

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS OF NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY AWKA

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between social media use and academic performance among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The **Uses and Gratifications Theory** was adopted as the theoretical framework. A mixed methods research design was employed, along with a multistage sampling procedure. The target population consisted of undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and a sample size of 200 respondents was statistically determined using the **Taro Yamane formula**. A **questionnaire** and an **In-Depth Interview (IDI) guide** served as instruments for data collection. Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)** version 25. Frequency tables were used to describe and present the quantitative data, while qualitative data were transcribed manually and analyzed using **thematic analysis**. Two research hypotheses were formulated and tested using **Chi-square inferential statistics**. The study found that students use social media very frequently. It also found that social media use negatively affects students' academic performance. Based on these findings, the study recommended that the university implement educational programs focused on digital literacy, emphasizing the responsible use of social media. It also recommended that the university establish clear policies regulating social media use during school hours.

Key words: social media, students' academic performance, academic performance, social media and students' academic performance

Introduction

Social media usage among students has become a significant issue in today's digital age. The benefits of social media for students include improved communication with teachers and classmates (Chun & Cheng-Herath, 2015), increased access to educational resources (Buckingham & Scullion, 2013), enhanced collaboration on group projects (Liu et al., 2016), and opportunities for networking and building professional relationships (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media also allows students to stay informed about current events and trends in their field of study (Gladwell & Shirky, 2011).

With the widespread availability and accessibility of social media platforms, students are increasingly falling prey to addictive social media use that can have detrimental effects on their academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being (Landa-Blanco et al., 2024).

One of the primary ways in which social media negatively affects students' academic performance is through distraction and procrastination (Bhandarkar et al., 2021). Kolhar et al (2021) aver that the addictive nature of social media platforms often leads students to spend excessive amounts of time scrolling through their feeds, watching videos, or engaging in online conversations instead of focusing on their studies. This constant distraction can significantly reduce the time and effort students dedicate to their schoolwork, resulting in lower academic performance.

Social media use can also impact students' study habits and learning processes. Xie, et al., (2023) state that frequent use of social media can lead to a decline in cognitive abilities such as concentration, memory retention, and critical thinking skills. Constant exposure to short-form content and instant gratification on social media platforms can hinder students' ability to engage in deep learning and complex problem-solving tasks required for academic success. One of the primary concerns associated with frequent social media use is its impact on attention span. Firth et al (2019) reveal that the constant stream of information on social media platforms can train individuals to seek quick bursts of stimulation rather than sustained focus. They further averred that this can be detrimental in an academic setting where tasks often require prolonged concentration and critical thinking. Students accustomed to scrolling through rapid-fire content may struggle to engage with lengthy texts or complex problems that demand sustained attention. Montag et

al., (2019) argue that social media platforms are designed to provide instant gratification through likes, shares, comments, and other forms of immediate feedback. They further buttressed that this constant reinforcement of instant rewards can condition individuals to seek immediate satisfaction rather than investing time and effort in tasks that offer delayed gratification, such as studying for exams or working through challenging academic problems. The ability to delay gratification is crucial for academic success as it enables students to persevere through difficulties, set long-term goals, and prioritize learning over momentary distractions (Firth et al., 2019).

Zubair et al., (2023) aver that excessive use of social media has been associated with various mental health issues that can impact students' academic performance. Anto et al (2023) opined that cyberbullying, comparison anxiety, fear of missing out (FOMO), and low self-esteem are common problems worsened by social media use among young people. They further stressed that these psychological stressors can lead to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and overall emotional distress, all of which can hinder students' ability to focus on their studies and perform well academically.

Aparicio-Martinez et al (2019) state that social media platforms often promote unrealistic standards of beauty, success, and happiness that can negatively impact students' self-esteem and self-perception. Samari et al (2022) opine that constant exposure to curated images and posts from peers or influencers may lead students to engage in unhealthy social comparisons that erode their confidence and sense of self-worth. They also agreed that this preoccupation with external validation can detract from academic pursuits as students prioritize maintaining a certain image or popularity online over their educational goals.

To address this issue, the government, educational institutions, and other stakeholders have implemented various steps and policies aimed at reducing students' excess usage of social media. One of the primary approaches taken in Nigeria is to raise awareness about the negative effects of excessive social media use among students. Educational institutions, government agencies, and non-profit organizations have launched campaigns to educate students about the importance of balancing their online activities with real-life responsibilities (Mosharrafa et al., 2024). These programmes often include workshops, seminars, and informational materials that highlight the risks associated with overuse of social media. Another strategy employed in Nigeria is the integration of digital literacy education into the school curriculum (Okechukwu & Ogbonnaya, 2023). By teaching students how to use social media responsibly and critically evaluate online information, educators aim to empower them to make informed decisions about their online behaviour. This approach not only helps students develop essential digital skills but also encourages them to be more mindful of their online activities (Okechukwu & Ogbonnaya, 2023).

