

Influence of motivations for social media use on cyberbullying behaviours among undergraduates in Malaysian public universities

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Abstract

In modern times, social media platforms have become veritable tools of communication and interaction amongst young adults in the university environment as well as the larger society. However, the platform has continued to cause serious psychological and emotional trauma to users through cyberbullying activities. This study examined the influence of motivations for social media use on cyberbullying behaviours (CBB) among undergraduates in Malaysian public universities. It was a quantitative type and it adopted survey design. A total sample of 400 undergraduates were purposively selected from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Self-designed questionnaire entitled Motivation for social media use and CBB was used for data collection. Data were analysed using Structural Equation Modelling Partial Least Squares 3. The findings revealed that undergraduates were more socially motivated for social media activities than for academic motives; thus, the reason for experiences of cyberbullying. Also, there was a significant relationship between motivations for social media use and CBB.

Keywords: Motivation, social media use, cyberbullying behaviours, public universities.

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, bullying has assumed a new form with the advancements of technology. It has evolved in another trend with Internet use and the different social media platforms and chat rooms; thus, transcending the widely known physical, verbal and relational forms of bullying to electronic bullying, which is rapidly gaining momentum in recent times, particularly among university undergraduates. Social media use at this time of increasing globalisation has continued to put university students more in their own self-designed world than in the established norms, tradition and custom of the society (Bolton et al., 2013; Campbell, 2012).

Motivation, refers to any condition, usually internal, that appears by inference to initiate, activate or maintain an organism's goal-directed behaviour. It is also viewed as an explanation of human behaviour, emphasising internal factors that energise humans to seek, attain, reestablish, balance or maintain some goals that help with survival, which could either be physical, social or psychological survival. From the definitions of motivation given, four major components or parts of motivation are readily identified, and these according to Lefton (1994) are the internal condition, inference, initiation, activation or maintenance and goal-directed behaviour. Each of these parts plays a significant role in human behaviour, and by extension, cyberbullying behaviours (CBB) or experiences among university undergraduates due to their frequent use of social media platforms. Motivation reflects an internal condition. The condition may develop from physiological needs and drives or from complex desires, such as the desire to help or hurt others as in the behaviour of cyberbullying; to obtain approval for something or to earn a higher income or increased social status.

Motivation is an inferred concept that links a person's internal conditions to external behaviours, and in this case, the link between an individual's internal drives/desires (to use social media platforms) and cyberbullying behaviour. Ideally, platforms offered by the social media should serve beneficial purposes, it is surprising that in modern times, some parents and guardians alike often develop a misconception that teens and other consistent users of the social media platforms are wiser, more exposed and somewhat more knowledgeable than them (Adeboye, 2018).

However, this faulty line of assumption prevents certain parents from closely monitoring their children's social media activities; hence, they become susceptible to psychological and emotional trauma due to lack of close monitoring by parents or older ones (Adeboye, 2018). In other words, when youngsters' social media adventures are not given adequate supervision, they could be motivated to continue in the act which is capable of subjecting them to serious traumatic experiences due to experiences or perpetration of cyberbullying activities. The internal conditions or desires cannot be observed directly, but its presence can be inferred by its behavioural impacts or effects (Lefton, 1994). Thus, motivation initiates, activates or maintains behaviour. A motivation for something could drive an individual's quest for greater feats, masteries as well as levels in that particular activity, be it sporting events, academic, vocational or social engagements of which visiting the social media too frequently and consequent CBB are major components.

Motivation generates goal-directed behaviours. Goals vary widely across individuals and situations. While some goals are concrete, immediate and temporal, for example, to get up and eat food, to remove some painful stimuli, to overcome boredom or fatigue, or to even win a diving match/contest; other goals are more abstract and long-term. For example, the behaviour of someone who studies hard may be to maximise learning, obtain good grades and ultimately get a good job. This further explains why the philosophical orientations of motivation theories tilt towards learned motives, or cognitive, or humanistic theories (Lefton, 1994). In using social media platforms, bullies attempt to satisfy the needs of entertainment (fun) and power which ultimately leads to cyberbullying. According to Tanrikulu (2014), the need for power (feeling superior over others to dominate them) and fun (entertainment) constitute the major motivations driving cyberbullies' indulgence in the act.

