



Strategic Leadership of School Principals in Improving Teacher Work Culture in Islamic Secondary Schools

Nurul Huda*

Islamic Education Management, Raden Intan State Islamic University, Lampung, Indonesia
e-mail: nurulbagol77@gmail.com

Subandi

Islamic Education Management, Raden Intan State Islamic University, Lampung, Indonesia
e-mail: subandi@radenintan.ac.id

Amirudin

Islamic Education Management, Raden Intan State Islamic University, Lampung, Indonesia
e-mail: amirudin@radenintan.ac.id

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Abstract:

The principal holds a strategic role in shaping teacher work culture to enhance the quality of education in Islamic schools. This research aims to describe the leadership strategies employed by the principal of MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung in strengthening teachers' work culture. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The results show that the principal implements a participatory and religious leadership model by integrating Muhammadiyah values into daily practices, such as congregational prayers, religious mentoring, and character development. The CECC strategy (Check, Evaluate, Consult, Control) is applied systematically to improve teacher discipline, professionalism, and responsibility. Moreover, teachers are involved in decision-making and receive welfare support through fair task distribution, incentives, and social protection. These efforts have successfully built a disciplined, collaborative, and spiritually grounded teacher work culture, contributing significantly to the improvement of educational quality at the school.

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Introduction

Education is crucial in developing superior and competitive human resources (Sudarma, 2022). At the secondary school level, the principal's role as a leader in the educational world is a key factor in the success of the learning process. The principal handles administrative aspects and strategically encourages improved teacher performance to achieve educational goals, producing individuals with quality, character, and competitiveness. Various aspects influence the quality of education, with teachers playing a central role in learning activities (Subandi, 2018). A teacher's task is not only to deliver subject matter but also to shape students' character and instill a work culture that reflects professionalism, integrity, and responsibility (Nainggolan & Naibaho, 2024). According to Hasibuan & Hadijaya (2024), in

carrying out their duties, teachers are required to implement a good work culture, such as discipline in terms of time management, consistency between planning and implementation of learning, collaboration with fellow educators, and a commitment to improving the quality of education. This conducive work culture positively impacts the quality of learning activities and influences the overall academic climate. In addition to being a teaching leader, the principal also serves as a role model, coach, facilitator, and mentor, rather than simply a guardian or administrator of teaching (Hamid, 2024; Khalis, 2024).

Pancasila leadership contains three main concepts (Ikmal, 2021). First, *ing ngarso sung tulodho* means that a leader must be able to set an example for those he leads. Second, *Ing madya mangun karso* means that a leader must be at the center to build enthusiasm and provide space for subordinates to be independent. Third is *Tut Wuri Handayani*, where leaders provide continuous encouragement and motivation so followers can perform optimally. However, the reality at MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung shows that the school still faces challenges in forming and maintaining an ideal teacher work culture. Some teachers lack discipline, are reluctant to participate in training, do not actively engage in school activities, and have not maximized their potential in creating innovations in teaching. This situation highlights the need for serious attention to efforts to develop and strengthen teachers' work culture in a targeted and sustainable manner. One of the key factors significantly influencing this process is the role of the school principal as the leader of the educational institution.

School principals are not only responsible for administrative matters, but also serve as agents of change who determine the direction of school progress through effective leadership strategies (Lestari et al., 2025). Effective school principals demonstrate leadership by formulating a focused vision, establishing transparent communication, creating a conducive working atmosphere, and encouraging teachers' professional development. In this case, the strategies implemented by the principal play an important role in shaping a positive and productive work culture for teachers. These strategies can include implementing continuous training and coaching, appreciating teacher performance, forming collaborative work teams, and involving teachers in decision-making. Additionally, the leadership demonstrated by the school principal is an important aspect that can inspire and motivate teachers to enhance their work ethic (Rahmawati, 2019; Sri, 2019).

