



The role of single parents in developing children's self-awareness; A case study in the Islamic region, Aceh

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the steps single parents take in fostering the self-awareness of 5-year-old children and describe their attitudes. This qualitative research used a case study approach that involved two single parents and two children aged five years as research subjects. Based on interviews and observations, single parents foster children's self-awareness through several steps: recognizing one's own emotions and the emotions of others, managing one's emotions, motivating oneself, being a role model, and building social relationships. As a result, children's self-awareness manifests in self-confidence, independence in choosing activities, emotional control, understanding of rules, discipline, persistence, and pride in their work. The development of self-awareness in 5-year-old children is closely related to the steps implemented by single parents, with being a role model being the most effective method in fostering children's self-awareness.

Keywords: *Children's Self-Awareness; Early childhood Education; Single Parent's Role*

A. INTRODUCTION

Early development by providing educational stimulation in accordance with the Law of the National Education System will help children's growth and development to be ready to enter further education. Appropriate educational stimulation can help children's brain development. Children's brains will continue to develop as they get older (Yunita, 2022). Karam et al. (2023), in their study, outlined that around 80% of children's brains experience a growth process between the ages of 0 and 6 years. This development is also inseparable from two interrelated factors: internal (factors from within the fetus or child itself) and external factors (factors from the child's external environment). Both are interrelated and can influence brain development. The health of pregnant women, the environment, parenting patterns, diet, oxygen, and other factors are external factors and external factors that can affect the brain. So, the role of parents has a huge influence on children's brain development, such as providing good nutrition, a good environment, and correct parenting patterns that can stimulate brain development and personality formation in the form of children's self-awareness from an early age. Because every word or action, especially of parents, becomes the basis for forming children's behavior, self-awareness, emotions, and intelligence. Thus, it is very important to provide education from an early age to children to help develop behavior as an initial stimulus to continue education at the next stage with a good attitude at formal, non-formal, and informal education levels.

Informal education, education that children receive through the role of parents and family interactions, will shape behavior, personality, self-awareness, and skills. Because the family, as the smallest community, can provide love and affection to shape a child's personality (Muthmainnah, 2018). In line with that, Syukur (2023), said that the family has its function in forming a child's personality. The first community known to children has an urgency in providing a sense of comfort, environmental development, and role models through daily interactions that can train them to know other people around them so that they can shape their intelligence, personality, motor skills, self-awareness, and the like.

Even though fathers and mothers have roles as parents, they are mandated to educate, care for, and be responsible for their children. However, in the family, there are different roles. Fathers play a more significant role in earning a living to meet family needs, while mothers manage the house and care for children (Tumbage et al., 2017). So, a father who does not interact too much with his child does not have much influence in shaping the child's behavior, while a mother spends more time at home with her child and is known as "*madrasah al-ula*." Over time, not all families have the same opportunity to work together in educating, caring for, and sharing joys and sorrows in meeting other needs. So, one of them must be the backbone of the family. In reality, many mothers play a dual role as fathers in educating their children. Mothers are the backbone of the family in educating and looking after children without help, support, or responsibility from their partners; many mothers row pedicabs, become parking attendants, sell merchandise on the sidelines, and so on for a bite of rice for the baby. It can be caused by divorce (living divorce or death divorce) or the condition of a mother giving birth to a child without a partner (single mother/single mom). Divorce status can occur in a family because it involves different backgrounds and personalities. Suryana (2021), in his study, said that the main factor that causes divorce is

high expectations before marriage. So, the reality of life does not match the dream. However, it is different from the death of one of the partners in the family (both husband and wife) because every human being cannot avoid death. Death in Siswanto's (2020) study was categorized as one of the influences of the breakup of a household due to the loss of a figure in the child's life so that the child feels a lack of affection, love, and attention. Even though the Qur'an has immortalized death as a disaster for the family left behind (*Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 156*).