2. Statement of the problem

Lu (2015) carried out a study on the influence of pathological Internet use (PIU) and demographic factors on PIU among 1,493 surveyed Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) undergraduates; 1.2% prevalence of PIU was reported among the UTM undergraduates; the author also found that undergraduates spent between 19 and 68 hours on the Internet weekly, that is, at least about 6.5 hours on a daily basis; thus, the researcher found from the findings that majorly, undergraduates engaged in online games (example is the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game) and social networking sites, which were influenced by cognitive distortion, motivation via access to the Internet and stressful life events (boredom, depression) contributing 65% variance of PIU. As it has been established that undergraduates spend a considerable number of hours on social media platforms on a daily basis, this study is, therefore, aimed at determining the relationship or link between motivations for social media use, demography, personality and CBB among undergraduates studying in a Malaysian public university.

Ling, Ramadass, Altaher and Arjuman (2011) also identified 58 persons (29%) at-risk of extreme Internet use among 203 Malaysian undergraduates and the study asserted that individuals at ages 18 to 25 years were more vulnerable to the extreme use of the Internet, called PIU, particularly university or college students. This is because university students are considered as often having more free time to themselves, have easy access to the Internet, as well as a more rational reason in the environment (Ling et al., 2011). Therefore, if individuals within the age bracket of 18–25 years were found to be engaging in the extreme use of the Internet, particularly for non-academic purposes, there is the need to establish if the frequency of use of social media by undergraduates has any relationship or link with CBB; as well as the motivations for such frequent visits to social media platforms, and personality traits of users.

The studies of Ng et al. (2012) revealed that Malaysian university (medical) students spent 13.31 hours per week online, and the age at which the students started using computers was age 14 on the average. Also, the study carried out by Kate re Los et al. (2011) indicated that students at risk of extreme Internet use spent a maximum of 9 hours online non-stop on a daily basis; they preferred to join forum conversations, chat rooms and emails. Furthermore, Lu (2015) studied PIU among undergraduate students at UTM. By PIU, Lu (2015) implies excessive use of the Internet and its significant consequences and influences on the individual user's normal life and family, invariably, addiction to the Internet. Hence, this study focused on the influence of motivations for social media use on CBB among undergraduates in Malaysian public universities.

3. Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to determine the influence of motivations for social media use on CBB among undergraduates in Malaysian public universities.

3.1. Research questions

These research questions were raised to provide a guide in this study:

1. What are the motivations for social media use among undergraduates in Malaysian public universities?
2. To what extent are Malaysian university undergraduates cyberbullied as a result of their social media engagements?

3.2. Research hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between motivations for social media use and CBB.

4. Methodology

The study was a quantitative type and it employed survey design. Survey was considered more suitable because of the nature of the study; i.e., one dealing with a large population from which samples were drawn for the study. The population comprised all undergraduates in UTM. A total of 400 participants were purposively selected from the three faculties that had been selected using cluster sampling.

Purposive sampling was adopted in order to ensure that the results obtained represented every group in UTM. A self-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was entitled 'Motivation for social media use and CBB (MSUCQ)'. The researchers decided to design the questionnaire in order to be able to give careful consideration to the cultural and religious practices of the respondents in this part of the country without any form of bias. The questionnaire had two sections (A and B). Section A focused on respondents' demographic details, while section B consisted of items on the influence of motivations for social media use on cyberbullying among undergraduates. The instrument was tailored towards a Four-point Likert type format on a continuum of 4–1 scoring. The instrument was subjected to a Cronbach's alpha method of reliability and it yielded a coefficient of 0.92, thus, making it reliable for use as the data gathering tool for this study. Participation was voluntary, thus, respondents offered to actively participate in the study Data collected were analysed using the descriptive statistical tools and Structural Equation Modelling Partial Least Squares 3 (SEM-PLS3), while the demographic aspects were analysed with the use of percentage, mean and standard deviation, the null hypotheses were tested with the SEM-PLS3. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

5. Results

5.1. Demographic data

The study was conducted among 400 university undergraduates from three faculties in UTM. The demographic profile of the respondents was presented on their individual characteristics based on gender, frequency of daily use of social media platforms, programme of study, race/ethnicity and whether or not they have experienced cyberbullying assaults before. The section below elaborates on the results obtained.

