-reporting of an intimate affiliation.

Ethical considerations

Consent for using the questionnaire in this research, was taken from the author.

For data collection, permission was seek from the institutional heads.

The nature and purpose of the research were clarified to the participants.

Informed consent was signed from the students.

Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and any further query regarding this matter was patiently handled.

Participants were given full right that they can withdraw from the research at any time as well as not to answer any question that they find obnoxious.

Statistical analysis:

Descriptive statistics like frequency, mean and SDs were used to calculate the demographic variables. Correlation and regression analysis were conducted to test the hypothesis.

Results

This part starts off with the descriptive statistics of demographic variables, followed by correlation and regression analysis.

Table 1 describes the mean and standard deviation of male and female. According to the table, there were 227 females (M=20.50, SD=1.60) and 120 males (M=20.76, SD=1.89).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of various demographic variables. (N=348)

Variable	Female		Male	
	M	SD	M	SD
Age	20.50	1.60	20.76	1.89
No. of Intimate relationships in past	1.50	.50	1.41	.49

Table 2 shows frequency and percentage of demographic variables. The result showed that females were a little overrepresented in the sample. All except one participant reported Islam as their religion. More than half of the sample reported their residence as home with nuclear

family system and monthly income between 20000-70000. Most of the participants reported their relationship with their father, mother and siblings as pleasant and their parental marital relationship being living together. Most of the participants reported having an intimate relationship in the past.

Table 2. Frequency and percentages of demographic variables (N = 348)

Demographic Variables	f	%
Gender		
Male	120	34.5
Female	227	65.2
Missing	1	.3
Residence		
Hostel	86	24.7
Home	255	73.3
Other	2	.6
Missing	4	1.1
Family System		
Combine	132	37.9
Separate	212	60.9
Missing	4	1.1
Monthly Income		
Below 20000	89	25.6
20000-70000	153	44.0
Above 70000	106	30.5
Relationship with father		
Pleasant	277	79.6
Satisfactory	52	14.9
Moderate	12	3.4
Unsatisfactory	2	.6
Unpleasant	3	.9
Missing	2	.6
Relationship with mother		
Pleasant	311	89.4
Satisfactory	31	8.9
Moderate	4	1.1
Unsatisfactory	1	.3
Unpleasant	311	89.4
Missing	1	.3

Home environment		
Pleasant	240	69.0
Satisfactory	80	23.0
Moderate	24	6.9
Unsatisfactory	1	.3
Unpleasant	2	.6
Missing	1	.3
Parental marital status		
Living together	338	97.1
Living separate	2	.6
Divorced	3	.9
Deceased	3	.9
Missing	2	.6
Relationship with siblings		
Pleasant	290	83.3
Satisfactory	43	12.4
Moderate	8	2.3
Unpleasant	1	.3
Missing	6	1.7
Intimate relationship in past		
Yes	182	52.3
No	162	46.6

Table 3 showed a significant positive correlation of extraversion with obsessive preoccupation ($r=.11$, $p<0.05$), also with conscientiousness and obsessive preoccupation

($r=.11$, $p<0.01$). A significant positive relationship is also clear between neuroticism and possessiveness ($r=.17$, $p<0.05$). A significant negative relationship was depicted between agreeableness and manipulation ($r=-.12$, $p<0.05$) as well as with possessiveness ($r=-.15$, $p<0.01$). However, openness didn't show any significant relationship with any of the domains of pathological love.