Collis and Eggers (2022) decry that despite the implementation of various measures to limit excessive social media usage among students, the issue continues to be a significant concern. In the light of the foregoing, this study examines the effects of social media usage on the academic performance of students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Literature Review

Haddock et al., (2022) opine that social media has various positive effects on students' academic performance. It serves as a valuable tool for enhancing learning, collaboration, and skill development among students. Social media platforms enable students to connect with peers, teachers, and educational resources. They revealed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media facilitated academic collaboration and communication, allowing students to continue their studies remotely. Social media platforms enable students to connect with peers, teachers, and educational resources by providing a digital space where individuals can interact, collaborate, and share information. These platforms offer various features that facilitate communication and networking within the educational community.

According to Manji et al (2021), social media provides access to a vast array of educational content and information, aiding students in clearing doubts and enhancing their understanding of various subjects. One of the primary ways social media aids students in clearing doubts and enhancing their understanding is by providing access to a wide range of educational content. Platforms like YouTube, Khan Academy, and Coursera host a plethora of educational videos, tutorials, courses, and lectures on diverse subjects. Students can easily search for specific topics they are struggling with and find detailed explanations and demonstrations that help clarify their doubts (Arieniwa, 2023).

Kolhar et al., (2021) opine that by fostering personal connections and maintaining social ties, social media contributes to the mental well-being of students. It helps create a sense of community among students, even when physically distant. By fostering personal connections and maintaining social ties, social media contributes to the mental well-being of students. It helps create a sense of community among students, even when physically distant.

Engaging with social media can help reduce stress and anxiety levels in students. By connecting with others, sharing their thoughts and feelings, and receiving validation from their peers, students may feel more supported and less overwhelmed by academic or personal pressures. Moreover, social media offers a platform for self-expression and creativity, allowing students to explore their interests and hobbies as a form of stress relief (Athukorala, 2018).

According to Noor et al (2022) social media can however have several negative effects on students' academic performance, impacting their grades and overall educational success. They stated that one of the primary negative effects of social media on students is distraction. Spending excessive time on social media platforms can lead to poor time management, resulting in less time dedicated to studying and academic tasks. Constant notifications, scrolling feeds, and engaging content can divert students' attention away from their schoolwork.

The instant gratification provided by social media interactions can hinder students' ability to concentrate on complex academic assignments. Constant switching between social media use and studying can impair focus and retention of information, making it challenging for students to engage deeply with their coursework (Athukorala, 2018).

Kolhar et al., (2021) aver that social media often presents an idealized version of others' lives, leading students to compare themselves unfavourably and experience feelings of inadequacy. This comparison culture can negatively impact self-esteem and create unnecessary stress, detracting from students' focus on their academic goals. Constant exposure to these idealized portrayals can lead students to engage in social comparison, where they measure their own worth based on others' seemingly perfect lives. This comparison culture can evoke feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and low self-esteem among students. As they compare themselves to their peers or influencers online, students may perceive themselves as falling short or not measuring up to the perceived standards set by others (Shah et al., 2021).

Osharive (2015) carried out a study to examine the influence of social media and academic performance of students in University of Lagos. To achieve this, the descriptive survey research design was adopted. The simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 378 students. A four point Likert Type Rating Scale Questionnaire type, titled: Social Media and Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (SMAAPOS) was used to collect data from the participants. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage, were used to analyze the demographic data while inferential statistics of Chi-square(χ^2) was used in testing the research hypotheses. The study found that many students are addicted to social media, and thus perform poorly in their academics.

Ramaraj (2020) carried out a research to investigate the effects of social media on academic performance of the students. The study was done in Cuddalore district, India. Survey method was adapted to collect the relevant data for the study. 1000 respondents were selected as sample. Random sampling technique was employed for sample selection. The Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to process the data. The findings were presented in tables and charts. The study reported that social media has a positive impact on students' academic performance.

Sharma and Behl (2022) conducted a research to analyze the impact of social media on the academic performance of students. Data were collected from 408 undergraduate and postgraduate students segregated into 202 males and 206 females determined through convenience sampling. 234 students were enrolled in postgraduate courses, whereas 174 were registered in the undergraduate programme. One-way ANOVA was employed to compare the extraversion and introversion students of different education levels and gender. The study found that the personality trait of a student plays a vital role in analysing the impact of social media on their academic performance.

