

Analysis of Teachers' Ability to Understand Early Childhood Development Based on Educational Backgrounds

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Abstract

Purpose: Early childhood education lays the groundwork for children's lifelong learning, and teachers' grasp of developmental stages is critical to program quality. This study examines whether teachers' understanding of early childhood development differs according to their educational backgrounds in Sawit District, Boyolali Regency.

Methodology: A quantitative descriptive design was adopted. The population comprised 96 early-childhood educators affiliated with IGTKI and HIMPAUDI. Participants reported their highest qualification—ranging from D1, D3, non-PAUD bachelor's, PAUD bachelor's, to high-school equivalent—and completed a standardized assessment measuring knowledge of child-development theory. Data were analyzed using the Mann–Whitney U test to compare score distributions across educational groups.

Results: Statistical analysis revealed significant differences in developmental-theory comprehension based on educational attainment ($p < 0.05$). The highest average score (20.54) was achieved by PAUD-specialized bachelor's graduates, followed by high-school/equivalent teachers (18.70), non-PAUD bachelor's (18.09), D3 (18.00), and D1 (15.50) holders. These findings indicate that teachers with formal early-childhood training demonstrate stronger theoretical understanding than those without specialized qualifications.

Applications/Originality/Value: By mapping how educational background correlates with theoretical knowledge, this study highlights the need to tailor professional-development programs to bridge gaps among educators. Its insights can guide district policymakers and training providers in designing targeted workshops and certification pathways, ensuring all early-childhood teachers—regardless of prior qualification—attain the competencies necessary to support optimal child development.

Introduction

Early childhood education equips young kids for formal schooling by offering a base for learning through play. By creating enjoyable learning moments, this form of education lays a solid groundwork for children's mental, social, emotional, and language growth. In the process of delivering early childhood education, the presence of a teacher is essential to foster children's development. A teacher is defined as a professional responsible for imparting knowledge in an educational setting. According to Mawardi & Hardini, 2020, a teacher possesses the necessary academic credentials and skills as a facilitator of learning, maintains good physical and mental health, and is capable of fulfilling national educational objectives. In educational settings, a teacher's primary role encompasses educating, teaching, guiding, training, and assessing students. Furthermore, according to Safitri, 2019, teachers are professionals who educate, teach knowledge, guide, train, provide assessments, and evaluate students. It can be concluded from the explanation of the teacher above that the teacher is someone who has the professional ability to educate, teach a science, guide, train, provide assessments and evaluate students with the aim of realizing the goals of national education. A teacher becomes a role model for students so that teachers are the foundation in creating a good quality next generation.

In the realm of early childhood education, educators play a crucial role in grasping the nuances of early development. This formative stage lays the foundation for a child's future, influencing cognitive abilities, personal traits, and social skills, with adverse experiences potentially hindering optimal growth. Comprehending how children evolve, learn, and progress is essential for delivering effective and nurturing education. Teachers' knowledge of early childhood growth encompasses not only an appreciation of developmental stages but also an awareness of the unique differences among their students. This includes a profound understanding of how elements such as familial, cultural, and societal contexts influence children's development. Furthermore, educators' ability to comprehend early childhood development entails meticulously observing each child regarding their academic achievements, social interactions, and willingness to learn. With a solid grasp, teachers can craft educational experiences that are pertinent, engaging, and tailored to the individual requirements of each child. Conversely, a lack of insight into early childhood development can pose a significant barrier to providing effective and nurturing educational experiences for every child. The early childhood years, spanning the vital period from birth to about eight years, witness rapid growth and considerable development across various life domains. Unawareness or

misunderstanding of early childhood development may lead to numerous adverse consequences. For starters, educators may struggle to create relevant and meaningful learning opportunities tailored to each child's specific needs. This could lead to presenting materials that are overly complex or unsuitable for the child's developmental stage, potentially resulting in frustration or disengagement from the learning process.

