

Teacher–Student Communication Patterns in Islamic Moral Education: A Qualitative Study on Character Formation in Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The decline in student morality has become a critical issue amidst globalization and digital transformation, particularly in Islamic education, which prioritizes character building as a primary goal. This study aims to analyze how teacher-student communication patterns in *Aqidah Akhlak* (Faith and Morality) learning contribute to the formation of students' moral character in Islamic secondary schools. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach at MTs Bina Iman Pasir Belengkong, with one teacher, 15 grade VII A students, and the principal as supporting informants. Data collection techniques included observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, while data analysis used the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The results showed that teachers implemented a combination of one-way, two-way, and multi-way communication patterns adapted to the learning dynamics. These communication strategies were proven to improve students' moral behavior, such as increased respect, reduced use of harsh language, increased cooperation, and time discipline. This study also identified supporting factors such as a religious school environment and parental involvement, as well as inhibiting factors such as the influence of digital media and limited learning time. The implications of this study confirm that communication is an effective pedagogical strategy in moral education, and therefore needs to be integrated into teacher training and curriculum development. Further research is recommended to broaden the context, use a mixed approach, and examine the role of digital media in students' moral formation.

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INTRODUCTION

The combination of globalization and digital transformation presents serious challenges for moral education, particularly in the context of Islamic education, which emphasizes character formation through *Aqidah* (Islamic faith) and *Akhlak* (moral conviction). The phenomenon of declining moral values in students, such as diminished respect for teachers and increased disrespectful communication between students (Kasman, 2025; Liang et al., 2020), demonstrates the urgency of strengthening effective educational strategies (Rasmani et al., 2025). Emphasized that basic education is the primary foundation for character formation, particularly in the early stages of schooling (Berkowitz & Grych, 2000; Birhan et al., 2021), where the impact of globalization begins to be evident through the degradation of moral values (Hidayani, 2022). Furthermore, described modern life as a "moral pandemic" that demands adaptations in moral education systems to address the escalating social crisis (Huynh & Nguyen, 2024). Thus, an educational approach is needed that focuses not only on knowledge transfer but also on the continuous internalization of moral values (Nursalim et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have examined the role of communication in moral education, but this research remains limited. Highlight teacher-parent communication and the role of religious teachers in religious practice (Hayati, Y. N., & Rofik, A., 2023), but have not yet examined in depth the dynamics of communication patterns in moral formation at the secondary education level (Yusuf et al., 2025). Emphasize that teachers' attitudes and perceptions significantly influence the success of moral education curricula (Zhang et al. (2022), while Gui et al. (2020) point to the importance of implementing diverse communication strategies in creating a comprehensive moral learning environment. Furthermore, Wardhani et al. (2018) reveal that the social climate in the classroom influences students' perceptions of character education, and Sanderse (2024) emphasize the importance of teachers' role as role models in shaping students' morals (Adiyono et al., 2026). Other research also shows that participatory learning strategies can increase student engagement and moral literacy (Cahill et al., 2013; Dara et al., 2025). However, these studies have not specifically integrated various communication patterns (one-way, two-way, and multi-way) in the context of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning, thus creating a research gap that needs to be filled.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze teacher communication patterns in *Aqidah Akhlak* (Islamic Creed) learning and their contribution to the formation of students' moral character at the secondary education level. This research contributes by integrating the perspectives of educational communication and Islamic moral education within a comprehensive analytical framework. Previous studies, such as those (Hendrizar et al., 2022; Tabroni & Romdhon, 2022), have shown that communication-based character education models can improve students' social skills (Chen et al., 2026). Furthermore, Sofiani et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of integrating emotional and spiritual dimensions in moral education, while Ibrahim et al. (2024) highlight the need for diverse communication approaches to create a learning environment that supports the internalization of values. This research complements the limitations of previous studies by delving deeper into the relationship between variations in teacher communication patterns and changes in students' moral behavior (Longobardi et al., 2024; Bjärehed et al., 2024).