The primary function of teachers is to design, manage, implement, and evaluate learning. The role of teachers in the learning process is also vital and decisive. One of the factors influencing the success of a teacher's duties is their performance in planning or designing, implementing, and evaluating the learning process (Asmara, 2016). However, in practice, teachers face various challenges in carrying out their duties, ultimately impacting the quality of education in schools. At MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung, approximately 45% of female teachers who are young mothers face challenges in managing their time and prioritizing between their roles as educators and homemakers, particularly since the implementation of the full-day school system. These difficulties often disrupt the teaching and learning process; sometimes, classes are interrupted because teachers prioritize their domestic responsibilities. As an illustration, when there are issues at home, teachers do not hesitate to request permission to leave even though classes are still in session.

MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung is one of the Islamic educational institutions under the Muhammadiyah organization, which consistently prioritizes Islamic values, academic excellence, and humanity in its educational process. MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung has a vision and mission to cultivate students who excel in academic achievement and noble character and are prepared to face the challenges of the modern era (Muhisa News, 2024). In achieving these goals, the role of teachers is crucial, as they are directly involved in daily teaching and learning activities with students (Amala, 2020). Schools must actively

strengthen teachers' work culture, as it plays a vital role in the overall quality of education. In practice, the principal of MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung faces the challenge of fostering a strong and consistent work ethic among teachers with diverse backgrounds and characteristics. School principals can improve teacher performance through various strategies, such as academic supervision, competency development, and achievement provision (Sat et al., 2024). This strategic approach encourages teachers' work ethic and helps build a positive work culture that reflects professionalism in the school environment.

Previous studies have revealed that the strategies implemented by school principals play a significant role in strengthening the performance culture of teachers. Research (Norlatifah et al., 2024; Sholeh, 2021) shows that the transformational leadership applied by school principals directly influences teachers' performance, creativity, and work motivation in early childhood education and elementary schools. Teachers' performance is influenced by various factors, both internal (within the teacher) and external (from the surrounding environment). Similar research conducted by Rozalinda and Zebua (2024) found that the implementation of collective leadership has proven effective in helping teachers create an effective and inclusive learning environment, thereby supporting improvements in educational outcomes at school. This is aligned by research (Badrudin et al., 2020), which found that the leadership of the principal and the teacher working group influenced the performance of elementary school teachers in the Antapani sub-district of Bandung City.

Work culture is important in education, particularly in creating comfort, increasing motivation, and inspiring enthusiasm among teachers (Eliya, 2024). A strong work culture fosters harmony within the school environment and enhances teachers' professionalism. This, in turn, contributes to the improvement of educational quality. Therefore, the principal's strategies in building and developing teachers' work culture at MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung are critical factors.

To build a good work culture, solid collaboration is needed between the principal, teachers, parents, and students to achieve quality education (Hidayatulloh & KR, 2025; Khofi & Sunoko, 2025). As the highest leader in an educational institution, the principal plays a strategic role in driving school progress (Rahmi et al., 2023). In addition, developing innovative strategies to enhance teacher work culture is a critical issue that demands attention. Based on this concern, the researcher seeks to examine the strategies implemented by the principal of MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung to strengthen teacher work culture as part of broader efforts to improve educational quality.

Metode

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is where data is expressed verbally and analyzed without statistical techniques (Sugiyono, 2013). The researcher adopted a qualitative approach to explore the meanings and in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena, particularly the principal's strategy in shaping teachers' work culture (Ramdhan, 2021). A descriptive design was employed to systematically describe how the principal at MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung formulates and implements strategies to improve teacher work culture. The study occurred at MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung, in Sukarame, Sukarame District, Bandar Lampung City, Lampung 35131.

This study employs a qualitative approach, also called the naturalistic method, as it uses natural settings that reflect real conditions in the field (Ulfatin, 2022). This study aims to describe and understand phenomena related to teacher work culture and the strategies applied by school principals in everyday contexts. The subjects in this study include school principals as leaders who design and implement strategies to improve work culture, teachers as those who directly feel the impact of these strategies, students as a source of information regarding

the influence of strategies on the learning process, and the school committee to gain an understanding of the policy support provided. There were a total of seven informants in this study. The researcher collected data using several instruments, including interview guides with open-ended questions to explore in-depth information from respondents, observation sheets to record teacher behavior and classroom interaction, particularly related to discipline, motivation, and the work atmosphere, and document analysis to examine school policies and practices.

