Santri Character Education: Implementation of Dr. Abdul Karim Zaidan's Thought in Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of santri character education at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima Karanganyar, Central Java, from the perspective of Dr. Abdul Karim Zaidan. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, this research explores the values, norms, and culture that shape the character of santri through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data triangulation was conducted to verify the validity of the information. At the same time, data analysis used a process of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing to understand the practice of character education in depth. The results show that the character education model in this madrasah uses a holistic approach that integrates Islamic values with modern education theory. Methods such as modeling, habituation, teaching through Qur'anic stories, giving advice, discipline, and targhib create an effective character-building process. Values such as piety, independence, honesty, discipline, social care, tolerance, and responsibility are internalized through daily routines, teaching and learning activities, and extracurricular activities. This model not only focuses on moral development but also supports academic achievement, such as the success of santri in science olympiads and Al-Qur'an memorization competitions. This research makes a practical contribution to the Islamic character education literature by showing how religious values can be integrated into the formal education system to form a generation with superior personalities. This model can be a reference for other educational institutions designing holistic and value-based education programs.

Keywords: character education, Islamic values, Madrasah Aliyah, Dr. Abdul Karim Zaidan,

Introduction

The moral crisis among Indonesia's young generation is increasingly becoming a serious concern, as reflected in the 2024 Criminal Statistics data, the number of criminal incidents increased dramatically from 372,965 cases in 2022 to 584,991 cases in 2023, with a crime rate of 214 incidents per 100.000 population, but also the weak moral integrity reflected in the increase in violence, corruption, and drug abuse.[1] This data shows that the intensity and frequency of criminal acts continue to increase, including acts of violence, abuse, and crimes against decency. This condition illustrates the weakness of social control, the need for reform in the education system, and the internalization of moral values.

In essence, the government pays great attention to character education, which is realized by establishing character building as one of the goals of Indonesian education. This is regulated in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System.[2] However, in practice, these goals are often not implemented effectively. Darcia Narvaez's study shows that character problems are a picture of the failure of the internalization process of moral values in the education system, which is the leading cause.[3] This condition reflects weak social control, the need for reformulation in the character education system, and the internalization of moral values. Education based on religious and ethical values is an urgent solution to creating an intellectually superior and morally strong generation.[4]

In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, pesantren play an essential role in the moral and spiritual formation of the younger generation. Although religious and moral education has long been the primary focus of Islamic educational institutions, in recent years, there has been a push to develop a more systematic and integrated model of character education, taking into account contemporary social and cultural challenges. One model that significantly contributes to the character-building of santri is the approach

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[1] Direktorat Statistik Ketahanan Sosial, *Statistik Kriminal 2024 Volume 15, 2024* (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024), https://www.bps.go.id/id/publication/2024/12/12/13317138a55b2f7096589536/statistik-kriminal-2024.html.

[2] Indonesia Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, "Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional," 2003.

[3] Darcia Narvaez and Daniel K Lapsley, "Moral Identity, Moral Functioning, and the Development of Moral Character," *Psychology of Learning and Motivation* 50 (2009): 237–74.

[4] Budi Apriandi et al., "The Islamic Intellectual Intelligence as a Social Class," *TOFEDU: The Future of Education Journal* 4, no. 1 (2025): 30–39.

initiated by Dr. Abdul Karim Zaidan, an essential figure in the world of Islamic education. Zaidan's approach focuses on the integration of religious values in moral education, with an emphasis on the formation of solid morality through strengthening religious understanding and practicing noble moral principles.

Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima in Karanganyar, Central Java, is a concrete example of the application of this character education model. This institution emphasizes memorizing the Qur'an and integrates moral values in Islamic teachings as an integral part of the curriculum. This tahfizhul Qur'an-based approach is believed to facilitate the development of academically intelligent characters, good morals, and high social responsibility.

The results of researchers' searches in the literature review show that many researchers have carried out research related to character education in Islamic educational institutions that examines the importance of integrating religious values in shaping the morality of the younger generation. Amin's study found that incorporating spiritual values in education in madrasah can improve students' moral understanding.[5] Salahuddin Wahid's study shows that pesantren, as religious educational institutions, effectively form responsible individuals through character-based education incorporating Islamic teachings.[6] Another study by Munawir showed that Qur'anic teaching in pesantren integrated with moral values plays a vital role in developing the character of santri. However, it also emphasized the need for further strengthening with a systematic curriculum-based approach to avoid merely sporadic normative teaching.[7] On the other hand, Kartika Sagala highlights the importance of character education responsive to social change, especially in the digital era, which demands the application of religious values in education with a more contemporary approach to answering the challenges of an increasingly complex era.[8]

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[5] Moh Nasrul Amin, Muhammad Nashihin, and Mukh Nursikin, "Peningkatkan Karakter Religius Siswa Melalui Internaliasi Nilai Dalam Kegiatan Keagamaan Dan Sosial," *Madinah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 11, no. 2 (2024): 295–312.

