Family Background and Social Media Usage as Correlates of Academic Performance in Physics among Secondary School Students in Abia State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated family background and social media usage as correlates of academic performance in Physics among secondary school students in Abia State. The study was guided by two research questions and two hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance. It adopted a correlational research design. The study population comprised 8,739 students in Senior Secondary II (SS II) in 263 public schools in Abia State, from which 874 students (10%) were selected as a working sample using a multi-stage sampling technique. A researcher developed questionnaire titled Family Background and Social Media Usage Questionnaire (FBSMUQ) was used for the study alongside students' cumulative Physics results for the 2023/2024 academic session obtained from school records. The instrument was validated by three experts, one from Psychology, one from Guidance and Counselling and one from Measurement and Evaluation in Abia State University, Uturu, and yielded a reliability coefficient above 0.70. Data were analysed using multiple regression to answer the research questions, while the t-test associated with regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that family background especially parental education and social media usage significantly predicted students' academic performance in Physics, with excessive social media usage predicting performance negatively. The study recommended among others increased parental involvement in students' academic activities and responsible use of social media to enhance students' academic performance in Physics.

Keywords: Family Background, Parental Education, Social Media Usage, Physics Performance, Adolescent.

INTRODUCTION

Education is universally recognized as a cornerstone for individual development and national progress. As UNESCO (2021) emphasizes, education is a deliberate and sustained process of communication designed to facilitate learning. It occurs across formal, non-formal, and informal settings, aiming not only to develop the full potential of individuals but also to promote peaceful, inclusive, and equitable societies.

Doharey, Verma, and Yadav (2023) describe education as "the transmission of knowledge, values and skills from one generation to another, the development or cultivation of critical reasoning, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and ethical decision-making, empowering individuals to become lifelong learners, adaptable to a rapidly evolving world." In the same vein, education in Nigeria involves deliberate actions that foster not just knowledge and skills, but also social and ethical values in students so that they can participate meaningfully in societal development (Wada, 2023). In Nigeria, the importance of education is emphasized in the National Policy on Education, which underscores the role of schooling in fostering national consciousness, promoting societal values, and preparing students for future careers (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Within this educational framework, Physics occupies a unique and significant position as it is among the most essential science subjects in the secondary school curricula. Physics occupies a central position among science subjects in Nigerian secondary schools, as it equips learners with conceptual understanding, problem-solving skills, and cognitive abilities necessary for scientific advancement and academic achievement (Adolphus, Aderonmu, & Naade, 2021). Mastery of Physics is essential not only for personal academic progression but also

for equipping the nation with a scientifically literate workforce capable of driving technological and industrial advancement.

Despite its importance, students' performance in Physics has remained consistently low in Nigeria, as reflected in successive Chief Examiners' Reports from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC, 2022). Contributing factors to students' academic challenges include inadequate family support, poor study habits, limited access to learning resources, and distractions arising from excessive social media use (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) Furthermore, Physics is often perceived by students as abstract and mathematically demanding, which negatively affects achievement and makes the subject particularly sensitive to external influences such as family background and students' engagement with social media platforms (Orji & Eya, 2017). Investigating academic performance in Physics in relation to family background and social media usage is both timely and relevant, as it provides critical insights into the factors that shape learning outcomes in a subject essential for producing scientifically literate individuals and fostering national technological development. However, while education serves as a pathway to personal and national advancement, the extent to which students succeed in their academic pursuits depends on multiple factors, with family background emerging as one of the most significant.

Family background is widely recognized in contemporary research as a multidimensional construct that profoundly influences a child's academic and social development. Family socioeconomic background represents a combination of parents' educational attainment, occupation, and economic resources, all of which directly influence children's access to opportunities and developmental outcomes (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Family background impacts children physically, intellectually, and emotionally, providing the foundation upon which other social influences build. In essence, the primary agent or institution for education and socialization is the family , laying the groundwork for a child's future development. According to Ede and Igbokwe (2018), a well-structured family environment enhances cognitive, social, and emotional development, which in turn positively influences school performance. Family background generally encompasses the indices of parental education, occupational status, household income, family structure, and other factors that shape the home environment.