The data analysis technique used in this study employs Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). Data collected from various sources will be tested for validity using triangulation techniques to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the findings.

Results and Discussion

A. The principal's Strategy in Improving Teacher Work Culture

Leadership strategy is a systematic effort to mobilize all organizational elements to work optimally in achieving common goals. In education, the principal has a strategic role in creating a work climate that supports the implementation of school programs, particularly in improving the quality of learning (Juharyanto et al., 2020). The success of this strategy depends heavily on the principal's ability to build harmonious social relationships, understand the cultural conditions of the environment, and be sensitive to educational dynamics.

The MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung's principal acts as an administrative manager and a transformational leader who actively communicates with various parties. Communication is established internally, such as with teachers and educational staff, and externally, such as with parents, the surrounding community, and the Muhammadiyah Association (Juharyanto et al., 2020). This collaborative approach is an important strategy in gaining external support, which ultimately positively impacts forming a productive and collaborative work culture among teachers. For effective leadership strategies, the principal must thoroughly understand the community's expectations (Alfiandrizar et al., 2023). This is done by identifying emerging aspirations and integrating them into school programs. This process involves consultation and active community involvement in planning and implementing programs. This participatory approach aligns with the school's vision, teachers' needs, and community expectations, supporting a conducive work environment.

1. Principal Planning for Improving Teacher Work Culture

Principals also play an important role in fostering discipline as part of a professional work culture. Discipline is considered an important foundation for improving teacher work ethic. Principals at MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung apply a role model approach through consistency in time, responsibility, and work commitment. The principal reinforces this strategy by providing continuous mentoring and personal motivation and promoting Islamic work values that align with Muhammadiyah principles (Hevi Hellen Sofia, 2025).

Discipline is the foundation of a teacher's work culture. I start with myself by arriving on time, working according to my responsibilities, and maintaining my commitment. I regularly mentor teachers, provide motivation when needed, and emphasize Islamic values such as honesty and trustworthiness. I hope discipline can become a habit through this approach in this school (Hevi Hellen Sofia, 2025). The principal here is very serious about discipline. He constantly reminds us to arrive on time and consistently attend because it is important for the smooth running of learning. In addition, the principal also provides support to make it easier for us to teach. The rules are clear, so we know what to do. Because of that, we are more enthusiastic about our work, and the atmosphere

at school is also more orderly (Sujana & Wijaya, 2023).

To that end, the principal established strict, clear, and easily understandable disciplinary policies for all teachers, covering permission procedures, attendance requirements, and penalties for repeated violations without clear reasons. Attendance monitoring is also conducted regularly through manual and digital administrative systems to maintain discipline (Solihin, 2024). Additionally, the school principal promotes discipline in lesson planning by encouraging teacher collaboration through discussions and sharing experiences. To a limited extent, the principal also involves students in providing input, ensuring lesson plans are more relevant and motivating for students.

The principal, acting as a facilitator, promotes open communication among teachers, which is important for collaborative learning (Aryani & Haryadi, 2023). They support teachers' professional development by creating opportunities for collaborative learning, which improves teaching skills and competencies (Sholeh, 2021). Building a school culture that values collaboration is essential for maintaining teacher engagement and improving learning outcomes (Ha et al., 2024).

By implementing a focused leadership strategy that integrates managerial, spiritual, and social dimensions, the principal fosters a work culture among teachers that emphasizes discipline, responsibility, and a strong commitment to enhancing educational quality at MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung. Discipline in the learning evaluation process is an important aspect that directly impacts improving educational quality. The school principal plays a strategic role by ensuring that all evaluation activities are systematically and objectively conducted (Sari Irawati, 2025).

Discipline in learning evaluation is essential for improving school quality. The principal ensures that evaluations are conducted on time, honestly, and professionally. He also regularly monitors teachers to be more disciplined and serious about their duties. This supports what the principal said about the importance of discipline and exemplary behavior in building a good work culture (Sari Irawati, 2025).