In summary, while social media can have detrimental effects on students' academic performance through distractions, addiction, and mental health issues, much of the studies above noted it could also have positive effects such as opportunities for collaboration, access to educational resources, and efficient information sharing when used responsibly.

Theoretical Framework

The Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) has been adopted as the theoretical framework of this study. The theory acknowledges that individuals have agency in choosing the media they consume. In the context of social media and academic performance, students actively engage with various social media platforms based on their specific needs and motivations. Moreover, the theory provides a framework for understanding the motivations behind students' use of social media. Students may turn to social media for entertainment, information seeking, socialization, or even educational purposes. Finally, the theory also considers how audiences actively interpret and respond to media content. In the context of social media's influence on academic performance, this aspect becomes crucial in understanding how students perceive information shared on social platforms, how they engage with educational content online, and how these interactions shape their learning experiences.

Methodology

Research design

The study adopted the mixed methods research design. The method involves the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in data collection and presentation. According to Williams (2007), the mixed methods research design combines elements of quantitative research and qualitative research to gain a more complete picture of the phenomena under study.

Study organization

The study was done at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state, Nigeria. Anambra State is in the Southeast geo-political zone of Nigeria, with Awka as the state capital. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka also called UNIZIK or NAU in short is a federal university in Nigeria. It consists of four campuses in Anambra State (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, n.d.). Its main campus is in Awka (the capital of Anambra State), while its other campuses are in Nnewi, Agulu, and Ifite-Ogwari, all in Anambra State. It is one of the federal universities which are overseen and accredited by the National Universities Commission. The university is named after the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (Chiegboka & Nwadiolor, 2015).

According to Onyeri (2022), Nnamdi Azikiwe University came into being as an offshoot of the defunct Anambra State University of Technology (ASUTECH). ASUTECH which was established through Law No. 7 of 30 July 1980 by the Government of the old Anambra operated as a multi-campus university, with campuses in Abakiliki, Enugu, Awka, and Nnewi. In 1991, following the split of the old Anambra State into Anambra and Enugu States, the Awka and Nnewi campuses of the former ASUTECH were constituted into Nnamdi Azikiwe University by the Anambra State Edict No.5 26 November 1991 (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, n.d). Nnamdi Azikiwe University was taken over by the Federal Government by Decree No. 34 on 15 July 1992.

Nine Faculties are domiciled in the Awka Campus. They include The Faculties of Arts, Biosciences, Education, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Law, Management Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences. The Faculty of Agriculture is domiciled at Ifite-Ogwari, while the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences is domiciled at Agulu. The Nnewi campus houses the College of Health Sciences and Technology, which comprises the Faculties of Medicine, Health Sciences and Technology, and Basic Medical Sciences. This brings the total number of Faculties in the University to fourteen.

Sample size and sampling technique

The target population of this study comprised of undergraduate students of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. According to the Directorate of Academic Planning, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, the number of undergraduate students in the university as of 2024 is 25,000. A sample size of 200 undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was statistically determined for this study. The sample size was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula. The formula is given as: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

The sample size was considered adequate to represent the entire study population given the timeframe and the resources within the disposal of the researcher. This sample size was however for the quantitative aspect of the study. The qualitative aspect of the study included 8 study participants.

Sample size and sampling technique

This study adopted the multi-stage sampling procedure. This involves the breakdown of sampling process into distinct stages, as well as combination/application of different sampling techniques such as simple random sampling in selecting the study participants. Multi-stage sampling procedure is relevant for this study because the study population is fairly large.

There are 9 Faculties at the Awka campus of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University. They include the Faculties of Arts, Biosciences, Education, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Law, Management Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences. The names of the Departments in each of the 9 Faculties were written on different pieces of paper and placed in a bowl with the corresponding Faculty name. Using the hand picking method without replacement of the simple random sampling technique, 3 Departments from each Faculty were picked, thus having a total of 27 Departments. In each of the Departments, at least 8 undergraduate students were selected using the availability sampling technique. This process was repeated where applicable until the target was achieved.

Purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the participants for the qualitative aspect of the study based on their knowledge of the themes of the study. Eight undergraduate students were selected as participants for the In-Depth Interview (IDI). The selected participants included 4 male students, and 4 female students.

Instruments for data collection and administration

For this study, a researcher-developed questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data, while the In-Depth Interview (IDI) was used to collect the qualitative data. The questionnaire was divided into sections, and designed in simple English language. The IDI guide was designed in simple English language, in line with the specific objectives of the study and contained probes associated with each question. The IDI was used to obtain more detailed information about the theme of the study.

