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Weaving family networks through solidarity economics in a community in Peru

Tejiendo redes familiares desde economía solidaria en una comunidad de Perú

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine how family networks manifest themselves through family businesses and their impact on the solidarity economy. These networks allow synergies to be built based on territoriality, which favors the sustainability of communities. They also promote the development of initiatives, generate economic income, strengthen skills, consolidate community economies, and contribute to the expansion of the middle class. The research adopted a mixed approach, with a descriptive, non-experimental design, developed in several phases: construction and validation of the data collection instrument, pilot test, and final application. Inductive-deductive and analytical-synthetic methods were used to analyze the content of family economies. The techniques included a questionnaire with 20 closed questions and in-depth interviews, applied to a sample of 100 parents belonging to a selected community. The results confirm that family businesses promote values such as commitment, reciprocity, democracy, cooperation, and autonomy among family members. In addition, they allow for the equitable distribution of resources and collective management that promotes the overall well-being of participating families.

Keywords: family entrepreneurship, family networks, solidarity economy.

Resumen

El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo determinar cómo se manifiestan las redes familiares a través de los emprendimientos familiares y su repercusión en la economía solidaria. Estas redes permiten construir sinergias con un criterio de territorialidad, lo que favorece el sostenimiento de las comunidades. Asimismo, promueven el desarrollo de iniciativas, generan ingresos económicos, fortalecen habilidades, consolidan economías de carácter comunitario y contribuyen a la expansión de la clase media. La investigación adoptó un enfoque mixto, con un diseño descriptivo no experimental, desarrollado en varias fases: construcción y validación del instrumento de recolección de datos, prueba piloto y aplicación final. Se emplearon los métodos inductivo-deductivo y analítico-sintético para el análisis del contenido de las economías familiares. Las técnicas incluyeron un cuestionario de 20 preguntas cerradas y entrevistas en profundidad, aplicadas a una muestra de 100 padres de familia pertenecientes a una comunidad seleccionada. Los resultados confirman que los emprendimientos familiares fomentan valores como el compromiso, la reciprocidad, la democracia, la cooperación y la autonomía entre los

miembros del núcleo familiar. Además, permiten una distribución equitativa de los recursos y una gestión colectiva que promueve el bienestar integral de las familias participantes.

Palabras clave: emprendimiento familiar, redes familiares, economía solidaria.

Introduction

Family networks intertwine and strengthen with the solidarity economy, understood as a model that offers advantages for improving the quality of life of its members. This form of organization allows for the generation of employment, income, and well-being (Ramírez, 2016).

The solidarity economy is based on a culture of work that involves both material resources (tools, methods, techniques, among others) and symbolic resources (attitudes, ideas, customs, beliefs, habits, achievements, and knowledge) shared by groups of people, taking into account their religion, class, gender, and ethnicity. This model is grounded in family-based labor (Vega-Gómez, 2021).

It represents an alternative to the traditional economic system, focused on values such as cooperation, reciprocity, equity, and sustainability. It manifests within the family context by promoting dynamics of internal collaboration and engagement with other families or communities, where the family acts as a unit of consumption, production, exchange, and mutual support. This logic enables families to confront economic crises by forming cooperatives that reduce expenses, optimize resources, and strengthen economic autonomy (López-Gonzales, 2023).

These mechanisms generate not only material benefits but also reinforce emotional bonds and shared responsibility within the family unit, promoting intergenerational support networks. In this context, competition is not predominant; rather, solidarity prevails among members (Serrano, 2022).

In the solidarity economy, families exchange not only goods and services but also knowledge, experiences, and values that contribute to building a more just and equitable society. This broadens the scope of action and strengthens community ties; family networks intertwine with other social networks, forming a solid foundation for social transformation (Fernández-Guerrero, 2021).

The family, as the basic unit of society, plays a crucial role in implementing the solidarity economy. Authors such as Magdalena León have highlighted the importance of the economy of human care, linked to the concept of "buen vivir" or sumak kawsay, which prioritizes life as the central axis of the economy. From this perspective, a solidarity economy must integrate the realm of reproduction and make visible the economic relationships occurring within households (Ortiz-Guerrero, 2020).