Parental education represents a key component of socio-economic status and a strong predictor of academic outcomes. Education shapes insight, personality, moral values, knowledge, and skills, all of which influence a child's growth and academic outcomes. Gobena (2018) notes that parental education, alongside socioeconomic status, directly affects students' academic achievements. Importantly, parental education can independently shape the value parents place on learning, influencing their children's educational attainment, even if family income is limited. Parents who possess higher levels of education are more likely to create intellectually stimulating home environments, provide learning resources, and support their children's academic activities (Duncan & Magnuson, 2020; Zhao & Zhao, 2021). Jaiswal, Griffin, Singer, Greene, and Acosta (2018) similarly observe that children of educated parents develop stronger study habits and benefit from structured academic support at home. conversely, students from less educated family may likely face difficulties such as limited academic guidance and inadequate exposure to educational resources, which can negatively affect their performance.

Another important dimension of family background is family structure, which significantly influences the emotional and psychological environment in which a child develops. Research by Yang and Wang (2022) indicates that students from single-parent households or homes characterized by marital conflict often experience emotional instability, which can hinder effective learning. Supporting this view, Li (2021) reports that parental conflict is associated with reduced cognitive development, weaker reasoning abilities, and lower academic achievement. These findings suggest that a stable family structure fosters a supportive learning environment, while instability may disrupt students' academic focus and progress.

Closely related to family structure is family size, which cuts across cultures, economic systems, and regions, depending on factors such as fertility rates, access to education, family planning practices, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic conditions. Ordinarily, families with five or more members are regarded as large, whereas those with two to four members are considered small. Empirical evidence shows that family size has implications for economic decision-making, health outcomes, and child-rearing practices (Adewale, 2023). Fewer families tend to have greater access to socioeconomic resources, enabling parents to invest more effectively in their children's

education. On the other hand, larger families are often faced with resource constraints, which may result in limited educational support, poor nutrition, and increased pressure on accessible resources, thereby affecting children's academic outcomes negatively.

Furthermore, parental occupation is another key indicator of family background, which determines the level of material resources available to children and also shapes the nature of parental involvement in education. Shah and Hussain (2021) found that parents engaged in formal and stable occupations are more likely to provide consistent financial support, learning materials, and academic guidance. In contrast, parents involved in informal or fickle employment may struggle to maintain steady support due to wavering income levels. Evidence from Tanzania, particularly in Njombe Town Council, further shows that parental occupation influences students' academic performance through its effects on school attendance, motivation, and the quality of the home learning environment (Kyao & Onyango, 2024).

In addition to occupation, parental income level remains a crucial determinant of students' academic success. When parents possess adequate financial resources and actively support their children's education, such as by supplying educational materials and monitoring academic activities, students tend to attain better outcomes. Gobena (2018) emphasizes that family income has a significant impact on the academic performance of both male and female students. Similarly, Rakesh, Lee, Gaikwad, and McLaughlin (2025) argue that children from low-income families often lack access to essential educational and social resources. Their systematic analyses reveals that such environments are linked to reduced cognitive stimulation, limited language exposure, and fewer early learning opportunities, all of which sabotage school readiness and long-term academic achievement.

Overall, these indices, Parental education, family structure, family size, parental occupation, and parental income, are interrelated components of family background. Together, they shape the quality of the home environment, access to educational materials, and the level of parental support accessible to students. Hence, variations in these factors can lead to considerable distinctions in students' academic engagement and performance. For the sake of this study, the researchers are particularly interested in parental education as one of the indices of family background and how it correlates with social media usage to influence the overall performance of students in physics