Copies of the questionnaire were produced and administered to the sampled respondents on a face-to-face basis by the researchers. The IDI was equally administered and moderated by the researcher on the schedule and at the leisure of the selected participants. Permission was sought from the selected participants to allow the use of a tape recorder to record their responses.

Method of data analysis

The quantitative data collected from the field was processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software. However, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and simple percentages. The data was also presented using tables and charts. Furthermore, the hypotheses were tested using the chi-square (χ^2) inferential statistics. This will be done to test the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. On the other hand, the qualitative data collected through IDI was analyzed thematically. This involved first transcribing the interviews and thereafter reading the interview notes and transcripts to gain an overview of the body and context of the data collected. Each theme was discussed and necessary illustrative quotes from the IDI were extracted to support the quantitative data.

Findings**Socio-demographic data of respondents****Table 1: Distribution of respondents by their socio-demographic characteristics**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
SEX		
Male	115	57.5
Female	85	42.5
Total	200	100
AGE		
18-22	132	66
23-27	63	31.5
28-32	3	1.5
33 and above	2	1.0
Total	200	100
LEVEL		
100	28	14.0
200	34	17.0
300	15	7.5
400	119	59.5
500	4	2.0
Total	200	100
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION		
African Traditional Religion	3	1.5
Christianity	197	98.5
Total	200	100
RESIDENCE		
Off campus	173	86.5
On campus	27	13.5
Total	200	100

Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 shows that 57.5% of the respondents are male, while 42.5% of the respondents are females. It also shows that 66% of the respondents are between 18-22 years, while 1% are aged 33 and above. Moreover, 59.5% of the respondents are in 400 level, while 2% are in 500 level. Furthermore, 98.5% of the respondents are Christians, while 1.5% of the respondents are adherents of African Traditional Religion. Finally, 86.5% of the respondents stay off campus, while 13.5% stay on campus.

Research Question: What are the effects of social media on students' academic performance in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka? Questionnaire items 19-24 were designed to answer this research question. The findings are presented in tables below:

Table 2: Respondents' views on whether they would consider themselves addicted to social media

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	166	83.0
No	34	17.0
Total	200	100

Field survey, 2024

Data from table 2 shows that 83% of the respondents believe that they are addicted to social media, while 17% stated otherwise. This entails that social media could be highly addictive.

Table 3: Respondents' views on whether they actively participate in online challenges or trends on social media

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	187	93.5
No	13	6.5
Total	200	100

Field survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that 93.5% of the respondents actively participate in online challenges or trends on social media against the 6.5% that opined that they do not. This shows that many young people are keen on social media trends and challenges.

Table 4: Respondents' views on whether they find it challenging to balance their time between academics and social media use

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	190	95.0
No	10	5.0
Total	200	100

Field survey, 2024

Table 4 shows that 95% of the respondents opined that they find it challenging balancing their time between academics and social media use, while 5% opined otherwise. This further reiterates the b addictive and distractive nature of social media. This finding corroborated the submission of an IDI participant:

Yes, I find it challenging balancing my time between social media and use and my academics. I am almost always on social media, even in class. When I get home, I usually continue from where I stopped. I can spend hours on social media. Time that should be invested in studying or doing other things are spent on social media. I usually tell myself that I would stop, but I just find myself scrolling through social media for hours non-stop.

(Female, 21 years, Faculty of Social Sciences).

Table 5: Respondents' views on how social media affects their academic performance

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Positively	22	11.0
Negatively	147	73.5
No effect	31	15.5
Total	200	100

Field survey, 2024

Table 5 shows that 73.5% of the respondents opined that social media affects their academic performance negatively, while 11% opined that it affects their academics positively. It can therefore be deduced that social media generally has a negative effect on the academic performance of students. According to an IDI participant:

Social media affects academic performance both positively and negatively—it all depends on the person using it. You can find useful academic tips on social media, as well as important materials for your assignments. All of these can be helpful. However, on the other hand, social media also comes with a lot of distractions. Sometimes, you log in to find materials for your assignment, but then you start seeing video reels and other content that distracts you. Before you realize it, you forget why you went on social media in the first place. You end up scrolling through different videos and reels. So yes, social media comes with a lot of distractions that can negatively affect academic performance.

(Male, 25 years, Faculty of Social Sciences)

Table 6: Respondents' views on how they would rate their academic performance generally

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	12	6.0
Very good	45	22.5
Average	125	62.5
Poor	14	7.0
Very poor	4	2.0
Total	200	100

Field survey, 2024

Table 6 shows that 62.5% rated their academic performance to be average, while 2% rated it to be poor. Thus, majority of the respondents are performing averagely in school.