In Latin America, there are concrete examples of the functioning of the solidarity economy: in Ecuador, solidarity enterprises led by women constitute a source of community development (Verzosi et al., 2023); in Colombia, handicraft marketing ventures improve the living conditions of communities (Marcano et al., 2023); and tourism has also been considered a practice of the solidarity economy (Núñez et al., 2022). Weaving family networks through the solidarity economy involves a reconfiguration of economic relationships based on a collaborative and cooperative logic.

This approach strengthens family empowerment and sustainability, placing individuals and their connections at the center of constructing more inclusive development models, where families not only survive but live and coexist harmoniously with their environment. Families share knowledge, experiences, and values that build a more just and equitable society, strengthening community ties and generating social networks that consolidate a solid foundation for social transformation (Escobar-Pérez, 2023).

Weaving family networks through the solidarity economy reconfigures economic relationships under a collaborative logic, promoting empowerment and family sustainability. This model seeks to meet individual and collective needs through cooperative management within the family, where women often lead initiatives to support their households, becoming engines that fulfill basic needs (Tarditti et al., 2021).

Its foundation lies in relationships of trust and cooperation, which particularly benefit the most vulnerable producers (Montoya et al., 2022). In this way, clusters of entrepreneurs and micro-entrepreneurs are articulated by a sense of belonging and a shared social condition (Díaz et al., 2016). This represents a community bond that connects landowners with the need to enter the market, establish themselves in the production chain, and obtain fair returns, with the family as the associative center (Ferrarini & Ramos, 2022).

According to Marcillo and Salcedo (2010), this involves a set of self-managed and humanistic practices aimed at the integral development of the human being as the ultimate goal of the economy. This approach is manifested in initiatives such as bartering, time banks, and family cooperatives, strengthening bonds of solidarity and mutual support.

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Moreover, the solidarity economy fosters support networks that transcend the family sphere, reinforcing community cohesion. Karl Polanyi (1944) posits that all societies have economic principles such as reciprocity and redistribution, applied according to the social context. These practices, originating within the family, extend to the community, contributing to the construction of an alternative economic system that prioritizes collective well-being over individual accumulation.

Thus, weaving family networks through the solidarity economy implies transforming economic relationships toward a more humane and collaborative logic, enhancing empowerment, community resilience, and sustainability. This transformation places individuals and their connections at the center of the economy, recognizing and fostering key practices to build more inclusive development models, where families not only survive but thrive in harmony with their environment.

The principles governing the solidarity economy include the primacy of individuals and work over capital, democracy in decision-making, the purpose of service to members or the community, voluntary membership, the general interest over particular interests, and management autonomy (Rincón, 2021). Those organized within this framework practice values such as mutual aid, democracy, equity, honesty, equality, justice, plurality, shared responsibility, solidarity, transparency, and trust. These values facilitate collaborative work, especially within families (Serrano, 2022), constituting a form of self-management that promotes face-to-face social relationships from a democratic, solidary, and egalitarian perspective, characterized by cooperation, trust, and reciprocity. All of this provides its members with a sense of belonging to the group (Guérin, 2005; Domínguez-Rodríguez, 2020).

It is important to note that this model is based on the premise that territories are composed of social subjects under specific historical conditions, which determine the possible paths of development and foster identity with their particularities and characteristics (Puntal et al., 2021). It revolves around cooperation among family members to advance the enterprise, work effectively and respectfully, aiming for equity in the development of family life. It involves taking on shared responsibilities, valuing individual opinions, and contributing to the social economy from identity, internal cohesion, and the defense of autonomy.

In this context, the present research aims to address the scientific question: How do family networks impact the economy of families? The hypothesis posits that family enterprises strengthen cooperation, equitable distribution, autonomy, and well-being, generating synergies with the territory and expanding the bases of the middle class. Consequently, the objectives of this study are: to determine how family networks influence the economy through enterprises, identify their characteristics, and describe their development in relation to the places where they reside.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach and was conducted under a non-experimental descriptive design. The phases of the study included the construction of a validated data collection instrument, the application of a pilot test, and the subsequent application of the instrument to the entire population. Regarding ethical considerations, rigorous criteria were followed to ensure respect for the participants. All participants were informed about the research, its purposes, and the instruments they were to complete. Explicit consent was requested for participation in the study, and confidentiality of their data was guaranteed in accordance with Peruvian Law No. 29733, the Personal Data Protection Law.