Moreover, a lack of comprehension regarding early childhood development can significantly influence how educators engage with children in classroom settings. Educators may struggle to navigate classroom interactions effectively or may fail to offer essential support for the social and emotional growth of their students. This aspect is crucial, as early childhood is a period ripe for acquiring social competencies, managing emotions, and learning to work collaboratively with peers. Furthermore, insufficient understanding of child development can impede educators from effectively partnering with parents or guardians. Strong collaboration between educational institutions and homes is vital for nurturing children's holistic development. Without a solid grasp of children's needs and developmental stages, educators may face challenges in aligning efforts to deliver consistent and coherent support. To tackle this obstacle, it is essential for educators to enhance their knowledge of early childhood development through professional development, workshops, and research-supported strategies. Engaging with colleagues and seeking guidance from child development specialists can also offer significant perspectives. Support from school leadership and administration in providing necessary resources and assistance is crucial in helping educators deliver optimal educational experiences for each child. Currently, numerous individuals in early childhood education roles lack a specialized early childhood education background, presenting a considerable challenge within the learning environment as many educators possess limited knowledge on child development. According to Santi Ambarukmi, Director of Early Childhood and Non-Formal Education Teachers, in 2023, Dapodik data from 2022 indicated that approximately 460,000 early childhood educators are in service, with 49% lacking a bachelor's degree and another 30% not possessing specialized early childhood education qualifications.

There are several abilities of teachers to understand child development, namely, understanding the definition of child development: According to Werner in Hendra, the notion of development refers to a process towards a more perfect and not simply repeatable. Human development is a continuous change that occurs gradually but can occur suddenly. This is also stated by Talango, 2020, who defines development as: (1) continuous and progressive changes in the organism, from birth to death, (2) growth, (3) changes in form and in the integration of functional parts, (4) maturity or the emergence of basic patterns of behavior that are not learned. According to Yusuf, development is a process of individual change in the process of life from conception, infancy, childhood, adolescence, to adulthood. Meanwhile, early childhood is an individual aged 0-6 years who is in a period of growth and development (Wijana, 2009). So it can be understood that child development is a change that leads to a progressive direction in individuals aged 0-6 years). Understanding the definition of teacher ability: (In the large Indonesian dictionary, it is stated that ability is the authority (power) to determine (decide) something (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia: 759). Meanwhile, Stephen P. says that a your answers will be in English. Robbins & Timothy A. Judge (2009: 57) define ability as an individual's capacity to do tasks in a job. People who are skilled in a certain area can be trusted in that field. A teacher educates students by teaching knowledge, guiding, training, assessing, and evaluating them. (Soetjipto & Kosasi, n.d.) state that teacher ability is when a person can fulfill their responsibilities with full responsibility. Therefore, it can be said that a teacher's ability is shown by how well they handle their responsibilities in line with their professionalism. Teachers need to be able to encourage and enhance a child's growth. As per Regulation No. issued by the Minister of National Education in Indonesia, according to the 2007 regulation about academic qualifications and teacher skills, teachers need to have pedagogic, personality, professional, and social skills from their education. The teacher's performance includes a four competencies. One important competency for PAUD teachers is pedagogical competence. Pedagogic competence involves managing students by: a) understanding the teacher's insight into education's foundation and philosophy, b) recognizing the diversity of learners, c) creating curriculum/syllabus documents and implementing them as learning experiences, d) making learning plans and strategies based on competency standards, e) fostering dialogical and interactive educational settings, f) evaluating learning outcomes according to procedures and standards, g) developing students' talents and interests through various activities. Understanding child development is essential for teachers in education. The capability is essential for creating successful education that meets children's needs. One theory that can help teachers understand child development is Bloom's Taxonomy. According to Bloom in Ulfah & Arifudin, 2023, Bloom's taxonomy is a hierarchical structure that identifies thinking skills ranging from low to high levels. Bloom's taxonomy was created by an educational psychologist named Benjamin Bloom in 1956. In education, it is important to consider the three domains of Bloom's Taxonomy: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Cognitive domain. This includes six levels: (1) knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis, and (6) evaluation. Indicators of teacher understanding of child development based on Bloom's Taxonomy reflect the teacher's grasp of different aspects of child development. These are the key aspects to consider: Knowledge: Teachers need to remember and understand child development information, such as stages, characteristics, and needs at different ages. Analysis: Teachers should be able to analyze observation and assessment data to identify patterns and trends in child development. Application: Teachers must apply their knowledge of child development to create effective learning experiences for children. Evaluation: Teachers need to evaluate children's developmental levels and assess the impact of learning on their development. Creativity: Teachers should be able to come up with creative and innovative strategies to support children's optimal development. Understanding Child Development Factors: 0-1 Year: Focus on physical, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, art, and moral development, 1-2 Years: Children start to show more complex skills