Divorce cases (life/death) hurt education, mental health, and attitudes that can make children more rebellious, sad, withdrawn, embarrassed and anxious (Maria, 2021). This life can undoubtedly influence a child's growth and development because a mother must share multiple roles in navigating the cycle of life; the mother must play an active role in all aspects of her child's development, such as optimizing the child's self-awareness behavior so that the child can develop well. However, it cannot be denied that the fact is that many scholars were born and raised by single parents until they have the title of great mother who gave birth to scholars for the world, such as Imam Muhammad bin Idris Asy-Syafi'i, Imam Ahmad bin Hambal, Imam Malik bin Anas, and others. Allah guarantees "Paradise under the soles of the mother's feet" as enshrined in the *hadith* of *Rasulullah*. Mothers have a role as the first madrasah for their children, educating and guiding their children. If a mother provides a stimulus of kindness to her child, the child will grow up with kindness instilled from an early age. Specifically, this study discusses single parents (mothers) who can foster an attitude of self-awareness by making a very dominant contribution to the formation of an independent attitude, recognizing emotions, showing self-confidence, the ability to understand persistent attitudes, and appreciating the results of one's work with a purpose to increase children's self-awareness.

Awareness (self-awareness) is fundamental to be introduced from an early age. The more aware a person is about himself and his feelings, the more accustomed he is to expressing his feelings. Self-awareness is part of a child's emotional development that requires support and attention from parents. Goleman in Lestari (2019) emphasizes that self-awareness is the ability to understand one's own and other people's feelings, the ability to motivate oneself, and the ability to manage emotions effectively so that one can know what one feels, then use it as a reference for making decisions based on one's self-confidence.

Previous researchers have studied single parents, mothers, and fathers, such as Retnowati et al. (2014), about the communication patterns of single parents in forming children's independence. Transactional patterns of interaction and communication are urgent in transforming children's independence by internalizing awareness of being independent and providing training to children. A similar study by Indrayanti et al. (2018) identified openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality between mother and child as critical factors for children's success. If the mother has problems giving attention and affection, do not expect feelings of security and love for, let alone the environment around to form. If a mother is unable to create discipline in herself and her child's education, then it is likely that the child's unclear future will be detected early. It differs from the study by Rastiti (2020), which examines the role of single parent fathers in running a family. These findings are very minimal due to the husband whose wife died; if the child is still small and

young, of course, the husband will find a replacement more quickly. Because being a single parent, especially for a man, is not easy to take care of a family. Even if the children have reached adulthood and their life partner dies, the love that children receive is, of course, different from a mother's love, so many children end up dating and ruin their lives because their father's attention is not as perfect as their mother's love.

Based on preliminary data from interviews with Rukoh Village officials, 21 parents play dual roles as single parents. The data relating to this research is only two single parents with the death of their husband and each of them having a five-year-old child. They are called single parents because they have a living partner who has died and have an obligation to educate and raise their children alone without a partner. Based on this data, researchers found children in Rukoh Village who had lost their father figure due to death. However, self-awareness can be formed by single parents. Therefore, this study aims to identify the role of single parents in forming children's self-awareness from an early age. The formation of course begins with the steps a mother takes in her behavior when interacting with her child, such as the attitude of a single mother who recognizes and manages her own emotions, motivates herself, recognizes the emotions of others, and fosters social relationships.

B. METHOD

This research used qualitative research methods with a case study approach. A case studies an incident involving someone or something in a particular situation (Rahardjo, 2020). Case study research is a more suitable study if the central question of research concerns how or why. Researchers need more opportunities to control the events to be investigated when research focuses on contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts (Iswadi, 2023). Researchers used purposive sampling to determine research subjects. The participants are two single parents with 5-year-old children in Rukoh Village, Syiah Kuala District, Banda Aceh, Aceh. Two were taken from 21 single parents because both of them had children aged five years, and they had children whose self-awareness had been formed from single parents. Data collection techniques were conducted through interviews and observations using interview guide instruments and observation sheets. Observation of self-awareness of 5-year-old children based on emerging behavior, including an independent attitude, controlling feelings, self-confidence, understanding rules and discipline, persistent attitude, and being proud of one's work at their residence. Interviews were conducted regarding the role of single parents in developing children's self-awareness. The interview was guided by Goleman's theory of social-emotional intelligence (2011), in line with the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), including self-awareness, self-motivation, managing emotions, recognizing other people's emotions, and fostering social relationships. The data collected is analyzed by reducing the data, presenting the data, and drawing conclusions to produce accurate data about the role of single parents in children's independence.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The informants are two single parents with the initials WI (42) and WA (40). WI and WA are siblings who live in Rukoh Village. WI works as a nasi uduk seller. She has three children, one of whom is five years old (PA). WI is assisted in his daily activities by his first child (PA's older sibling). WA, who also works as a stall trader, is in the same situation as her sister. She is divorced and has three children. Two of her children are married and live separately; the other is five years old and lives with her. Based on the data collected from the two informants, the results of the research related to the role of single parents on the attitude of independence and the picture formed in children are as follows:

1. The role of single parent on the self-awareness of 5-year-old children

The interview was based on the indicators determined above, so the researcher found several steps implemented by single parents in cultivating children's self-awareness. These steps are as follows.

a. Self-awareness

WI determines the first step in cultivating a self-aware attitude by recognizing one's emotions. Awareness of the surrounding conditions is very important to introduce early on for the common good, especially with the condition that a single parent has the responsibility to meet the needs of herself and her family. Of course, they need to know the emotions to avoid having a temper and take out the anger on the child. By taking steps to recognize emotions, children can form a self-aware attitude that gives rise to an attitude of independence, discipline, responsibility, and self-confidence.

In line with that, WA also knows that it is very important to introduce self-awareness to children to foster an independent attitude that will be related to social emotions, so that parents can start by getting to know their own emotions. The role of single parents in children's self-awareness based on the data found is through recognizing one's own emotions so that they can manage their own emotions, recognize the emotions of other people, and build social relationships through a self-aware attitude in everyday life. This action or role begins with an example from oneself (role model), inviting children to discuss, managing emotions, introducing children to the environment, and appreciating their work. In line with this statement, Wahyuningtyas (2019) stated that self-awareness is a person's view of themselves regarding independence, self-control, identity, security, and self-defense. Furthermore, Goleman in Maitrianti (2021) emphasized that self-awareness is the ability to recognize and sort feelings, understand what is being felt, and know the causes of feelings and their influence on others.

b. Self-motivation

The single parents motivate themselves to introduce self-awareness to children as her statements have been translated into English according to the translation criteria:

"I motivate myself by always being persistent, independent, and confident to foster positive values in children so that children develop an attitude of self-awareness when they are at home or when hanging out with their peers, by encouraging them to be persistent, be independent in choosing activities,

show self-confidence, begin to control feelings, begin to understand rules and discipline and be proud of their work." (WI)

"I have implemented an attitude of self-awareness and introduced it to children by motivating myself in my own activities and children's activities and providing opportunities for children to carry out activities by playing with their friends. So that a persistent attitude is formed and shows self-confidence." (WA)

Motivation has an urgency in life, so it fosters a sense of enthusiasm to create a good generation. WI and WA have introduced an attitude of self-awareness through role models who always motivate themselves to be able to educate their children well. Both informants motivate themselves to be role models for their children by applying a persistent attitude, understanding the rules, controlling their feelings so that children can imitate them and develop an independent attitude in choosing activities, controlling feelings, showing self-confidence, understanding rules, and discipline, having a persistent attitude, and proud of his work. This is in line with Shochib's opinion in Girsang et al. (2022), which is that parents are responsible as guides and examples for their children. In line with this, WI provides opportunities for children to show an independent attitude and discuss choosing activities to practice decision-making. In line with Astuti, children's independence can be sought by encouraging them to carry out their own activities, such as daily activities, and giving children opportunities to make decisions, such as playing and exploring their desires (Sari, 2019). If children are given the opportunity to carry out activities independently, it will make them happier and have more confidence in themselves. Dependence and attachment to parental orders and regulations will lead to disappointment and limited abilities.

c. Managing emotions and recognizing other people's emotions

WI manages emotions well so that it creates a habitual attitude to be skilled in making decisions and taking responsibility for every action. This produces a positive attitude for children in everyday life, such as getting children used to putting things back in their place after they have finished using them and applying the reward-punishment method in every child's activity. This habit begins with WI by giving an example to children. Even though the child rebelled at the beginning of the introduction to the rules of life, WI managed to discuss them calmly. WI also gives children the opportunity to play with friends as a form of interaction with the environment and also introduces children to people in the surrounding environment. Because playing with peers and interacting with the environment will train children to manage their emotions and foster self-confidence.