The questionnaire used was structured into four sections: general data, family data, family enterprises, and solidarity economy. This instrument was validated through expert judgment, following the guidelines proposed by Sireci and Faulkner-Bond (2014), who assert that coherence is achieved when there is an acceptable relationship among the items. For validation, the Content Validity Coefficient (CVC) was applied, as indicated by Hernández-Nieto (2002), emphasizing the relationship of responses among the three consulted experts. This technique considers the mean, the number of experts, and the scores assigned during validation, with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70, as stated by Balbinotti (2004).

The items were rated by experts using a scale that assigned three points for responses deemed good, two points for average responses, and one point for poor responses. This evaluation was based on criteria such as clarity, coherence of questions, appropriate language use, and the adequacy of the items to collect the desired information. The questionnaire achieved an index of 0.96, which, according to Hernández-Nieto (2002, cited in Pedrosa, Suárez-Álvarez & García-Cueto, 2014), exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.80 and validates the acceptability of the instrument's items.

The study sample consisted of 100 residents from a populated center. It was a non-probabilistic convenience sample, and participants, mostly parents, were contacted in person. Of the total participants, 70% were women, many of whom were heads of their households. Additionally, it was identified that 35% of the respondents assumed the primary role within the family unit.

Results and discussion

The general objective of this study was to determine how family networks manifest through family enterprises and their impact on the solidarity economy. The results obtained show a significant relationship between both variables, highlighting that the economy of the studied community is predominantly agricultural, integrated into the market through the production and commercialization of grapes and wines. It was observed that 23% of participants are engaged in grape harvesting, while 18% are involved in wine production. Moreover, 20% reported working in the restaurant sector, as indicated in Figure 1. This demonstrates that the primary sector of family enterprises is related to the production of alcoholic beverages, representing 23%, as shown in Figure 2. These data reflect a family economy based on bonds of belonging and common needs that arise within the family unit.

Figure 1: What does the family enterprise do?

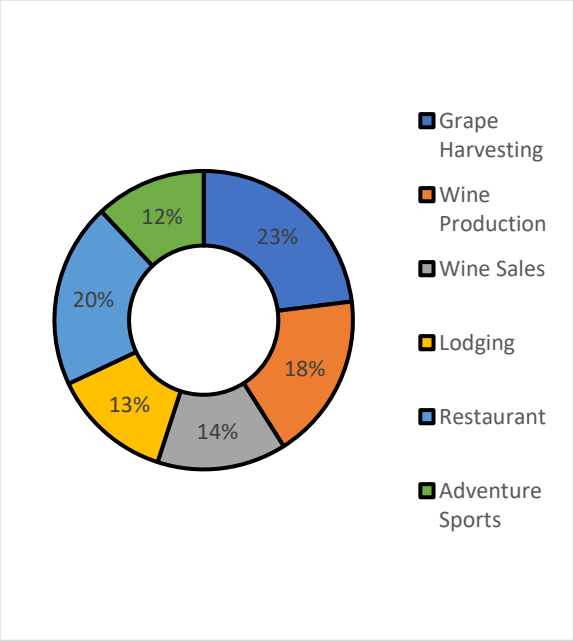
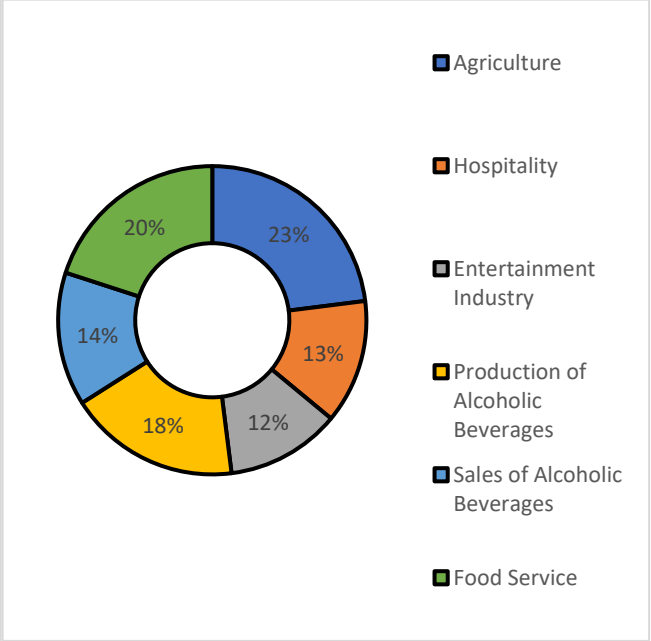