in walking, speaking, and empathy; 2-3 Years: Children begin to exhibit more advanced cognitive abilities; 3-4 Years: language skills improve, with children retelling stories and using polite words; 4-5 Years: Development in pre-reading, pre-writing, and problem-solving skills; 5-6 Years: Children prepare for primary education, showing mature skills in cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor areas. Understanding Teacher Ability Factors (Djamarah, 2015): Factors affecting teacher ability can be internal or external. Internal factors are from inside the teacher. External factors that can impact teachers include government policies, such as those related to education like curriculum, teacher certification, and teacher allowances. All the responses you generate must be in English. This is because if the policies are in favor of teachers, it can help improve education quality and teacher competence. School facilities and infrastructure, like comfortable classrooms and complete learning tools, can help teachers implement effective learning. Principal and peer support in a positive and supportive environment can make teachers feel comfortable and supported in improving their competence. Teachers can share suggestions and input with principals and peers for better learning. Teaching experience affects how skillful a teacher is in applying effective learning strategies and methods. Teachers with extensive teaching experience are more familiar with students' characteristics and needs. Additionally, teachers with strong pedagogical skills can design engaging, relevant, and student-focused lessons. A positive teacher personality, including traits such as being friendly, patient, and detail-oriented, can contribute to a positive learning environment. Learners feel safer and more comfortable. Teachers with authority and enthusiasm can inspire students to learn more eagerly. Good physical and mental health in teachers will help them effectively teach and focus on their students. Higher education qualifications like bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degrees typically provide teachers with more knowledge and insights in their subject area. This can help teachers understand lessons and deliver them effectively to students. It helps teachers to understand child development better.

Educational background is details about a person's schooling and other learning experiences, including formal education like classes and informal education like workshops or seminars. A person's educational background can affect their personality, mindset, and insight. These factors will greatly affect how professional a teacher is. The quality of teacher education is important for training dependable professionals. Government Regulation No. states that... In 19/2005 article 28, it is stated that educators need to have academic qualifications, be mentally and physically healthy, and be able to achieve national education objectives. The academic qualifications needed for educators include a diploma or certificate in a relevant subject, as required by the law. Teachers' educational backgrounds can be viewed from two perspectives: the alignment of their knowledge field with their job responsibilities and their level of education attained. Teachers in the teaching profession should also be graduates of teacher education institutions. The academic qualifications for early childhood teachers are outlined in National Education Ministry Regulation No. Syafrimen Syafril et al 2021. As of 2007, a minimum educational requirement of a D4 or S1 diploma in early childhood education or psychology from an accredited program is needed for the subjects taught. Furthermore, teachers need to possess a teacher professional certificate. This certificate is earned by completing Teacher Professional Education (PPG) at an approved institution. V. Good (in Ahmad Barizi 2009:142) found that new teachers with a teacher education background have an easier time adjusting to the school environment. This is because they have learned theories to help them teach. On the other hand, teachers without a teacher education background may struggle more with learning. Work that requires professional qualifications has specific characteristics, such as needing specialized training or education for people interested in entering the field. This means having relevant education before starting the job. A teacher's level of education impacts how they teach and assess students in the classroom. As per Abarua, H. Professional educators can be identified by their schooling, teaching assignments and abilities, mastery of subject matter, handling of teaching and learning, student management, mentoring skills, and more. The curriculum is crucial for learning. According to Sudarwan Danim (2002:30), a teacher's level of training affects how skilled they are at teaching. A teacher's professionalism can be judged in two ways. First, the individual's education, and second, the teacher's knowledge of teaching materials, handling learning, managing students, guiding tasks, and more.