Meanwhile, WA gives children the opportunity to choose and decide on their activities with mutually agreed rules. Children begin to be skilled in making decisions as a form of self-awareness. However, sometimes children lack discipline in carrying out the rules, such as often leaving toys in a mess, which makes the mother emotional and requires a process of effort to provide understanding to the child when the child

is not yet responsible for the activities that have been carried out. WA chose to represent responsibility for children's mistakes while helping to provide an understanding of the consequences of their behavior.

Managing one's own emotions and recognizing the emotions of others is urgent in forming children's self-awareness. Parental emotions can have an impact on children, giving rise to positive and negative attitudes in children. Malaret in Maryani (2014) said that parents have a role in increasing children's potential and are liaisons in introducing children to their environment so they can adapt to social interactions. This is in line with the conditioning theory developed by Skinner. This theory emphasizes the form of consequences that play a role in following a behavior. According to this theory, a person's behavior is influenced by the consequences of their environment. The consequences given will determine whether the behavior can be repeated or disappear. If the consequences are pleasant (seen as valuable), then the attitude or action tends to be maintained and repeated. Unpleasant consequences, or in the form of punishment, to a certain extent, can actually strengthen behavior (Yuliana, 2022).

Parents give children the opportunity to express themselves emotionally with natural reactions so that children learn to control their feelings. Children's emotional expressions need to be encouraged by giving them opportunities to express themselves. Children will learn to express their emotions by observing the reactions of the people around them (Erlita & Zainal, 2020). Therefore, give children the same opportunity to show self-confidence by getting them used to having the courage to express opinions and considering their opinions, starting to understand rules and discipline by getting used to activities according to their time (such as sleeping, eating, praying, and so on). Children are accustomed to the concept of time, which helps them manage their personal schedules, such as when it is time to play, study, and so on. Parents can also accompany children by including time management reasons as part of children's discipline learning (Sari, 2019).

Implementing a reward-punishment pattern to train children to be persistent so they don't give up and are proud of their work, starting with appreciating the child's process and achievements and providing educational punishment if necessary. One factor in the emergence of self-confidence in children is driven by the need to obtain recognition and reward. Rewards or appreciation are very important things to do to build children's sense of persistence and self-confidence (Noor, 2022). On the other hand, punishment is a punishment given in learning (Dian, 2022). Giving punishment is educational and pedagogical to improve and direct children in the right direction, not the practice of torture punishment; this punishment aims to improve and educate children to become educated and responsible human beings.

d. Foster social relationships

WI is very skilled at building social relationships and has an influence on her children. This is based on the results of interviews, where WI has implemented the values of social relations in her daily life, where children will imitate what they see in

their lives. So it really helps the development of their children's behavior in forming self-awareness, which is useful in fostering social relationships such as reacting according to emotions, interacting with the environment, be aware and responsible when making mistakes. WI also appreciates her child's work in building self-confidence, which can help children be persistent and appreciate their own work.

Meanwhile, Wa is still trying to apply self-awareness in everyday life regarding social relationships and trying to manage emotions. It influences their child's behavior in social interactions. Her son (NAM) grew up with good attitudes and self-confidence in socializing with almost all age groups. NAM has an attitude of never giving up on doing something, although on the other hand, he is still irresponsible, cannot control his emotions, gets angry if what he wants is not fulfilled, does not want to put toys back in their place, and sometimes breaks play equipment, and cannot yet appreciate his work. He is still crying and tearing up his work.

"I am sad because of his attitude, and sometimes I am also reckless in dealing with his attitude and lose control of it, but I still try to be a good mother to his child, keep encouraging him and appreciating his work so that he slowly changes as he gets older."

Based on the description of the data above, it can be understood that social skills are part of self-awareness that must be developed and paid attention to from an early age. Both informants have played a role and tried to foster social relationships through applying self-awareness in everyday life by becoming role models, inviting children to discuss, managing emotions, introducing them to the environment, and appreciating their work. The forms of self-awareness of the behavior shown by children include independence, emotional reactions, social skills, awareness of mistakes and responsibilities, persistent attitude, and pride in their work. Respondents have recognized the values of self-awareness, self-confidence, and persistence.