Therefore, the primary focus of this study is to examine whether various teacher communication patterns including one-way, two-way, and multi-way communication, have a significant influence on the formation of students' moral character. This study argues that effective communication serves not only as a means of delivering material but also as a pedagogical strategy capable of concretely shaping students' behavior and values. Therefore, this research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic moral education that is adaptive to the challenges of globalization, while also strengthening the role of communication as a key element in shaping students' character.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach as proposed by Creswell (2017), which aims to understand phenomena in depth through natural interactions and the surrounding social context. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture the dynamics of teacher-student communication patterns in *Aqidah Akhlak* learning and its influence on the formation of students' moral character. The study was conducted at MTs Bina Iman Pasir Belengkong, East Kalimantan, in the 2022–2023 academic year. The research subjects consisted of one *Aqidah Akhlak* subject teacher, 15 grade VII A students as the main participants, and the principal as a supporting informant. Subject selection was carried out purposively by considering direct involvement in the learning process and moral development. Theoretically, this approach is supported by the findings of Junaid et al. (2023) who emphasized the importance of classroom interactions in shaping students' moral reasoning, Gui et al. (2020) who highlighted the strategic role of teachers in moral education, and Hyry-Beihammer et al. (2019) who emphasized the importance of teacher-student emotional relationships in increasing learning effectiveness.

The research procedure consisted of three main stages: preliminary, data collection, and data processing. The preliminary stage included obtaining research permits and initial observations to identify classroom communication patterns. Data collection was conducted over one semester using observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Direct observations were conducted to observe teacher-student interactions and student moral behavior in the classroom. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and the principal to obtain data on experiences, perceptions, and communication strategies used. Documentation in the form of learning materials, curricula, and school archives was used to strengthen the research context. Research instruments included observation sheets, interview guidelines, and a documentation checklist. To clarify the research flow, Figure 1 visualizes the research stages, while Tables 1 and 2 systematically summarize the data collection instruments and techniques, thus visually enhancing the clarity of the methodology.

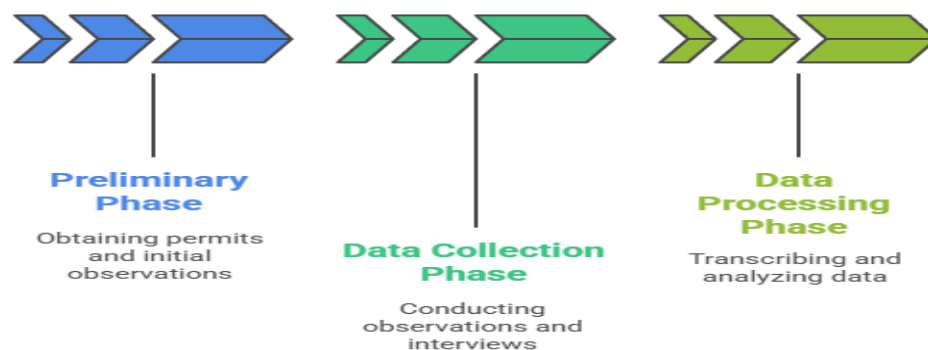


Figure 1. Research Process Phases

Table 1. Research Instruments Supporting Data Collection

Instrument	Function/Description
Observation Sheets	Recording student behaviors such as respect, discipline, and cooperation.
Interview Guidelines	Providing semi-structured questions for teachers, students, and administrators.
Documentation Checklists	Collecting school policies, lesson plans, and class records for contextual analysis.

Source: *Research Design*, 2023

Table 2. Data Collection Techniques Used in the Study

Technique	Description
Classroom Observation	Direct monitoring of teacher–student interaction and students’ behavioral responses.
In-depth Interviews	Conducted with teachers, students, and administrators to capture perceptions and experiences.
Document Analysis	Examination of school records, curricula, and lesson plans to provide contextual background.