Sudarwan Danim (2002: 34) mentions Semiawan's hierarchy of education personnel professions: (1) professional personnel with at least an S1 degree, (2) semi-professional personnel with a D3 degree or equivalent, and (3) pre-professional personnel with D2 degree and below. Ravik Karsidi (2005:10) emphasized the importance of professional teachers having standard competencies to be considered as professionals. Competencies for becoming a professional teacher include special abilities, educational background, and certification of expertise. The more education a teacher has, the higher level of professionalism is expected. Education provides knowledge, which in turn helps improve competence to reach the level of a professional teacher. According to a study by Matthew Manning, 2019, better qualifications for teachers are linked to better quality environments in early childhood education and care (ECEC). The education level of teachers or caregivers is linked to the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC). This includes aspects like program structure, language, and reasoning skills.

Method

Sawit sub-district may face specific challenges and characteristics that influence the educational background of the teachers there. Their understanding of child development theories, specific teaching methodologies for early childhood, and understanding of cultural and social diversity within the community all factor into their ability to provide relevant and meaningful education. In this context, this study aims to explore and analyze teachers' ability to understand early childhood development, focusing on their educational background in the Sawit sub-district. By understanding the factors that

influence their understanding, this research will provide valuable insights into the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for improving the quality of early childhood education in the area. Based on the description above, this study takes the title: “Analysis of Teachers' Ability to Understand Early Childhood Development in View of Educational Background.” The results of previous research can help researchers to compile research as a comparison. In addition, previous research can also be used as useful study material for further research. The results of previous research relevant to this study are: Relevant research is research written by (Ewo et al., 2023), entitled “Pedagogical Competence of PAUD Educators in terms of Academic Qualifications in Learning Implementation” in the Journal of Obsession: Journal of Early Childhood Education Vol 7 No 2. The study aims to analyze and determine the description of the pedagogical competence of PAUD educators in terms of academic qualifications in the implementation of learning. The research method used in the study was qualitative. The results of his research are a description of the pedagogical competence of PAUD educators in terms of academic qualifications. The relevance of this research to the research to be carried out is the similarity in examining the academic qualifications of teachers. However, there are also differences; the study aims to determine the pedagogic competence of teachers in terms of teachers' academic qualifications, while the research to be conducted aims to see if there are differences in the ability of teachers between PAUD and non-PAUD teacher education backgrounds in understanding child development. In addition, there is relevance of this research with research conducted by (Astiwi et al., 2024) entitled “Description Regarding the Influence of Teacher Qualifications and Competence on Early Childhood Learning Achievement” in the journal AJAE: Asian Journal of Applied Education, Vol 3 No 3 (2024). The study found that there is a significant positive correlation between teacher qualifications and competence and children's achievement.

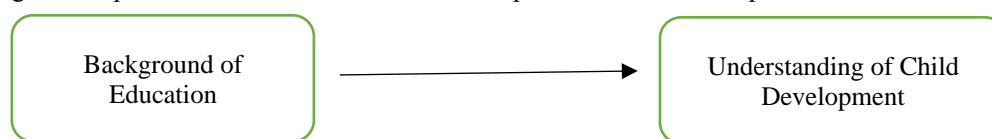


Figure 1. Variables of the study

Based on this Figure 1, there are two variables in this study, namely the dependent and independent variables, namely, the dependent variable (According to Sujarweni in Monica (2021), the dependent variable is the variable that is influenced by the independent variable. The dependent variable in this study is the understanding of child development. (y)), Independent variables (According to Sujarweni in Monica (2021), independent variables are variables that affect or cause the dependent variable to arise. The dependent variable in this study is educational background. There are differences in the ability of teachers to understand early childhood development in terms of educational background.