Table 7: Respondents' views on whether they struggle with their class work and assignments because of social media

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	181	90.5
No	19	9.5
Total	200	100

Field survey, 2024

Majority (90.5%) of the respondents opined that they struggle with their class work and assignments because of social media, while 9.5% opined otherwise. Again, this shows how addictive social media could be. This finding corroborated what an IDI participant said:

Yes, social media is really a distraction. It is a distraction that cannot be avoided to be honest. And yes, sometimes I struggle with my schoolwork due to being engrossed in social media. Sometimes, I forget that we were given an assignment to be submitted the next day. Other times, I just keep postponing when I would do the assignment until the day of submission, and it dawns on me that I had not done it.

(Female, 23 years, Faculty of Management Sciences).

Hypothesis one: H₁: There is a significant relationship between time spent on social media and the academic performance of students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Table 8: The relationship between time spent on social media and the academic performance of students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

			How would you rate your academic performance generally?				
			Excellent	Very good	Average	Poor	Very poor
How much time do you spend on social media platforms cumulatively each time you log in? X²=10.33, DF=16 P-value=0.004	Less than 1hr	Count	5	6	6	4	1
	1-3 hours		3	5	20	2	1
	4-6 hours		2	22	35	2	1
	7-9 hours		1	30	37	1	1
	Above 9 hours		1	6	6	5	-

Field survey, 2024

The P-value of $0.004 \leq 0.05$ (which is the level of significance), we therefore accept the substantive hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. Thus, there is a significant relationship between time spent on social media and the academic performance of students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This entails that the more time students spend on social media, the poorer their academic performance could be.

Discussion of findings

The study found that social media is used very often by students as all the respondents agreed that they use social media daily. This finding is in line with the finding of a study by Anto et al (2023). This finding suggests a high level of engagement among students. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok have become integral to the daily lives of young people. According to Noor et al (2022), 90% of students, report using social media regularly. Students utilize social media for multiple purposes, including communication with peers, sharing content, accessing news and information, and participating in online communities. The interactive nature of these platforms allows for real-time communication and fosters a sense of belonging among users (Ramaraj, 2020).

This study found that the use of social media negatively affects student's academic performance. This finding is in line with the finding of a study by Oshariwe (2015). Social media often serves as a significant distraction for students. Shah et al (2021) noted that the constant notifications and the urge to check updates can interrupt study sessions, leading to fragmented attention. Oshariwe (2015) equally found that multitasking between social media and academic work can reduce cognitive performance. He equally reported that excessive use of social media has been linked to poor sleep quality among students. Sleep deprivation is known to impair cognitive functions such as memory retention and problem-solving skills, which are crucial for academic success.

The study found that encouraging time management among students would prove effective in curbing excessive use of social media. Ramaraj (2020) equally found that effective time management is key in curbing excessive and unhealthy use of social media. He reported that good time management enables individuals to assign specific time slots for activities, which can help prioritize tasks and reduce procrastination. When students learn to manage their time effectively, they are less likely to engage in unproductive behaviours, such as excessive scrolling through social media platforms.

Hypothesis was tested using chi-square inferential statistics and interpreted. It was found that a significant relationship exists between time spent on social media and the academic performance of students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This entails that the more time students spend on social media, the poorer their academic performance could be. It was equally found that there is no significant relationship between the number of social media students belong to and their academic performance of in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. The university should implement educational programmes that focus on digital literacy, emphasizing the importance of responsible social media use. These programmes can teach students about the potential negative impacts of excessive social media academic performance.
2. The university should offer workshops that teach effective time management skills. By equipping students with tools to prioritize their tasks and manage their time efficiently, they may be less inclined to spend excessive hours on social media.
3. They should promote extracurricular activities that engage students in physical, artistic, or intellectual pursuits outside of the digital realm. This could include sports, clubs, and community service projects that encourage face-to-face interactions.
4. The university should establish clear policies regarding social media use during school hours. By limiting access to social media platforms during class times or study periods, students may be encouraged to focus more on their studies.
5. The university should create environments that encourage offline interactions among peers through organized events like sports days, cultural festivals, or community service initiatives that promote teamwork and collaboration without reliance on technology.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of social media on students' academic performance at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Social media is pervasive and especially popular among young people and students. It can facilitate collaborative learning environments, where students share resources and ideas. It also allows for the quick dissemination of information regarding academic events or changes in schedules. Furthermore, it can serve as a platform for peer support and motivation. However, the unhealthy and excessive use of social media can negatively impact students' academic performance. The addictive nature of social media often results in poor time management, making it difficult for students to balance their online activities with academic responsibilities. Therefore, there is a need to promote healthy and balanced social media use among students.

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