As shown in table 4 multiple regression analysis with backward method was carried out to find the predictors of various domains of pathological love. Using the backward linear regression analysis, thirteen variables were added i.e. parental marital status (whether the parents of the participant are living together, are separated or divorced), age (numeric representation), gender (male/female), intimate relationship in past (yes/ no for intimate relationships in the past), intimate people (number of people you have been intimated with in the past), home environment (overall environment of home; rated on 5-point scale from pleasant to unpleasant), relationship with mother (rated on 5-point scale from pleasant to unpleasant), relationship with father (rated on 5-point scale from pleasant to unpleasant), openness, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism. Pathological love was added as dependent variable. During the process, it deleted several variables, such as gender, openness, relationship with father,

Table 3. Pearson Correlation between Big Five Personality Traits and three factors of Pathological Love Questionnaire

	E	A	C	N	O	OP	M	P	M	SD
E	-	.37**	.44**	-.51**	.37**	.11*	.08	-.03	26.32	5.63
A	-	-	.47**	-.28**	.40**	.04	-.12*	-.15**	33.23	5.47
C	-	-	-	-.47**	.37**	.11*	-.01	-.06	31.23	6.18
N	-	-	-	-	-.10*	.09	.02	.17**	23.68	6.23
O	-	-	-	-	-	.07	-.06	.01	34.26	5.13
OP	-	-	-	-	-	-	.67**	.59**	78.11	24.6
M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.67**	42.94	16.51
P	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12.38	4.92

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$.

E= Extraversion, A= Agreeableness, C= Conscientiousness, N= Neuroticism, O= Openness, OP= Obsessive Preoccupation, M= Manipulation and P= Possessiveness.

relationship with mother, intimate people, age, agreeableness, home environment and parental marital status; and generated 10 models of which only one was significant.

Table 4. Predictors of Pathological Love

Pathological Love			
Variable	B	β	95% CI
Constant	76.68		[28.55-124.82]
Extraversion	1.14	.16	[-27.55-10.02]
Conscientiousness	.85	.13	[-.20-2.07]
Neuroticism	1.20	.19*	[.03-1.67]
Intimate relation in past	-18.78	-.23**	[-.36-2.05]
R ²		.11	
F		8.93	
Δ R ²		.09	
Δ F		1.76	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

The model shown in table 4 was highly significant at $F(307) = 8.93$, $p < .001$. This shows that 'intimate relationship in past' negatively predicts pathological love, while, 'Extraversion', 'Conscientiousness' and 'Neuroticism' positively predicts Pathological Love. This model explained 11% variance ($R^2 = .11$).

Overall, the results showed that extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism positively correlates to pathological love, however, agreeableness is negatively correlated to pathological love. Regression results showed that extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism positively predicts pathological love and intimate relationship in past negatively predicts pathological love.

Discussion

The present research determined the relationship between personality traits and pathological love among young adults. It also explores which personality traits predict pathological love.

Young people are generally experiencing relationship problems especially in intimate relationships. Relationships have increasingly been found to be linked with

massive preoccupation with the lover, extreme level of possessiveness and dependency. Therefore, pathological love can have adverse consequences for the lover and victim.

There is growing rate of young people coming to seek psychological help with issues relating to close intimate love relationships. It has been observed through literature that certain personality traits are found to be linked to love pathology; however, the relationship is still unclear and requires further exploration. There is a need to evaluate which personality traits predispose an individual toward pathological tendencies of love. Based on the finding of this research effective clinical interventions can be devised keeping in view the personality predisposition of the individuals which can help them develop more secure form of love relationships. It can further help to address the wider social problems of pathological love; work can be done with both the lover and the victim.

The first hypothesis of present research stated that there is likely to be a relationship between personality traits and pathological love among young adults. The correlation of big five domains of personality were carried out with domains of pathological love; the results partially supported the hypothesis. Obsessive preoccupation was found to have a significant positive relationship with extraversion and conscientiousness while neuroticism and possessiveness were also found to be positively related. Agreeableness was found to have a significant negative relationship with manipulation as well as with possessiveness. However, no significant relationship was found between any openness and domains of pathological love.

The result is consistent with the studies done by Watson et al. (2000), White, Hendrick and Hendrick (2004) and Ahmetoglu, Swami and Premuzic (2010). They explored the relationship of five factors of personality and love styles and their results supported that extraversion correlate positively with passionate love. Assertiveness (facet of extraversion) also demonstrated positively correlation with passionate love (Engel, Olson & Patrick, 2001).