Through effective leadership, school principals can build a work culture encouraging teachers to conduct learning evaluations responsibly and honestly. This discussion will outline various steps that can be implemented by the principal of MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung in order to improve teacher discipline, particularly in the implementation of learning evaluations. These efforts include continuous supervision, clear guidance, and the instillation of professional values in every evaluative process within the school environment (Erfika et al., 2024).

2. Implementation of the Principal's Strategy in Improving Teacher Work Culture

Leadership strategy is an effort to mobilize all organizational elements to achieve optimal performance and effectively realize common goals. In education, the principal's leadership strategy is to create a conducive work environment to support the maximum implementation of school programs, particularly in learning. The principal can only exercise effective leadership by demonstrating social sensitivity, understanding the cultural and political context, and actively engaging with internal and external school communities. The principal's ability to build proportional interactions is one of the key strategies for strengthening community support for the school. However, as an educational institution, the school is also required to understand better the aspirations and expectations of the community, as well as to identify, unify, and manage its programs through comprehensive community participation.

An interview with the principal of MTs Muhammadiyah Sukarame, Bandar Lampung,

revealed that the principal faced challenges in implementing the full-day school system at the beginning of his leadership. The principal overcame these obstacles by implementing several strategic programs that addressed the issues and supported human resource development. The strategies implemented also impacted improving teachers' work culture, which ultimately supported the creation of a more productive and professional work environment at the school.

In the first year of leadership, implementing full-day schooling faced various challenges. One of the principal's main obstacles was the mental unpreparedness of several teachers and the lack of an optimally established work culture. Additionally, during the first six months of his tenure, the principal was required to participate in the four-month National School Leadership Revitalization Program (NRKS) without taking leave, affecting his ability to perform leadership duties effectively. In addressing these conditions, school principals must provide concrete solutions to help teachers adapt and overcome existing issues. As a strategic response, school principals designed an approach through supervision, training, and creating a conducive work environment to improve teachers' work culture (Hevi Hellen Sofia, 2025).

In order to improve the work culture of teachers, the principal of MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung has implemented a collaborative strategy that synergizes with the Muhammadiyah Association. As an educational institution under the organizational structure of the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership (PDM), this school actively establishes partnerships and communication with the association, both at the branch and regional levels. This collaboration is realized through various regular training activities, such as religious training, counseling on Muhammadiyah values, and a cadre development process to instill loyalty and commitment among teachers to the values of the Muhammadiyah struggle. These activities are conducted regularly and are an important part of efforts to build the character and integrity of teachers in performing their professional duties.

In addition to ideological development, the school principal also places significant emphasis on improving the welfare of educators. The strategies implemented include providing adequate incentives, a fair and transparent salary system, and social security protection through participation in the BPJS Ketenagakerjaan program (Duryat, 2022). The principal ensures a proportional distribution of workloads and teaching hours to create a healthy and balanced work environment. These measures aim to foster a sense of safety, comfort, and motivation among teachers, enabling them to carry out their responsibilities more effectively.

The principal helps shape a religious work culture as the primary foundation for creating a positive and spiritually valuable work atmosphere at MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung. The principal cultivates a religious culture by implementing structured daily worship practices, such as performing the duha prayer and reciting the Qur'an each morning before classes begin. Additionally, all teachers and students consistently perform the noon and afternoon prayers in congregation within the school premises. This worship routine enhances the quality of faith and piety among the teachers. It serves as a means of character development, reflecting Islamic values such as discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and social concern. Implementing a work culture rooted in religious values aligns with the school's vision, "Excellence in Achievement, a Model of Noble Character." Culturing religious practices and strengthening spiritual values are expected to shape intellectually intelligent educators and serve as role models in character and behavior. The values of *akhlakul karimah* instilled through these religious activities create a harmonious, respectful, and exemplary work environment, positively impacting teacher performance and student achievement (Hevi Hellen Sofia, 2025).