A child's independent attitude is the child's desire to take care of himself and have his own initiative (Pangestu, 2017). Musthafa in Wiyani (2013) states that independence is the ability to make choices and accept the causes and consequences. Children's independence is part of the value of self-awareness and is included in the development of social-emotional aspects. Soetjiningsih in Wardhani & Carolind (2016) state that social emotionality is part of the process of developing children's ability to adapt to the social world. This is supported by Steven J. Stein's statement in the EQ Explosion (2002) that independence is characterized by the ability to control social emotions, the ability not to depend on physical needs (eating and drinking alone to carrying out daily activities alone or with a little help from others) to being able to make decisions emotionally and interact with other people socially.

Introducing an independent attitude by giving children the opportunity to choose their own activities, such as when they want to ride a bicycle, play crank, and so on. This opportunity will help children think in making decisions about activities, reduce feelings of inadequacy, increase feelings of ability, and develop logical standards of achievement.

However, there are also children who generally prefer to play personal games even though there is an agreement between the child and his parents regarding playing,

even though sometimes these rules are violated by the children. Like cleaning up toys after playing activities are finished. Parents must be patient in educating children, even when it comes to cleaning up toys, and give them the opportunity to clean up after themselves, even if they have to spend more time doing so. This is one way to help children have independence regarding children's activities, giving them confidence that they can do them. This opportunity will help children achieve the victory of independence.

There are many ways to train children's independence; apart from providing opportunities appropriate to the child's age (completing tasks on their own, making decisions), it is also necessary to provide help only if they ask for it. Sometimes, parents think their children need help when, in fact, they just want company or attention. Based on Seefeldt in Rika (2017), this is said to be a child's autonomous need, namely a need that is characterized by an independent and non-independent mental attitude. Sometimes, a child wants to go out and try to do it himself, but sometimes, he wants his mother to be nearby.

Seto (Child et al. of the Indonesian Child Protection Institute), in a virtual panel discussion, said that parents need to appreciate the potential that children have to help build self-confidence. Appreciation as inner strength or potential. When children are appreciated for their potential, a sense of self-confidence and inner strength will emerge, which will be rooted in the ability to be humble, self-confident, and respectful. This opinion is supported by Indrajit (Chair of PB PGRI), who said that to increase children's self-confidence, you can ask them to express their hobbies. This requires parents to be humble enough to enter and position themselves in the world of children, one of which is by being the child's friend.

Even though WI has played a major role, as has been explained, of course, it cannot be denied that WI also experiences obstacles in increasing children's self-awareness. The obstacles that WI feels are about patience and continuing to learn not to be careless in educating children. WI believes that what children do starts from their example. The obstacle or challenge that WI feels is how to remain the best role model for children. This is something she is still working on; at the end of the interview, WA also said that the obstacles she felt were mixed emotions and feelings of regret when she made the mistake of venting his emotions. WA continues to try to admit her mistake by loving NAM again and hugging her child when the child is asleep while whispering affectionately in his ear.

2. Description of self-awareness of 5-year-old children from single parent

Based on the role of a single parent in life as described, several forms of self-awareness emerge in children along with the attitude of a single parent in everyday life. Indicators of children's self-awareness attitudes that are implicated in the attitudes of single parents include independent attitude, controlling feelings, self-confidence, understanding rules and discipline, persistent attitude, and pride in one's work.

The results of observations based on the role of a single parent on children's self-awareness, PA behavior gives rise to a more self-awareness picture, including an

independent attitude in choosing activities, controlling feelings, showing self-confidence, understanding rules and discipline, having a persistent attitude, and being proud of one's work. Meanwhile, NAM behavior displays less self-awareness, such as being independent in choosing activities, showing self-confidence, and having a persistent attitude. PA's self-awareness is that he dares to try to do something independently, which is shown by his behavior of starting to eat, drink, and play alone and being able to make decisions. PA also sleeps regularly, returns toys after playing with them, and throws away rubbish in its place. Indicators of independence in terms of physical abilities include being able to carry out daily activities independently (Martinis, et al., 2013).