Alongside family factors, social media usage has emerged as an important influence on adolescent learning. Digital media landscape such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram are widely used by secondary school students for academic and non-academic purposes. Talaue, Alghofaili, Alsaleh, Alharbi, and Alhamoudi (2018) note that these platforms facilitate note sharing, access to online lectures, and virtual study collaboration. Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) argue that educational content on digital platforms reinforces classroom learning and prepares students for examinations. However, excessive use for entertainment and social interaction can distract students, reduce study time, and negatively affect learning outcomes. Kalejaiye, Banjoko, and Oludipe (2023) report a strong negative correlation between social media usage and academic performance, particularly among students who primarily use Facebook for leisure. Frequent engagement with social media has been shown to hinder students' academic performance due to distraction and poor time management, although it can also provide access to useful academic information (Adeyemi, 2024). Olebara, Nnaji, and Edem (2021) further observed that excessive social media activity can disrupt time management, mood regulation, and academic engagement. Otaru and Nwankwo (2021) emphasize that prolonged recreational use of social media reduces focus on studies and adversely affects adolescents' learning outcomes.

Adolescence, spanning ages ten to nineteen, coincides with secondary school in Nigeria and represents a critical stage of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development (WHO, 2022). During this period, students experience rapid growth in abstract thinking, self-regulation, and executive functioning, which are essential for academic success but remain under development, making adolescents vulnerable to external influences such as family environment and digital media exposure. Steinberg (2020) notes that adolescents' decision-making capacity is still maturing, and their academic motivation is highly sensitive to parental involvement and peer influence. Alabi and Onuoha (2023) report that over eighty percent of Nigerian secondary school students access at least one social media platform daily, often during or after school hours, highlighting the overlap between developmental vulnerability and high exposure to digital distractions which affects academic performance.

Academic performance reflects the extent to which students achieve educational goals and serves as a determinant of socio-economic mobility and life opportunities (Salinas, 2019). Students who perform well academically are more likely to access higher education, secure better employment, and enjoy improved life quality (Oyewobi, Bolarin, Oladosu, & Jimoh, 2020). Academic achievement is shaped not only by the ability of the individual but also by external factors, particularly family background and access to educational resources. Gu, Ma, Wang, and Zhang (2024) demonstrate that family cohesion, low conflict, and supportive cultural values have a stronger influence on academic performance than socioeconomic status alone, underscoring the centrality of family context in shaping educational outcomes.

Empirical studies further highlight the combined impact of family background and social media usage on learning. Muhammed and Nwabufo (2020) investigated the influence of parental educational level on students' academic achievement in Business Studies in Adamawa State, Nigeria, and the findings of the study revealed that students whose parents had higher educational qualifications performed significantly better academically than those whose parents had lower educational qualifications. Ujuanbi (2021) examined the influence of social media usage variables such as frequency of visits, time spent online, and number of social media memberships—on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Edo State, Nigeria. In conclusion, the study noted that overuse of social media contributes to academic underachievement. Atuwokiki and Onyeukwu (2025) found that excessive use of YouTube and WhatsApp negatively affected academic performance among secondary school students in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, while educational use of Google improved learning outcomes. Okagbare, Ogheneakoke, and Ovwigho (2023) examined the influence of family background variables, specifically parental education and socio-economic status, on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Delta State, Nigeria and the findings suggested that family background variables significantly influence students' academic achievement. Aniagolu (2023) reported that uncontrolled social media use disrupted study habits, class participation, and behaviour in Enugu State.

While numerous studies have examined the impacts of family factors and social media on academic performance separately, there is a lack of research investigating their combined influence. This gap underscores the need for the present study, which seeks to explore how family background especially parental education and social media usage collectively affect the academic performance of secondary school students, particularly in Physics, in Abia State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The academic performance of secondary school students is a pressing issue for parents, policymakers and educators. Despite efforts to improve educational outcomes, many students continue to struggle academically, and disparities in achievement persist especially as seen in both external and internal examinations for example, NECO/WAEC. Two potential factors contributing to these disparities as observed by the researchers, are family background and social media usage.