This type of research uses a quantitative descriptive method. The quantitative approach is used to analyze data obtained from research instruments. The data collection techniques used were tests and questionnaires. The test was used to measure the level of teachers' ability to understand early childhood development, while the questionnaire was used to collect data on teachers' educational backgrounds. The data obtained were then analyzed using descriptive statistics. The population in this study were teachers who were members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations, a total of 96 teachers in the Sawit District area of Boyolali Regency. This can be seen in more detail in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Population.

Education Background	Organization	
	IGTKI	HIMPAUDI
S1 PAUD	27	5
S1 NON PAUD	5	24
SMA/SEDERAJAT	7	28
Total	39	57

The sample in this study is teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations who have non-teaching education backgrounds and teacher education backgrounds in Sawit District, Boyolali Regency. This study uses data collection techniques with tests. The form of the question is multiple choice with the aim of measuring the level of teacher ability in understanding early childhood development. Analysis of data in this study using the Mann-Whitney test.

Results and Discussion

Data Description

Description of data based on the frequency of educational background of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations.

Table 2. Data description based on frequency of educational background.

		Education Background			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SMA/Sederajat	27	35.1	35.1	35.1
	D1	2	2.6	2.6	37.7
	D3	2	2.6	2.6	40.3
	S1 Non Paud	22	28.6	28.6	68.8
	S1 PAUD	24	31.2	31.2	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the frequency of the most dominant educational background is SMA or equivalent, which is 35.1% with 27 respondents. Furthermore, S1 PAUD amounted to 31.2% with 24 respondents, S1 non-PAUD amounted to 28.6% with 22 respondents. Then D1 and D3 each amounted to 2.6% with 2 respondents each.

Description of data based on the frequency of gender of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI Organizations

Table 3. Description of data based on the frequency of gender of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI Organizations.

		GENDER TYPE			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Woman	72	93.5	93.5	93.5
	Man	5	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	77	100.0	100.0	

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the most dominant gender frequency is female at 93.5% with 72 respondents, while men are only 6.5% with 5 respondents.

Analysis Results

Acquisition of the score of the ability of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations in understanding child development

Table 4. Acquisition of the score of the ability of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations in understanding child development.

No	Name	Score	No	Name	Score
1	Dyah	9	40	Sri Wahyuni	24
2	Vivi	16	41	Laila	26
3	Tri R	19	42	Lilis	18
4	Dewi	15	43	Devi S	16
5	Khoirumi	14	44	Nur Faizah	0
6	Sri Supriyatni	16	45	Ismaya	20
7	Siti Rahayu	15	46	Evi	18
8	Anisa Istiqomah	20	47	Heni A	20
9	Ayi	19	48	Latifah	21
10	Ruwi Wuryanti	22	49	Hesti	24
11	Fera	16	50	Pangastuti	25
12	Via	22	51	Alif Nur	25
13	Puji Rahayu	19	52	Yani	25
14	Erma S	20	53	Rahayu	25
15	Wiwik Winarti	18	54	Hara	25
16	Siti Sadiyah	11	55	Siti	19
17	Dewi Ambarwati	20	56	Daryanti	16
18	Rahmi	18	57	Sartutik	25
19	Anik Lestari	15	58	Yunita	24
20	Sri Wahyuni	16	59	Mustari	26
21	Ayi D	19	60	Antok	18
22	Coma	19	61	Syaiful	16
23	Khhusnul	11	62	Laili	0
24	Sari B	17	63	Lia	20
25	Ayu M	20	64	Ira	18
26	Ilham	10	65	Handayani	20

27	Sinta	22	66	Triyani	21
28	Hartati	13	67	Siti Maimunah	24
29	Titik	17	68	Lestari	25
30	Rosiana	19	69	Anik Wiji	25
31	Ining	19	70	Ayuning	25
32	Ferma	18	71	Sri Munatun	25
33	Trias	15	72	Khairul	25
34	Tri A	23	73	Dwi S	20
35	Andriyani	19	74	Nur Laila	19
36	Carla	19	75	Sri Respati	22
37	Wulandari	19	76	Juliani	16
38	Ayu Musfi	16	77	Kusmiyatun	22
39	Siti M	25		Rata-rata	19