Figure 2: Family enterprise sectors



Family enterprises have shown to generate higher economic incomes. Therefore, they are considered economic and social practices that promote sustainable development, justice, and social equity through organized community participation in cooperative work and self-management (Castellano-García, 2022). The duration of the enterprises is also relevant, as 35% reported being active for between 11 and 15 years, as indicated in Figure 3. The family economy is sustained by enterprises, founded on the understanding that family and business coexist as interrelated systems. This perspective integrates the family system with the business system, resulting in family-owned businesses, a distinct organizational form that encompasses both familial and business dimensions (Arias-Mora, 2021; Moura et al., 2023).

Figure 3: Duration of enterprises

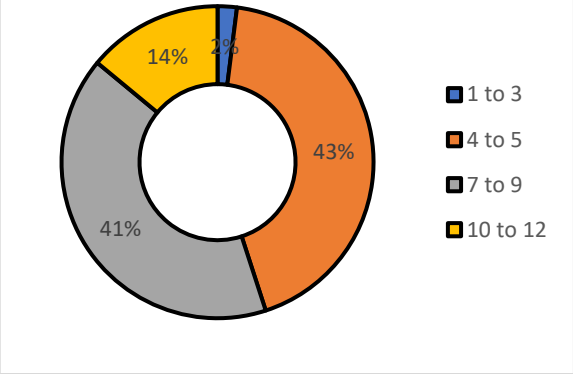
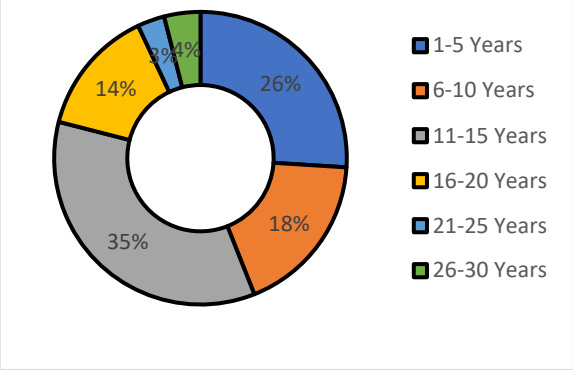
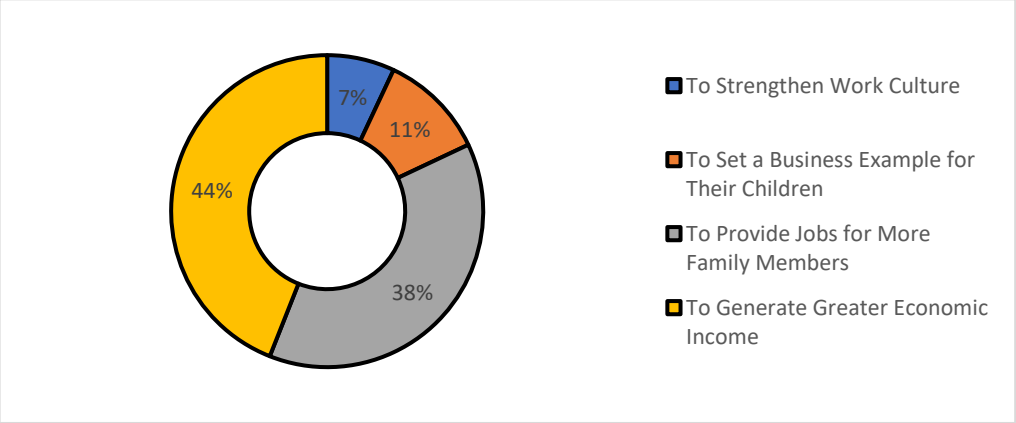