Source: *Fieldwork Data*, 2023

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data reduction was achieved by selecting and focusing on data relevant to communication patterns and moral character formation. Data is presented in descriptive narratives, tables, and matrices to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions are then drawn by identifying emerging patterns and verifying them based on the theoretical framework of communication and moral education. Data validity is ensured through source triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research findings (Rose, 2024; Korstjens, 2023).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of the study indicate that teacher communication patterns in the teaching of *Aqidah Akhlak* play a significant role in shaping students' moral character. Data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation demonstrate a consistent and directed communication pattern in the process of internalizing moral values. This finding directly addresses the research objective, which is to identify how teacher-student communication patterns contribute to the formation of students' moral behavior in the school environment. Data analysis also revealed that a combination of one-way, two-way, and multi-way communication not only improves students' understanding of moral values but also encourages behavioral changes evident in respect, discipline, cooperation, and the use of more polite language in everyday life. These findings are supported by various mutually reinforcing data sources, thus increasing the credibility and validity of the research results.

Teacher–Student Communication Patterns

The study revealed that teachers of *Akidah Akhlak* employed a variety of communication patterns to build students’ moral character. Three primary models were identified:

Table 3. Teacher–Student Communication Patterns in Islamic Moral Education

Communication Pattern	Description	Educational Function
One-way Communication	Delivered through lectures or sermons to directly transfer moral knowledge and values.	Knowledge transmission and value internalization.
Two-way Communication	Conducted through dialogue and questioning to involve students actively.	Encourages engagement, critical reflection, and moral reasoning.

Multi-directional Communication	Occurred through peer interaction and group activities.	Fosters collaboration, mutual correction, and shared responsibility.
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Source: *Field Observation and Teacher Interview, 2023*

Table 3 illustrates the three main communication patterns identified in *Akidah Akhlak* instruction and their respective roles in shaping students' moral character. One-way communication, delivered through lectures or sermons, served primarily to transmit moral knowledge and values directly from teacher to student. Two-way communication, in the form of dialogue and questioning, encouraged students' active participation, critical reflection, and the development of moral reasoning skills. Meanwhile, multi-directional communication emerged through peer interaction and group activities, fostering collaboration, mutual correction, and a sense of shared responsibility among students. Together, these patterns demonstrate how varied communication strategies collectively contribute to both cognitive understanding and practical application of moral values in the classroom.

Teachers combined these patterns flexibly depending on classroom situations. For example, one teacher explained during the interview: *"In class, I often begin with a short lecture, then invite students to respond and discuss. Sometimes I let students evaluate each other's behavior so that they learn responsibility together."* (Teacher Interview, 2023)

Students' Moral Behavior Before and After Intervention

Observation and documentation data indicated that students initially showed signs of moral decline, such as disrespect toward peers, lack of discipline, and inappropriate language use. After consistent communication-based interventions by teachers, several positive changes were recorded, particularly in respectful greetings, classroom discipline, and cooperation.

Table 4. Changes in Students' Moral Behavior (Observed in Class VII A)

Moral Indicators	Before Intervention	After Intervention
Respectful greetings	35% students greet teachers	78% students greet teachers
Polite communication	Frequent use of harsh words	Noticeable reduction in harsh words
Cooperation in class	Low participation in group tasks	Active collaboration in group work
Discipline (punctuality)	Many students arrive late	Significant reduction in late arrivals

Source: *Field Observation and Teacher Documentation, 2023*

Table 4 presents the changes in students' moral indicators before and after the teacher implemented varied communication strategies in *Akidah Akhlak* instruction. The data show a marked improvement across all observed aspects: the percentage of students greeting teachers respectfully increased from 35% to 78%, the frequency of harsh language use decreased noticeably, participation in group tasks shifted from low to active collaboration, and punctuality improved significantly as late arrivals were reduced. These findings highlight that teacher–student communication patterns played a crucial role in fostering respect, politeness, cooperation, and discipline, demonstrating the effectiveness of communication as a medium for moral character formation.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Before presenting the supporting and inhibiting factors, it is important to note that the effectiveness of teacher–student communication in shaping students’ moral character does not occur in isolation. The process is strongly influenced by the surrounding context, including the school environment, family background, and broader social conditions. Insights gathered from interviews with teachers and school administrators revealed that while several elements provide a strong foundation for reinforcing moral education, there are also significant challenges that hinder its optimal implementation. These findings are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Moral Character Formation

Category	Factors
Supporting Factors	- School environment emphasizing religious values. - Parental involvement in reinforcing moral education at home. - Teachers’ use of varied pedagogical methods (lectures, storytelling, role-modeling).
Inhibiting Factors	- Influence of digital media and global culture on students’ behavior. - Limited time allocation for <i>Akidah Akhlak</i> lessons. - Differences in students’ family backgrounds and home education styles.