Engel, Olson and Patrick (2001) and Heaven

et al. (2004) did a research on love styles and their relationship with personality facets. According to their results, conscientiousness showed significant positive correlates with passionate love.

Many researches supported the positive relationship between neuroticism and pathological love. These include, Middleton (1993), Lester and Philbrick (1988) and Fehr and Broughton (2001). In another study Ahmadi et al. (2013) reported significant relationship between anxiousness, which a facet of neuroticism and pathological love. In addition the finding of the present research was also consistent with the result of the researches done by Heaven et al. (2004) who reported a significant correlation of pathological love with depression, self-consciousness and vulnerability (Facets of neuroticism as described by McCrae & Costa, 1987). Woll (1989) and Sophia et al. (2009) reported positive correlation of impulsivity (facet of neuroticism as described by McCrae & Costa, 1987) with pathological love in their researches. Therefore their results were also found to be in line with the results of the present study.

The present research investigated significant negative relationship between agreeableness with pathological love. These findings are consistent with the results of study conducted by Heaven et al. (2004) who found out that trust, altruism, modesty and sympathy (facets of agreeableness) negatively correlate with pathological love.

Second hypothesis stated that various personality traits and sociodemographic variables are likely to differentially predict pathological love among young adults. However, in this study only neuroticism and intimate relationship in the past came out as significant positive and negative predictors of pathological love respectively. This is supported by the study of Ahmadi et al. (2013) who reported that anxiousness (facet of neuroticism) predicted pathological love. Anxiety, envy, guilt, anger and depressed mood are characteristic features of neuroticism. With all these negative emotions a person is emotionally unstable and more reactive to stressful situation and thus that person is more likely to develop dependency; a characteristic

feature of pathological love. They are more apt to cling to the relationship they have. This might be one of the reasons why neuroticism positively predicted pathological love.

The results of the regression analysis showed that intimate relationship in the past was a significant negative predictor of pathological love. This can be explained with reference to the assertion given by Sternberg (1998) who stated that intimacy in relationship has a negative effect on passionate love as intimacy reduces the intensity and anxiety, key features of passionate love (As cited in Ahmetoglu, et al., 2010). Furthermore, intimate relationship provides love, care and support required by a person. Having a relationship to confide to while growing up will ensure a stable personality and thus a secure attachment. This secure attachment rule out the dependency and fear of abandonment; two main features of pathological love. Thus having an intimate relationship in past negates the chances of being in pathological relationship.

In a nut shell, personality traits i.e. extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism positively correlates with pathological love while, agreeableness negatively correlates with pathological love. Moreover, extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism positively predict pathological love whereas; intimate relationship in the past negatively predicts pathological love.

Limitations and suggestions:

Only literate population was represented in this research. The future research can include illiterate population as well. Furthermore, convenient sampling was used as a means to collect data for this research, future research can be based on a more sophisticated sampling strategy to make the sample more representative.

Future implications:

This research was first of its kind in Pakistan. Therefore it was done in a view that it will open a passageway for the future researches on the tabooed topics as this one and will also encourage the researchers to explore further, beyond the limits imposed by the society. This research will also help in furthering the understanding of important societal problem

that afflicts both victim and lover and to develop awareness in masses about the concept of love pathology. Furthermore, this research will help to explore the clinical aspects of pathological love and also help regarding its treatment. In addition, it will also help in understanding relationship of personality and develop clinical interventions based on the findings of this research. Future researchers who want to work on this topic can get benefit from this research.

For future researches, the personality of the loved one can also be explored as it also impacts the relationship of lover with the loved one. Also, the duration of the relationship and as well as intensity of their relationship can be considered. Several others variables can also be studied with respect to pathological love such as religious inclination of the lover, physical attributes of the loved one etc.

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Further queries, if any contact:

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