Family background, including socioeconomic status, parental education level, and family structure, has been shown to influence academic performance. However, the extent to which family background affects academic performance in the context of increasing social media usage is not well understood. Social media forms an important part of modern life, and its effects on students' academic achievement is a topic of growing concern. Immoderate social media usage has been linked to decreased attention span, reduced study time, and lower grades.

However, literature has not satisfactorily shown or explained how the above variables predict academic performance in physics. Nevertheless, the relationship between family background especially parental level of education, social media usage and academic performance is complex, and more research is needed to understand its correlates and consequences. Hence, the problem of this study put in question form include inter alia: To what extent do parental educational level and social media usage correlate with academic performance of secondary school students in physics in Abia state.

Purpose of the Study

1. Examine how parental educational level correlates with students' academic performance in physics of senior secondary students in Abia State.

2. Determine how social media usage correlates with students' academic performance in physics of senior secondary students in Abia State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does parental educational correlate with the academic performance of senior secondary students in physics in Abia State?

2. To what extent does social media usage correlate with academic performance of senior secondary students in physics in Abia State

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: Parental educational level does not significantly correlate with academic performance of senior secondary students in physics in Abia State.

H_{05}: Social media usage does not significantly correlate with academic performance of senior secondary students in physics in Abia State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Conceptual Review

Parental Education

Parental education refers to the highest level of formal education attained by parents and is a core indicator of socio-economic status. It profoundly impacts students' academic outcomes by providing intellectual support, learning resources, and academic motivation. Empirical evidence suggests that students with more educated parents tend to perform better academically, likely due to enhanced parental involvement and helpful home environments (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023; Zhang & Li, 2024).

However, the relationship is not entirely deterministic, as contextual factors such as school quality and student motivation may moderate its effects.

Social Media Usage

Social media usage encompasses the frequency, duration, and purpose of engagement with virtual spaces. While social media offer opportunities for collective growth and partnership, its impact on academic performance depends largely on utilization patterns. Studies indicate that excessive and non-academic use negatively affects academic performance due to distraction and time mismanagement (Liu, Kirschner, & Karpinski, 2017; Masood, Luqman, Feng, & Ali, 2020).

Conversely, structured academic use can improve learning goals by providing access to information and peer collaboration (Hou, Qin, & Xu, 2024). Nonetheless, procedural flaws such as reliance on self-reported data remain a concern in existing studies.

Academic Performance in Physics

Academic performance in Physics refers to students' achievement in the subject as measured through tests and examinations. Physics is commonly seen as difficult due to its conceptual nature and mathematical complexity. Research indicates that performance is affected by a mixture of cognitive, environmental, and socio-economic factors, including parental background and study habits (Li, Cheng, Wang, Shen, Ma, & Islam, 2025). However, subject-specific studies remain limited, with most research focusing on general academic outcomes.

B. Theoretical Foundation

This study is anchored on three theories:

Social Capital Theory

This theory stresses the role of family relationships and parental involvement in enhancing students' academic success. Parents extend resources and professional support that facilitate learning outcomes (Zhang & Li, 2024).

Cultural Capital Theory (Bourdieu)

This theory explains how parents transmit knowledge, values, and skills that matches learning possibilities. Students from educated families possess cultural advantages that promote academic success (OECD, 2023).

Media Use Theory

This theory assumes that the impact of media depends on its usage. Productive use improves learning, while inordinate use leads to negative academic outcomes (Masood et al., 2020).

C. Empirical Review

Studies have consistently shown that parental education improves academic performance. International large-scale assessments (e.g., PISA) indicate that students with higher parental educational backgrounds perform better academically (OECD, 2023). Similarly, Zhang and Li (2024) found that parental involvement mediates the relationship between parental education and academic success.

Research on social media usage shows mixed findings. Liu et al. (2017) reported a negative relationship between social media use and academic performance, ascribing this to distraction and reduced study time. Masood et al. (2020) also found that immoderate use of social media can have a detrimental impact on academic outcomes. In contrast, Hou et al. (2024) demonstrated that social media can influence academic performance when used for educational purposes. However, most students tend to use social media for non-academic activities, thereby strengthening negative outcomes.