5.2. Gender

For gender, the results indicated that 152, 38.0% of the respondents were males and 248, 62.0% of the respondents were females. This implies that more female undergraduates participated in the study than their male counterparts. It also suggests that there are more female undergraduates than there are male undergraduates in UTM. Figure 1 presents the result.

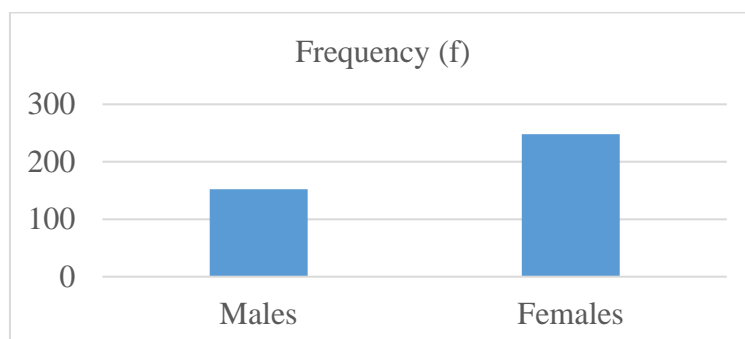


Figure 1. Gender distribution of respondents

5.3. Frequency of daily use of social media platforms

The daily frequency of the respondents' usage of social media platforms was grouped into less than 1 hour, 1–3 hours, 4–6 hours and above 6 hours. The result indicates that 13, 3.3% of the respondents spend less than an hour daily on the social media, 106, 26.5% spend 1–3 hours, 138, 34.5% of the respondents spend 4–6 hours and 143, 35.8% spend above 6 hours daily on social media platforms. This implies that UTM undergraduates spend more than 6 hours daily on social media platforms.

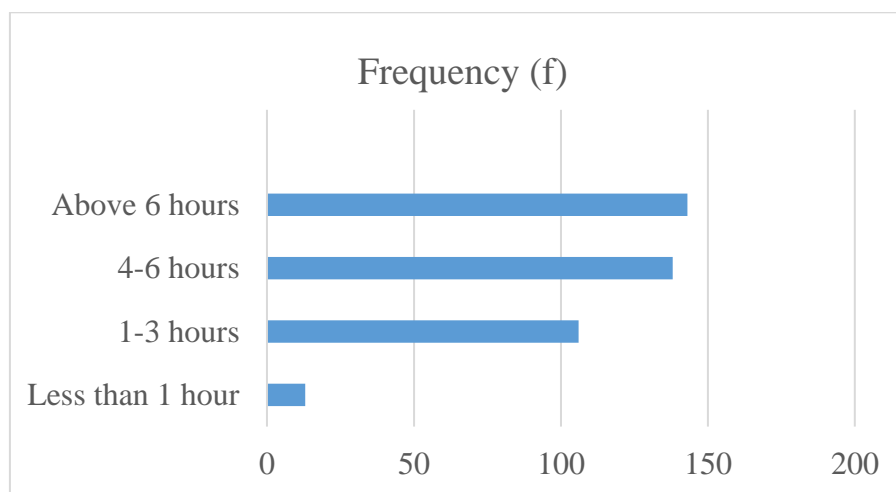


Figure 2. Respondents' distribution on daily frequency of usage of social media platforms

5.4. Race/Ethnicity

The race/ethnicity was categorised into four: Malays, Chinese, Indians and Others. The analysis revealed that 218, 54.5% of the respondents were Malays, while 87, 21.8% were Chinese, whereas, there were 27, 6.8% Indians and 68, 17.0% were other races/ethnic nationals that participated in the study.