Source: *Teacher and Administrator Interviews, 2023*

Table 5 outlines the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the effectiveness of moral character formation in *Akidah Akhlak* instruction. On the supportive side, a school environment grounded in religious values, strong parental involvement in reinforcing moral teachings at home, and teachers’ ability to apply varied pedagogical methods such as lectures, storytelling, and role-modeling all created a conducive atmosphere for moral development. Conversely, several challenges were identified, including the negative influence of digital media and global culture on students’ behavior, the limited time allocation for *Akidah Akhlak* lessons, and differences in students’ family backgrounds and home education practices. Together, these factors highlight the dynamic interplay between school, family, and external influences in shaping students’ moral growth.

Integration of Communication and Character Formation

Overall, the findings suggest that effective teacher–student communication patterns directly influenced the formation of students’ moral character. The integration of communication strategies with Islamic values provided a context-sensitive approach to character education, showing promise for broader application in Islamic schools facing challenges of globalization.

Moreover, the findings emphasize that communication is not limited to verbal exchanges but also encompasses non-verbal cues such as teacher attitudes, gestures, and consistency in modeling good behavior. Students tended to imitate not only what was taught but also what was demonstrated by their teachers in daily interactions. This reinforces the idea that effective moral education requires teachers to act as role models whose actions consistently reflect the values they communicate. Such alignment between speech and behavior strengthened students’ trust and increased the internalization of moral values.