In addition, resources, such as books, teaching materials, technological devices, and

other supporting facilities, are also provided so that teachers can design learning effectively and professionally. The principal ensures that all learning activities are implemented according to the established schedule and procedures. Teachers must arrive on time, deliver instructional material as planned, and fulfill their teaching responsibilities with professionalism and accountability. Clear supervision and work guidelines help create an orderly and professional work environment (Syahdani Simanjuntak, 2025).

The principal always supports teachers by providing books, teaching materials, technological tools, and other facilities for all learning activities according to the schedule. Teachers are required to arrive on time, teach according to plan, and take responsibility for their duties. Supervision is also routine, so the work atmosphere at school is more orderly and professional (Syahdani Simanjuntak, 2025).

The principal, teachers, and organizational structure have established a work culture system that integrates spiritual, structural, and ideological dimensions. Teachers are responsible for educating students in the classroom and serving as part of the da'wah movement and community development efforts. Integrating Muhammadiyah values into the principal's leadership strategy has made the work culture at MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung a strong, organizationally, spiritually, and socially meaningful. This is the key to creating a religious, loyal, and productive work environment, ultimately improving educational quality (Agustini et al., 2024).

3. Principal's Strategic Control in Improving Teacher Work Culture

The principal of MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung implements the CECC (Check, Evaluate, Consult, Control) strategy as an internal quality control system designed to improve teacher discipline and professionalism. This strategy is implemented regularly and systematically to ensure that all aspects of teachers' work align with established standards (Hevi Hellen Sofia, 2025).

At this school, we use the CECC strategy, which stands for Check, Evaluate, Consult, and Control. The goal is to maintain teacher discipline and professionalism. We carry out each part routinely. Starting with checking teacher attendance, administration, and task implementation. Then, we evaluate their performance, looking at their readiness to teach and the students' results. Teachers can consult directly if there are any issues, and we consider their input. However, if there are deviations, we take control sometimes through guidance, sometimes through reprimands, depending on the case. The main point is to ensure that all teachers work by the rules and that the work culture remains intact. (Hevi Hellen Sofia, 2025)"

During the Check stage, the principal routinely evaluates key elements such as learning administration, teacher attendance, and teaching performance. These evaluations are conducted through direct classroom supervision and weekly or monthly reports submitted by each teacher (Ramly, 2023). Next, the Evaluation stage aims to objectively assess teacher performance based on specific indicators, including teaching readiness, classroom management skills, and the impact of teaching on student learning outcomes (Rohani, 2025).

At this school, we are routinely checked, from administration, attendance, to teaching performance. Sometimes through direct supervision, and sometimes from reports that we collect. After that, we are evaluated based on teaching readiness, classroom management, and student learning outcomes. In my opinion, this is good, so we are more enthusiastic about preparing lessons (Rohani, 2025).

Then, during the Consultation stage, the principal opens up a space for dialogue and two-way communication, where teachers can convey the obstacles they face in the learning process, share innovative ideas, and reflect on the tasks they have performed. This helps

teachers improve their performance and strengthens their sense of ownership of the school's vision and mission (Rosdiana, 2025). Finally, the Control stage is part of the supervision and enforcement of discipline. Suppose the principal identifies any violations or non-compliance with established standards. In that case, corrective actions are based on the severity of the case, ranging from counseling and written warnings to administrative sanctions, when necessary. Through the implementation of the CECC strategy, school principals can monitor and evaluate the development of teacher discipline on an ongoing basis. Additionally, this approach fosters a healthy and professional work culture, supported by open communication (Rosmini et al., 2025), a commitment to the quality of learning, and a shared dedication to improving educational standards.

4. Follow-up on the Principal's Strategy to Improve Teacher Work Culture

Furthermore, in learning evaluation, the principal actively ensures that the assessment process is carried out regularly, objectively, and on time. Through consistent guidance and supervision, teachers are encouraged to be more responsible and disciplined in evaluating student learning outcomes (Rahmah Nur Hidayah, 2025).