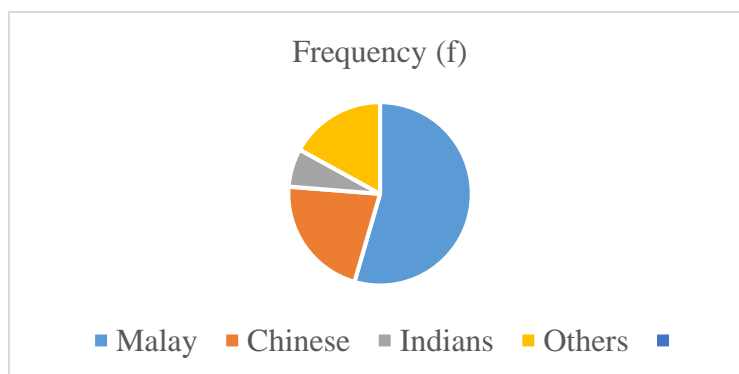


Figure 3. Respondents' race/ethnic distribution

5.5. Programme of study

According to the results, 25.0% ($N = 100$) consisted of computing undergraduates, 37.5% ($N = 150$) electrical engineering students and 37.5% ($N = 150$) undergraduates in various management programmes participated in the study. From the result, it can be deduced that there are more undergraduates in both electrical engineering and management than computing.

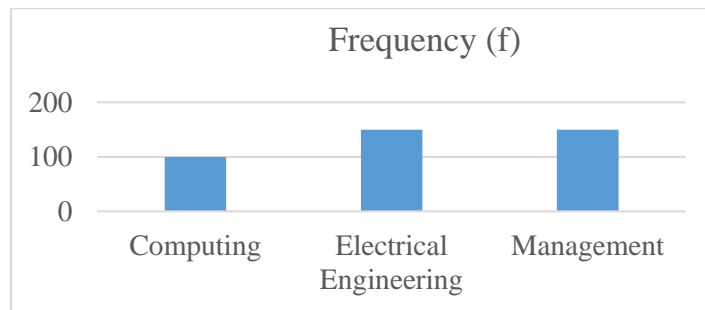


Figure 4. Respondents' programme of study

5.6. Experience of cyberbullying

The distribution of the respondents based on their cyberbullying experiences indicated that 244 (61%) of the respondents have experienced cyberbullying, while 156 (39%) have never experienced cyberbullying. This further confirms that cyberbullying behaviour is rampant among university undergraduates in UTM. The cross-tabulation of this was also done and presented as shown from Tables 1–3 in terms of gender, the frequency of daily use of social media, as well as the programme of study of respondents.

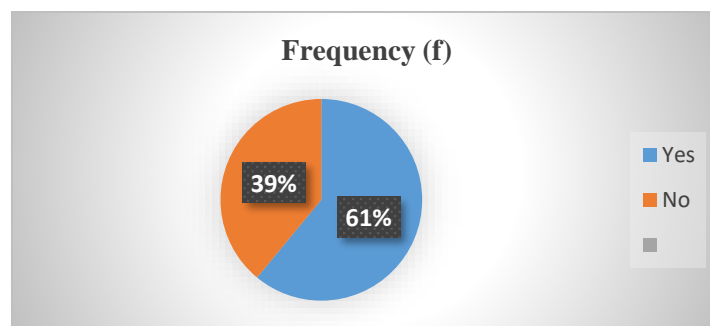


Figure 5. Respondents' experience of cyberbullying

5.7. Measurement model for motivation for engagement on social media use (ESMU)

The first latent factors, Motivations for ESMU, were defined by two individual variables: social and academic motivations. These variables were measured with 16 items. The model was validated, the composite reliability, convergent validity and average variance extracted (AVE) were assessed, discussed and presented as well.