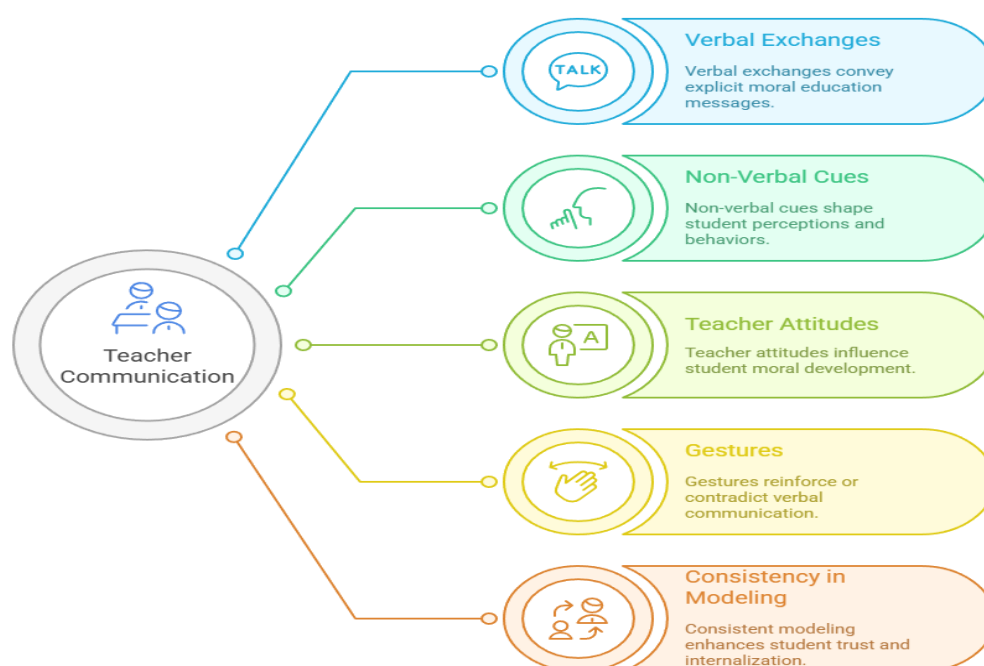


Figure 2. The Multifaceted Impact of Teacher Communication

The figure illustrates the multifaceted impact of teacher communication on students' moral development, highlighting both verbal and non-verbal dimensions. Verbal exchanges serve as a medium for conveying explicit moral messages, while non-verbal cues such as tone, expressions, and body language—shape student perceptions and behaviors. Teacher attitudes play a crucial role by influencing how values are understood and practiced, whereas gestures can either reinforce or contradict spoken words, thus affecting the clarity of moral instruction. Finally, consistency in modeling ensures that students not only hear but also witness values in action, enhancing their trust and supporting the internalization of moral principles. Together, these components demonstrate that effective moral education requires holistic and coherent communication from teachers.

In addition, the results highlight that collaborative communication practices, particularly through peer interaction and group-based learning, created opportunities for students to develop social responsibility and mutual accountability. By engaging in dialogue, cooperation, and collective problem-solving, students not only learned moral concepts but also practiced them within their peer groups. This experiential dimension of communication enhanced the sustainability of moral development, suggesting that character education in Islamic schools can be more impactful when it integrates teacher authority with student participation and peer collaboration.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the critical influence of teacher-student communication patterns in Islamic Moral Education (*Akidah Akhlak*), demonstrating that a blended approach to communication can significantly enhance students' character formation. By employing a combination of one-way, two-way, and multi-directional communication strategies, teachers can navigate classroom dynamics effectively (Musri et al., 2023), fostering a rich environment for moral development. This aligns with Tubbs and Moss's (2008) communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of both complementary and symmetrical interactions as essential elements in successful communication (Kent & Taylor, 2021). Moreover, this theory is reinforced (Murphy et al., 2018), who note that productive discourse—characterized by shared control among participants—can greatly enhance comprehension and critical thinking skills among students (Murphy et al., 2018). The implementation of diverse communication models not only operates at the level of information transfer but also acts as a vital moral intervention strategy, as noted (Tabroni & Romdhon, 2022), who emphasize the role of teachers

as moral exemplars through active engagement with students (Tabroni & Romdhon, 2022). In contrast to traditional top-down approaches, this dialogue-driven methodology facilitates a more responsive educational atmosphere, where students are empowered to engage critically and reflectively with moral content, consequently enhancing their ethical practice (Caviglia et al., 2017). Thus, this empirical evidence highlights the profound ability of dialogic engagement to foster a more meaningful educational experience in Islamic Moral Education, contributing significantly to both personal and communal moral frameworks necessary in the context of globalization.

Communication Patterns and Moral Development

The observed positive changes in students' moral behavior, including respectful greetings, reduced use of harsh language, and increased cooperation, highlight the multifaceted role of communication in Islamic Moral Education (*Akidah Akhlak*) as not merely a mechanism for knowledge transfer but also as a vital medium for value internalization. This aligns with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which posits that behaviors are acquired through observation and reinforcement, thereby suggesting that teachers serve as dual communicators and role models who shape students' (Alexander, P., 2022), moral values through both verbal and non-verbal means. However, the reference provided (Johnston et al., 2021) does not specifically address Bandura's (1977) theory or how it relates to moral behavior in the context of Islamic moral education; thus, it should be removed.

Previous research, such as that (Assante et al., 2022), focuses on the integration of critical consciousness and moral education, supporting the claim that moral education should involve students actively evaluating social norms and understanding their roles as moral agents to encourage altruistic behavior within the community (Assante, G. M., Popa, N. L., & Grădinariu, T., 2022). This study expands the discourse by demonstrating how multi-directional communication, particularly peer-to-peer interactions, nurtures a collaborative moral environment in the classroom.