Now, teachers seem to give grades more quickly and regularly. It is not like before when it sometimes took forever. Maybe because the principal often reminds and supervises them. Teachers have become more disciplined in providing assessments, which makes us feel that our learning progress is recognized. This, in turn, increases our motivation to learn (Rahmah Nur Hidayah, 2025).

The students deeply feel the impact. They feel that their learning outcomes are valued and acknowledged, increasing their motivation and enthusiasm for learning. The relationship between teachers and students has also become more positive due to the clarity and consistency in the learning evaluation process (Astuti & Hanif, 2024). With these strategies, the principal has successfully established a work culture among teachers that is disciplined, professional, and focused on improving the quality of education at the school (Ayu, 2025).

The findings of this study indicate that the principal of MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung implements a religious and participatory leadership strategy to foster a disciplined and professional work culture among teachers. Regular activities such as tadarus, duha prayer, tahsin, and congregational prayer consistently instill values of discipline, responsibility, and exemplary behavior (Rojak, 2024). The principal also serves as a role model in work ethic and involves teachers in various school programs and decisions. Collaboration with the Muhammadiyah Association through religious guidance and cadre development further strengthens teachers' ideological commitment. Attention to teachers' well-being through incentives, fair task distribution, and social security creates a comfortable and productive work environment. These strategies demonstrate the effectiveness of the principal's leadership in creating a work culture that supports improving education quality.

In line with research conducted by (Hidayatulloh & KR, 2025), religious value-based participatory leadership is an approach that involves all members of an organization in decision-making, while instilling spiritual values such as sincerity, responsibility, and integrity. This leadership style encourages collaboration while fostering a harmonious and productive work culture. MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung implements an integrated educational approach that fully integrates religious and general subjects. Teachers incorporate Islamic values into the curriculum through effective and collaborative teaching methods. The school principal plays a crucial role in building synergy among teachers, parents, and the community to instill character and develop students' competencies. This strategy also strengthens the work culture of teachers, who are professional and grounded in Islamic values.

B. Challenges in Implementing Principal Strategies to Improving Teacher Work Culture

Research on principal strategies to improve teacher discipline to strengthen work culture at MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung faces several significant challenges. One of the main challenges is limited access to internal school data, such as discipline reports, performance evaluation records, and supervision documents. Such information is often sensitive and not easily accessible to external parties, as stated by (Zikri, 2023; Nudin et al., 2023), so researchers need to build trust with the school to obtain the required data ethically (Samosir, 2024). In addition, because discipline and work culture are qualitative and subjective, their assessment largely depends on each informant's perceptions (Mukhlis, 2020), both from the school principal and teachers (Zhahira et al., 2022). This subjectivity can affect the objectivity of the data collected.

Another challenge arose from differences in teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward the disciplinary policies and the CECC approach implemented by the principal. Not all teachers responded similarly; some felt the strategy was too restrictive, while others saw it as a constructive improvement. This made it difficult for researchers to conclude the strategy's effectiveness. Time constraints also pose a challenge, as observing work culture and discipline requires a relatively long period to ensure the results accurately reflect real-world conditions. Additionally, the time constraints and busy schedules of respondents, both teachers and school principals, complicate the data collection process through interviews or direct observation. Equally important, social and political dynamics in the school environment, such as inter-teacher relationships (Iswahyudi et al., 2023), the influence of foundations, or informal power structures (Anshori, 2020), also influence how policies are implemented and accepted. These factors are often beyond researchers' control but significantly impact the validity of the findings.

Conclusion

The research findings conclude that the principal of MTs Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung's strategy in building a teacher work culture is through a leadership approach that integrates religious and participatory values. Active collaboration with the Muhammadiyah Association is utilized in ideological development and strengthening teachers' commitment through religious activities and leadership training. Daily religious practices such as Duha prayer, Tahsin, and congregational prayer serve as tools for fostering discipline, responsibility, and exemplary behavior. On the other hand, attention to teacher welfare is realized through incentives, proportional task distribution, and social security. The principal also involves teachers in decision-making, provides ongoing guidance, and serves as a role model in work ethic. This approach has proven effective in creating a professional and religious teacher work culture that supports overall educational quality improvement.

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