A child certainly feels the lack of perfection in a family without the presence of a father. As children with a single parent, PA, and NAM often ask about their father's whereabouts. This situation makes the mother feel extra full in understanding her child. Life is full of feelings, both sad and happy. The formation of a positive attitude PA toward something is by the stimulus given by his mother, such as returning something to its place after playing, having a sense of empathy for something, being happy and happy when playing with his friends, eating at the dinner table, feeling confident when asking questions, have the initiative to donate, be able to make decisions even though they are sometimes awkward, and carry out activities according to the agreed time. Martinis (2013) said that discipline indicators are shown by the behavior of carrying out activities according to the time. The indicator of responsibility in children is shown by the behavior of being able to return toys after playing with them. It aligns with Karim's (2020) statement that gathering and playing outside will help children develop social emotions regarding self-awareness, where children play with peers and can adapt to the environment.

PA grew up with a persistent nature and received sufficient appreciation. In line with Utami (2018), a persistent attitude is shown by behavior that respects one's work and the excellence of others. Meanwhile, the description of NAM's self-awareness shows high self-confidence and likes personal activities. On the one hand, NAM's egocentrism is still extreme, so it still does not respect time or take responsibility. Emotionally, NAM cannot control his feelings as a child raised by a single parent, sometimes NAM asks where his father is and feels sad when he sees friends with his father. NAM also has yet to learn about wrong and right. When her mother cried, Nama understood that she had made a mistake and learned to apologize to her mother.

NAM can play inside or outside the yard and sometimes eat at the dining table or outside the house; that's how the rules and discipline apply to him. NAM tends to throw tantrums if his desires are not fulfilled. Fachruddin (2017), in his study, said that tantrums usually occur in active children with excessive energy. Tantrums are emotional outbursts or outbursts of uncontrolled anger. In general, tantrums appear in children aged 15 months to 6 years. Tantrums are characterized by whining, crying, screaming, kicking, hitting. This anger occurs when the child experiences a sense of hopelessness when he cannot defend his feelings or becomes frustrated when expressing his desires. Tantrums can also occur as a reaction to sadness, confusion, and fear. Several studies show that tantrums occur at least once a week in 50-80 percent of preschool children, and three-

quarters of all tantrum behavior is estimated to occur frequently at home. However, the worst tantrums are often shown in public places because this ensures the child gets attention by making the parents feel embarrassed. Zaviera in Fachruddin (2017) said that the factors that cause children to have tantrums are generally caused by unfulfilled desires, the child's inability to express themselves, parents' parenting patterns, children feeling stressed and uncomfortable, or when children feel hungry, tired, and sick.

Furthermore, NAM has a responsible attitude; he has been unable to put away his toys after playing; he still often fights with his friends and will only do activities for the desired duration. Despite this, NAM has a persistent attitude, keeps going, and is enthusiastic about carrying out activities. He will do anything for the desired duration voluntarily. Self-persistence or persistent attitude is a voluntary behavior carried out to achieve the desired goal despite obstacles, difficulties, or despair (Nugraha, 2018).

An illustration of self-awareness in work, NAM has yet to show a picture of behavior that is proud of its work. However, NAM has social skills demonstrated in socializing with almost all age groups. Social skills are reacting and interacting effectively with the social environment (Nafisah, 2022). This ability is related to social adjustment so that it can be accepted and accepted in society. Good social skills are a process of social relations involving the ability to adapt and communicate with each other (Nuraida, 2016). In this case, NAM has self-awareness in terms of good social skills.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that PA has more self-awareness behavior than NAM. This comparison is caused by differences in the type of single parent in their role in self-awareness, where Wi focuses on being the best role model for children, is consistent, has an educational history, and has emotional maturity. We received this emotional maturity through self-motivation and the involvement of her first child, who took part in balancing the household. WI's second child is also always with PA. Meanwhile, WA is still trying to manage her emotions and sometimes acts because she lacks emotional support, both personally and socially.

D. CONCLUSION

The role of single parents in children's self-awareness is essential and urgent in developing children's behavior. So, single parents have an existence in forming children's self-awareness attitudes. Single parents in Rukoh Village have determined steps to form children's self-awareness through recognizing one's emotions, motivating oneself, managing one's emotions and getting to know the emotions of others, building social relationships starting with themselves as role models, inviting children to discuss, allowing him to be active and express emotions, be social, and appreciate his work. These steps will affect the child's self-awareness because children are influenced by the stimulus their parents give. Parents must be role models to improve children's self-awareness and enable them to interact with their environment.

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