Furthermore, this research underscores the significance of facilitating a learning atmosphere where communication strategies actively contribute to moral development, suggesting that educators' approaches should be intentionally designed to foster ethical behaviors, as emphasized (Lucey & Bates, 2014; Siegel, 2024; Bjärehed, 2024). They discuss the importance of dialogue in moral education contexts, aligning with the findings of this study. Ultimately, this study contributes a new dimension to the discourse on Islamic moral education, highlighting the substantial impact of effective communication patterns on character formation and moral agency among students.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The findings of this study illuminate the significance of contextual factors in shaping the effectiveness of communication patterns within Islamic Moral Education (*Akidah Akhlak*), indicating that supportive environments such as a religiously oriented school culture and parental reinforcement play vital roles in facilitating moral learning. Conversely, challenges resulting from students' exposure to digital media and their diverse family backgrounds underscore broader global concerns regarding moral decline in the digital age (Adiyono et al., 2024), as highlighted (Öztürk, 2023). This backdrop necessitates the integration of digital literacy and moral resilience into Islamic education curricula as a proactive measure to mitigate the negative influences of online spaces. Support this approach, illustrating the need for "moral and digital conceptualization" to help students navigate complex digital landscapes effectively (Badawi, 2026; Ningsih et al., 2024).

Moreover, studies indicate that youths display varying degrees of moral perception influenced by digital environments, which can simultaneously harbor positive and negative impacts on their moral development (Öztürk, 2023). By equipping students with the skills to critically engage with digital content and reinforcing ethical frameworks, educational institutions can cultivate a moral resilience that counters adverse online influences (Huang et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). The role of educators becomes paramount in addressing these challenges, emphasizing the necessity of adaptability in teaching strategies to promote character formation amid the shifting dynamics of modern society.

(Hayat et al., 2025 Soghomonyan, Z., & Karapetyan, A., 2023). Overall, this study argues for a multifaceted curricular approach that encompasses digital ethics alongside traditional moral education, addressing both the challenges and opportunities posed by a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The theoretical contributions of this study are significant in bridging Islamic moral pedagogy with communication studies by establishing a framework that situates moral education within interactive patterns rather than merely as content delivery. This innovative approach enriches the existing literature, integrating Islamic classroom contexts into broader educational communication scholarship. As noted (Assante et al., 2022), merging critical consciousness development with moral education, enable students to recognize themselves as moral agents, thus reinforcing the importance of interactive communication in moral pedagogy (Canary et al., 2014). This framework emphasizes the necessity for teachers to be proficient in both subject knowledge and pedagogical communication skills (Walz, 2024; Rohayati, 2025).

However, the reference to Lucey & Bates (2014) does not directly support the claim regarding the integration of communication competence within teacher education programs for crafting an effective moral education curriculum (Adila et al., 2023; Vanlommel, 2023). Their article focuses on financial morality topics and does not address moral education directly. Therefore, this citation has been removed as it does not align with the core argument of the passage.

Furthermore, this study highlights the practical necessity of integrating character education programs that actively involve parents, peers, and digital platforms, as this collaborative approach can yield a more consistent moral formation environment for students. Findings Waterworth (2023) echo this perspective, advocating for the incorporation of unified beliefs across various socialization agencies to foster a strong moral community (Djazilan, 2024). Collectively, these insights advocate for holistic training and curriculum design that actively engage all stakeholders, reinforcing the moral development process through interactive and responsive educational strategies.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that teacher-student communication patterns in *Aqidah Akhlak* learning, which integrates one-way, two-way, and multi-way communication, have a more significant impact than expected on the formation of students' moral character. This finding confirms that communication functions not only as a means of conveying material but also as a transformative pedagogical tool in fostering respect, discipline, and cooperation. This simultaneously challenges the long-held assumption that tends to view moral education as merely a one-way transfer of values, and opens new discussions about the importance of dynamic communicative interactions in character education.

Scientifically, this study reinforces previous findings regarding the importance of communication in moral education and fills a gap by presenting the concept of integrated communication patterns as a key variable in shaping student behavior. However, this study is limited by its relatively small sample size and specific research context, thus limiting the generalizability of its results. Furthermore, other factors such as variations in student background, gender, and age have not been analyzed in depth. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a broader sample, use a mixed-methods or longitudinal approach, and explore additional variables such as the influence of digital media on the formation of students' moral character.

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