A major limitation across these studies is the reliance on cross-sectional designs, which limits causal interpretation.

D. Identified Gaps

Despite extensive research, several gaps remain:

Most studies examine parental education and social media usage independently rather than jointly.

There is limited research within the Nigerian context, particularly in subject-specific areas such as Physics.

Many studies rely on self-reported data and cross-sectional designs, limiting causal inference.

This study aims to attend to these gaps by examining the combined influence of parental education and social media usage on students' academic performance in Physics.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of a correlational research design to investigate the relationship between the independent variables—parental education and social media usage—and the dependent variable, academic performance in Physics. This design is appropriate as it allows for the measurement of existing relationships between variables without experimental manipulation. The population of the study comprised 8,739 Senior Secondary School II (SSS II) students across 263 public secondary schools in Abia State for the 2023/2024 academic session. From this population, a sample of 874 students, representing 10% of the total, was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique involving simple random sampling of education zones and disproportionate stratified sampling of schools to ensure a representative mix of urban and rural students.

Data collection was carried out using a researcher-developed instrument titled Family Background and Social Media Usage Questionnaire (FBSMUQ), which utilised a four-point Likert scale to assess social media habits and gathered demographic data on parental qualifications, occupation and socio-economic status. To ensure the accuracy of the dependent variable, students' cumulative Physics results were obtained directly from official school broadsheets. The instrument's face and content validity were established through review by three experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation at Abia State University, Uturu. To ensure reliability, a pilot test was conducted on students outside the study area, yielding a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.78, which confirmed the instrument was suitable for the research.

The administration of the instrument was carried out by the researchers with the assistance of trained research assistants to ensure a high return rate. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected to address the research objectives. Specifically, multiple regression analysis was utilized to determine the extent to which the independent variables predicted academic performance. The null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using the t-test statistics associated with the regression analysis.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Research Question One

To what extent does parental educational level correlate with the academic performance of senior secondary students in physics in Abia State?

The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Linear Regression Exploring the Extent Parental Educational Level relate with Students' Academic Performance in Physics

Model	R	R- Square	R-Square × 100	Adjusted R-Square	Remarks
1	0.48a	0.23	23%	.229	Moderately Positive

a. Predictors: (Constant), Parental Educational Level

Table 1 presents the simple linear regression analysis of the extent to which parental educational level relates to students' academic performance in Physics in Abia State. The result reveals an r-value of .48 and an r-square of .23, resulting in the coefficient of determination of $r^2 = .23 \times 100 = 23\%$; implying that parental level of education predicts 23% of the variance in students' academic performance in Physics. Considering the r-value of .48, it can be deduced that parental level of education relates to secondary school students' academic performance in Physics in Abia State positively to a moderate extent.

Hypothesis One

Parental education does not significantly correlate with academic performance of secondary school students in physics in Abia State.

The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of t-test Statistic Associated with Regression Analysis of Significant Relationship between Parental Education and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Physics

Model	N	df	β	t	t-crit	Sig.	Decision
Parental Education	874	873	.48	9.214	1.96	.000	Reject Ho

Table 2 presents a summary of the t-test statistics associated with the regression analysis which examined the hypothesis that parental education does not significantly correlate with the academic performance of secondary school students in Physics in Abia State. The result shows the degree of freedom (df) to be 873 (β = .48 and t-value = 9.214, with t-crit = 1.96), resulting in a p-value of .000 at the 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 and the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, parental education significantly correlates with the academic performance of secondary school students in Physics in Abia State.

Research Question Two

To what extent does social media usage correlate with academic performance of secondary school students in physics in Abia State?