Figure 4: Number of members



Thus, an independent solidarity economy promoting its own development is emerging, where productivity is based on social relationships marked by solidarity and trust. This dynamic also becomes a means to achieve shared happiness through the collective work of family members. The existence of cooperation within the family unit facilitates an economic model that prioritizes collaboration and solidarity over competition and individualism (Núñez et al., 2022). This finding is reflected in the reasons for establishing family enterprises, where 44% indicated the motivation was to generate greater economic income, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Reasons for establishing family enterprises



Regarding the first specific objective, which seeks to identify the characteristics of family enterprises and their contribution to the territory, it was found that these businesses primarily engage in micro-scale production of subsistence goods, with potential for integration into local markets associated with irrigation projects. These activities require an organized community to participate in the commercial development of its inhabitants. The studied community opts to improve its living conditions through these initiatives, adopting forms of social organization based on solidarity, collective work, and early signs of profitable agriculture. In this sense, the solidarity economy emerges as a viable alternative to address the social and economic challenges of Latin America (Berlien et al., 2022). This is evidenced in Figure 6, where 67% indicated the existence of role division, and in Figure 7, where 95% affirmed that the enterprises generate higher economic incomes.

Figure 6: Role division

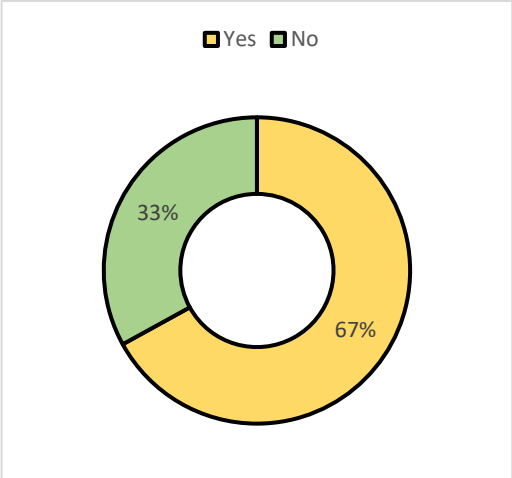
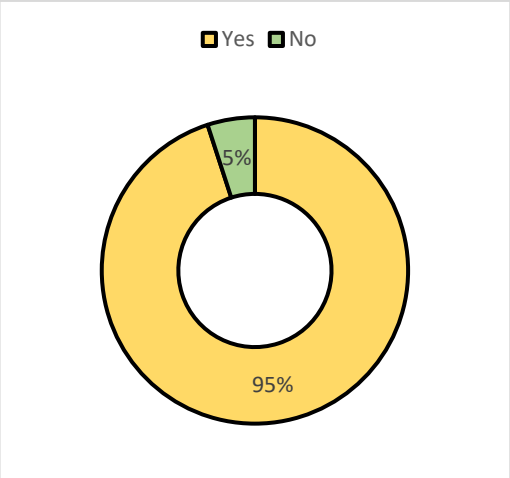


Figure 7: Increased income generation



Regarding the second specific objective, which consists of describing how family networks develop through enterprises, it was observed that these constitute an alternative to the traditional economic model. They are configured through networks of cooperation based on values such as solidarity, organization, cooperation, and self-management, focused on social justice, responsible consumption, and resource rationalization, all mediated by community participation (Moura de Oliveira et al., 2023; Pérez Villa et al., 2022). In Figure 8, 83% indicated the existence of cooperation, and in Figure 9, 84% noted that autonomy exists within these enterprises.