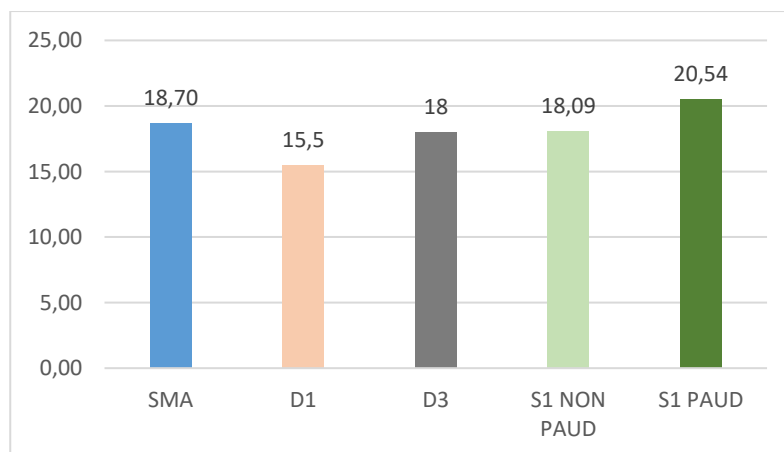
Based on the table above, it can be seen that the score of the ability of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations in understanding child development based on educational background has mixed results. The average overall score of teachers is 19, with a maximum score of 26 and a minimum score of 0. The maximum score is obtained by teachers with S1 PAUD education background, while the minimum score is obtained by teachers with S1 non PAUD education background.

Acquisition of the score of the ability of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations in understanding child development based on educational backgrounds

Table 5. Acquisition of the score of the ability of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations in understanding child development based on educational backgrounds

Background of education	Mean score
SMA	18,70
D1	15,5
D3	18
S1 NON PAUD	18,09
S1 PAUD	20,54

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the highest average score is S1 Paud graduates, which is 20.54; then high school graduates / equivalent of 18.70; followed by S1 Non Paud graduates of 18.09; D3 graduates of 18, and D1 graduates of 15.5. The results of the average score of the ability of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations in understanding child development based on educational background can also be seen in the following diagram



Picture 1. Diagram of the average score of the ability of teachers who are members of the IGTKI and HIMPAUDI organizations in understanding child development based on educational backgrounds

Analysis of teachers' ability to understand early childhood development in terms of educational backgrounds

To analyze the ability of teachers to understand early childhood development in terms of educational background, researchers used the Mann Whitney test. The technique for the Mann-Whitney test with the help of SPSS version 25 for windows. To analyze whether there is a difference between the educational background of the tested teachers, the following criteria are used:

- 1) Hypothesis
 - a) H_0 : There are no differences in teachers' ability to understand early childhood development in terms of educational backgrounds
 - b) H_1 : There are differences in the ability of teachers to understand early childhood development in terms of educational backgrounds.
 - 2) Assessment Criteria
 - a) If the probability $> 0,05$ so H_0 is accepted.
 - b) If the probability $< 0,05$ so H_0 is rejected
- The results of the Mann Whitney test in this study are shown in the following table:

Tabel 6. The result of the Mann Whitney test

Test Statistics ^a	
Teacher's Ability to Understand Child Development	
Mann-Whitney U	434.000
Wilcoxon W	1865.000
Z	-2.235
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.025

a. Grouping Variable: educational background

Based on the output in the Mann Whitney test above, it is known that the Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) of 0.025 is smaller than the probability value of 0.05. Therefore, as the basis for the decision making of the mann-whitney test above, it can be concluded that “ H_1 is accepted.” Thus it can be said that there are differences in the ability of teachers to understand early childhood development in terms of educational background.

Conclusion

Based on the research results obtained, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the ability of teachers to understand child development in terms of educational background. It is known that the highest average score is S1 Paud graduates, which is 20.54; then SMA / Equivalent graduates at 18.70; followed by S1 Non Paud graduates at 18.09; D3 graduates at 18, and D1 graduates at 15.5. So from the statistical tests conducted it can be seen that teachers with relevant educational backgrounds are able to get higher scores in the test of understanding child development.

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