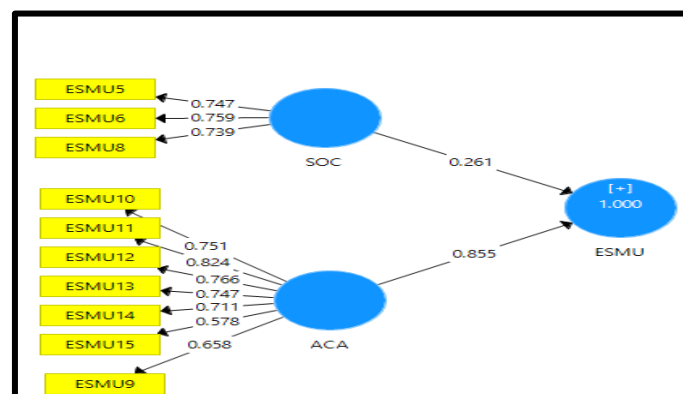


Figure 6. Measurement model for ESMU

The motivations for engagement on social media use reflective measurement model’s reliability and validity were assessed to determine the suitability of the model’s measurement construct. It is a reflective measurement model because the directions of the arrows go from the construct to the indicators (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014). Composite reliability was computed, these statistics normally ranges from 0 to 1, with values greater than 0.6 considered acceptable in exploratory studies (Hair et al., 2014). When analysing the composite reliability, social media use had 16 items, made up of two component factors of social and academic motivations. However, after the initial analysis, the indicators whose factor loadings were less than 0.5 and had low-reliability values were dropped and the analysis retested. Convergent validity is established when two supposed measures of the same construct are positively correlated (Allen & Yen, 1979). This was measured by the use of the AVE statistics. It is based on the requirement that the formulation of a latent variable should explain at least 50% of the variance in each of its indicators (Hair et al., 2016). Therefore, the AVE which is the mean of the square loading values of all the indicators associated with a certain latent construct should be greater than 0.5 for a latent variable to have convergent validity.

Table 1. Reliability and validity of ESMU

Construct	Items	Measurement model type	Outer loading	Composite reliability	AVE
SOC	ESMU5	Reflective	0.747	0.793	0.560
	ESMU6		0.759		
	ESMU8		0.739		
ACA	ESMU9	Reflective	0.658	0.884	0.523
	ESMU10		0.751		
	ESMU11		0.824		
	ESMU12		0.766		
	ESMU13		0.747		
	ESMU14		0.711		
	ESMU15		0.578		

Discriminant validity was also assessed. The discriminant validity assessment has the main goal of ensuring that a reflective construct has the strongest relationship with its indicators when compared with other constructs in PLS path model (Hair et al., 2017). Although the indicators’ cross loadings are sometimes used for the measure of discriminant validity; however, this looks quite liberal. As such, Hair et al. (2014) recommended the use of Fornell-Larcker criterion, which compares the AVE values with the correlations among the latent variables in the model. However, Henseler et al. (2015) proved through the means of a simulation study that these approaches (Fornell–Larcker criterion) do not reliably detect the lack of discriminant validity in common research situations. Hence, they proposed an alternative approach that is based on the multitrait-multimethod matrix in order to assess the discriminant validity, which is called the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). Henseler et al. (2015) further demonstrated the superiority of this approach’s (HTMT) performance by means of a Monte Carlo simulation study in which the new approach was compared with the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the assessment of partial cross loadings. Thus, this study adopts the HTMT to assess the constructs’ discriminant validity. Table 1 shows the discriminant validity of the ESMU constructs with the HTMT value below 0.90. The authors assert that HTMT 0.90 has higher specificity than HTMT 0.85 when the sample size is larger than 100. The sample size of the present study is well above 100; hence, it accepts values of below 0.90 as having discriminant validity in this study.

Table 2. Discriminant validity for ESMU

	SOC	ACA
SOC		
ACA	0.633	

5.8. Direct relationship of motivations for social media use and CBB

Hypothesis one tried to examine the influence, i.e., the relationship that undergraduates’ frequent use of social media platforms has on their CBB.

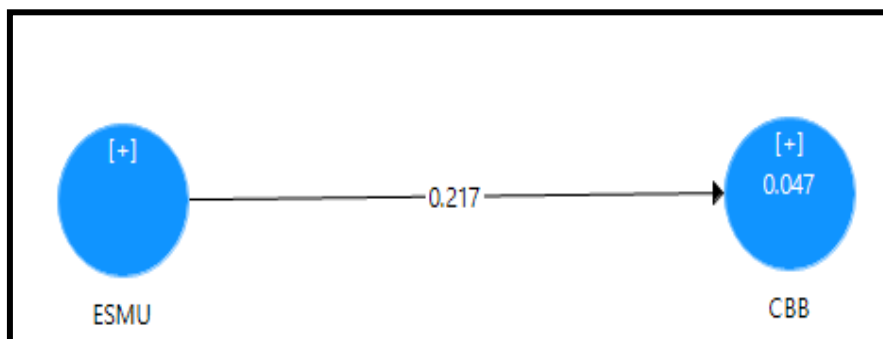


Figure 7. Structural model of the relationship between ESMU and CBB

Table 3. T-statistics and *p*-value of ESMU on CBB

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	<i>p</i> values
ESMU -> CBB	0.217	0.216	0.044	4.938	0.000