The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Linear Regression Exploring the extent Social Media Usage Relate to Students' Academic Performance in Physics

Model	R	R-Square	R-Square × 100	Adjusted R-Square	Remarks
1	−0.37a	0.14	14%	.139	Negative Low

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Usage

Table 3 presents the simple linear regression analysis of the extent to which social media usage relates to students' academic performance in Physics in Abia State. The result reveals an r-value of −.37 and an r-square of .14, resulting in the coefficient of determination of $r^2 = .14 \times 100 = 14\%$; implying that social media usage predicts 14% of the variance in students' academic performance in Physics. Considering the r-value of −.37, it can be deduced that social media usage relates to secondary school students' academic performance in Physics in Abia State negatively to a low extent, indicating that increased social media usage is associated with decreased academic performance.

Hypothesis Two

Social media usage does not significantly correlate with academic performance of secondary school students in physics in Abia State.

The result of the analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of t-test Statistic Associated with Regression Analysis of Significant Relationship between Social Media Usage and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Physics

Model	N	df	β	t	Sig.	Decision
Parental Occupational Status	874	873	-.37	-6.421	.000	Reject Ho

Table 4. presents a summary of the t-test statistics associated with the regression analysis, which examined the hypothesis that social media usage does not significantly correlate with the academic performance of secondary school students in Physics in Abia State. The result shows the degree of freedom (df) to be 873 ($\beta = -.37$ and t-value = -6.421), resulting in a p-value of .000 at the 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, social media usage significantly correlates with the academic performance of secondary school students in Physics in Abia State, but in a negative direction, indicating that proliferated social media usage is associated with lower academic performance.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from the first research question, which investigated the extent to which parental educational level relates with students' academic performance in Physics in Abia State, showed that parental level of education relates positively to a moderate extent with students' academic performance. The corresponding hypothesis revealed that parental education significantly correlates with students' academic performance. This result indicates that students whose parents are highly educated tend to perform better in Physics. The findings from this study agree with that of Muhammed and Nwabufo (2020) whose study investigated the influence of parental educational level on students' academic achievement in Business Studies in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The result of their study revealed that students whose parents had higher educational qualifications performed significantly better academically than those whose parents had lower educational qualifications. Further, the finding is in agreement with that of Okagbare, Ogheneakoke, and Ovwigho (2023) who examined the influence of family background variables on students' academic performance in Delta State. Their findings indicated that parental education significantly influences students' academic achievement.

The finding from the second research question which investigated the extent social media usage relates to students' academic performance in Physics in Abia State showed that social media usage relates negatively to a low extent with students' academic performance. The corresponding hypothesis showed that social media usage significantly correlates negatively with students' academic performance. This result indicates that excessive engagement with social media platforms tends to reduce students' academic achievement in Physics. The finding agrees with that of Ujuanbi (2021), who examined the influence of social media usage on students' academic achievement in Edo State, Nigeria. The study found that frequent visits, prolonged time spent online, and multiple social media memberships negatively affected students' academic performance. The study concluded that overuse of social media contributes to academic underachievement and recommended guidance on effective time management and academic-oriented use of social media.

CONCLUSIONS

Parental level of education has a moderate positive relationship with students' academic performance in Physics in secondary schools in Abia State. Implying that students whose parents possess higher educational qualifications are likely to receive better academic guidance and support which can improve their performance in Physics. Social media usage relates negatively to a low extent with students' academic performance in Physics. By implication, this means that excessive engagement in social media activities may distract students from academic responsibilities and reduce their performance. Family background and social media usage jointly have a high correlation with the academic performance of students in Physics. This shows that the combined impact of home-related factors and students' social media behaviour significantly determines their academic success in Physics.

Recommendations: The following recommendations were made:

Parents, regardless of their own educational level, should be sensitized through Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings on the importance of creating a conducive and enabling home environment and providing necessary science textbooks for their children.

School administrators and Physics teachers in Abia State should integrate digital literacy into the curriculum. This will help students transition from using social media purely for entertainment to using it as a resource for Physics research and collaborative learning.

School counsellors should develop targeted intervention programmes for students who lack sufficient academic support at home to provide the academic support and mentorship that may be lacking at home.

The Abia State Ministry of Education should formulate policies that encourage the development of local, subject-specific digital content to compete for students' attention on social media platforms.

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