Figure 8: Improved the economy

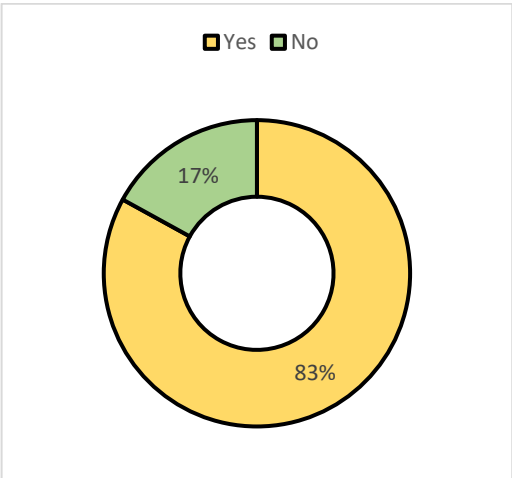
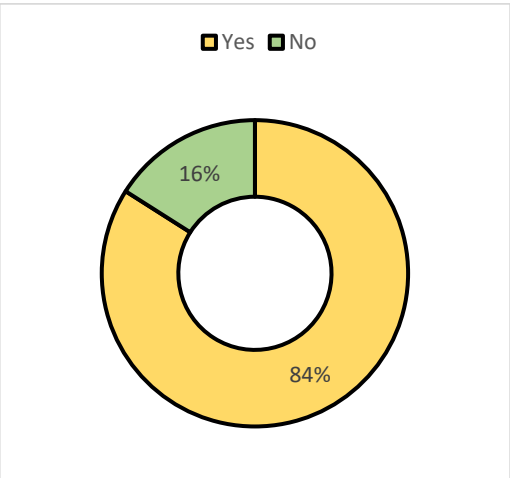


Figure 9: Autonomy in enterprises

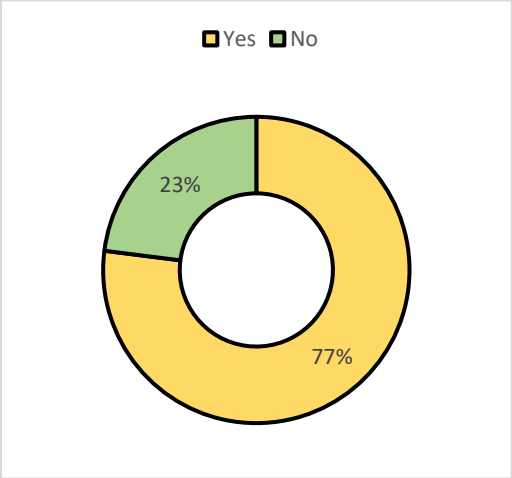


The data also indicate that the division of roles within family enterprises aims not only to maximize income but also to promote the well-being of individuals and families within the community. These enterprises solidify as sources of local development, generating dignified employment and improving living conditions through practices of cooperation and teamwork, serving as fundamental tools for sustainable growth (Marcano et al., 2023). Furthermore, they are linked with equitable resource distribution and autonomy, promoting an economic system based on the fair production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, centered on human rights. Instead of accumulating wealth, they focus on meeting needs and the participation of all family members (Martínez-Rojas, 2024). Figure 10 reinforces this finding, showing that 77% of participants believe that family enterprises

contribute to well-being and improve housing conditions. This assertion aligns with studies highlighting solidarity enterprises as key to sustainable development and family well-being (Marcano et al., 2023; Horrach, 2011).

Indeed, solidarity enterprises have developed mechanisms to offer services to other residents, adapting to both market laws and community norms, which involve active participation, consistency, and adherence to rules for production and commercialization. In this model, capital growth has a distributive and differentiated purpose.

Figure 10: Well-Being of enterprises



Finally, the contribution of family enterprises to the territory becomes significant, as they represent a necessary alternative to the effects of the traditional economic model, which has generated inequalities, social conflicts, and environmental damage. In this context, the values of collaboration, solidarity, and justice promoted by the solidarity economy allow for progress toward a more just and equitable society. Consequently, family enterprises not only improve the immediate environment but also contribute to the lifestyle, housing, and overall well-being of the involved families.

Conclusions

Family enterprises act as catalysts for the solidarity economy by providing a business model based on trust, reciprocity, and mutual aid among their members, where personal ties prevail over capital. This model allows for cost reduction and optimization of time in production processes, highlighting democratic and participatory management.

The solidarity economy pursues a social purpose and the attainment of common benefits. In this sense, it provides families with a more resilient structure, facilitates collective decision-making, access to networks of mutual support, and the capacity to adapt to environmental changes.

The articulation between family enterprises and the solidarity economy strengthens territorial development through fair value chains. This connection promotes social cohesion, job creation, and the generation of local social and economic value, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ultimately, family enterprises should not only be considered economic units but also spaces that foster equity and collaboration within the family unit. Thus, they contribute to a more humane economic development, respecting the individuality of each member.

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