The result of the path analysis shows that social media use (ESMU) has a significant direct positive relationship with undergraduates’ CBB. The relationship is positive with a path coefficient ($\beta = 0.217$, $t \geq \pm 1.96$). According to Byrne (2010), the standard decision rule for a relationship between constructs to be significant is (t -value greater than or equal to 1.96 and p -value is ≤ 0.05). This was employed here to decide the significances of the path coefficient between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Since the t -value is $\geq \pm 1.96$, it, therefore, means the relationship between social media use and cyberbullying behaviour is significant and social media use/engagement has an influence on undergraduates’ CBB. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between frequent use of social media and cyberbullying behaviour is not accepted. In this study, social media use/engagement accounts for 0.047% on CBB.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that the study reveals that undergraduates’ long hours of usage of social media platforms is premised on social motives than academic. The finding supports that of Ling et al. (2011) which assert that Malaysian undergraduates aged 18–25 years were more vulnerable to the extreme use of the Internet basically for socialising. It also supports the findings of Whittaker and Kowalski (2014) who found that there is a strong relationship between frequent visits to social media and cyberbullying experiences. This may also have been why Campbell (2012) and Bolton et al. (2013) concluded that social media use at this time of increasing globalisation has continued to put university students more in their own self-designed world than in the established norms, tradition and custom of the society. Social media has thus become another world for teeming youngsters; which is why Campbell (2012) regarded them as ‘netizens’, i.e., citizens of the Internet/social media.

This study also corroborates the study of Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007) in which the researchers found that making fun of another (which is a social motive) is one of the major goals of bullies in social media. It is seen as a platform to express their social worth and status to one another. This, however, results in grievous consequences of higher proneness to being victimised on the cyberspace. Thus, undergraduates’ motive for long hours on social media platforms is social motivation. It is the new

trend occasioned by globalisation and increased technological advancement (Bishop, 2015; Bolton et al., 2013). This may have been why the study of Eksi (2012) concluded that the number of persons reportedly seeking the assistance of counselling practitioners as well as mental health experts because of uncontrolled Internet addiction and CBB or experiences has tremendously increased over time particularly, in university settings.

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that social motive was the major driving force for undergraduates' frequency of social media platforms and not academic purposes. The study has also helped to determine that female undergraduates are more of victims of cyberbullying than males, who are either cyberbullies or bully-victims. This position has been variously taken by previous researchers but has been further confirmed by this study. It found that undergraduates are frequent users of social media. Undergraduates in management programmes, followed by computing and electrical engineering are heavy users of social media platforms, and management students are in the majority of the victims of cyberbullying.

7. Recommendations

The following suggestions are recommended based on the findings of this study:

- a. Academic motivations for social media use should be separated from social motives in order to avoid undue interferences in the results obtained. This becomes imperative so as to avoid misinterpretation of research findings.
- b. Future studies should determine if there are more cyberbullies in the faculty of electrical engineering than other faculties in UTM. This became necessary because there were less of victims of cyberbullying in electrical engineering than other faculties; likewise, there was more Chinese race in electrical engineering than in other faculties. Future studies could extend this study in order to be able to determine the particular race that mostly carries out cyberbullying activities on other undergraduate social media users in UTM.
- c. There is a need to conduct periodic psychological assessment of students in order to be able to become aware of their experiences, especially the hurtful ones with appropriate remedial measures put in place; this will largely reduce the rate at which youngsters get depressed or choose to isolate themselves from others or suicidal thoughts due to cyber harassments suffered. This could also encourage victims who are suffering in silence to open up and unbundle the hurts rather than covering-up in pretence.

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