[6] Salahudin Wahid, "Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Pesantren," *TARBAWI* 3, no. 1 (2014): 1–14.

[7] Munawir Munawir, Fina Alfiana, and Sekar Putri Pambayun, "Menyongsong Masa Depan: Transformasi Karakter Siswa Generasi Alpha Melalui Pendidikan Islam Yang Berbasis Al-Qur'an," *Attadrib: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1–11.

[8] Kartika Sagala, Lamhot Naibaho, and Djoys Anneke Rantung, "Tantangan Pendidikan Karakter Di Era Digital," *Jurnal Kridatama Sains Dan Teknologi* 6, no. 01 (2024): 1–8.

The above studies generally believe that religion-based character education effectively shapes morality. Still, there is a lack of a systematic and integrative approach in the curriculum that can maximize the results. In this context, your research, which focuses on the character education model integrated into the tahfizhul Qur'an curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima, with an emphasis on moral education based on understanding and practicing religious values, makes a substantial contribution by creating a more holistic and structured approach in shaping the character of students.

Research Methodology

This study aims to analyze the implementation of character education for santri at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima Karanganyar, Central Java, based on Dr. Abdul Karim Zaidan's perspective. It uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to explore the values, norms, and cultural practices embedded in the educational environment and their influence on the character formation of santri. The ethnographic approach was chosen because it provides a deep understanding of social realities and the meanings constructed by individuals within the daily context of the boarding school.[9]

Data was collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentary analysis. The field research took place over three months, from July to September 2024. During this period, the researcher actively participated in the life of the pesantren, observing daily routines, religious practices, learning processes, and interactions between santri and educators. Field notes and memos were compiled to capture in detail the socio-cultural context and meaning behind character education practices (thick description).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 informants, consisting of 1 pesantren leader (kyai), three ustadz, two madrasah administrators, and six santri (3 male and three female) who were purposively selected based on their active involvement in character-building activities. The interviews explored their perspectives, experiences, and practices in internalizing character values based on Islamic teachings and Dr. Abdul Karim Zaidan's thoughts.

Documentation was conducted on the curriculum, pesantren policies, activity archives, and historical documents related to character education practices. These

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[9] James P. Spradley, *Metode Etnografi*, ed. Misbah Zulfa Elizabeth, Edisi Kedu (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2006).

documents serve as supporting data to verify and strengthen the results of observations and interviews.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Coding was done manually to identify key themes related to character values and educational strategies implemented. Analysis was conducted using an emic approach (informant's perspective) and an etic approach (researcher's study), ensuring that data interpretation reflects internal cultural understanding and theoretical frameworks.[10]

To maintain data validity, triangulation was conducted at various levels: triangulation of data sources (interviews, observations, documentation), triangulation between informants, and triangulation of methods. Data validation was also strengthened through member checking and peer debriefing to ensure that data interpretation aligns with participants' original experiences and perspectives.

Character Education Model at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima Karanganyar

The character education model implemented at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima Karanganyar reflects a holistic approach that integrates Islamic values with modern character education theories. This model is a learning method for internalizing deep moral values. Approaches such as exemplary, habituation, discipline, teaching through Qur'anic stories, giving advice, and the Carib method emphasize the richness of pesantren pedagogy in shaping individual character based on religious values.

1. Exemplary Modeling as the Core of Character Learning

    The exemplary model applied in these Madrasahs reflects a key principle in Bandura's social learning theory: individual behavior is strongly influenced by observing and imitating behavioral models.[11] In the pesantren environment, the kyai and ustadz act as exemplary figures who convey religious values and live them in their daily actions. A study by Aslan confirms that the example of educational leaders efficiently shapes students' personalities, especially in a religious, value-based

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[10] Sugiyono, *Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D*, ed. Alfabeta (Bandung, 2019).

[11] Albert Bandura and Richard H Walters, *Social Learning Theory*, vol. 1 (Englewood cliffs Prentice Hall, 1977).

educational environment.[12] This model emphasizes the importance of consistency between the values taught and the actual behavior of educators.

2. Habituation as a Continuous Internal Process

Training and *habituation* in this pesantren are relevant to the *habituation theory* approach, which emphasizes that character is formed through consistent repetition of behavior.[13] Practices such as congregational prayer, politeness towards teachers, and practicing Islamic values in daily life form a routine that eventually becomes the innate morals of santri. Research by Ngadiono shows that religious value-based habituation shapes individual morality and increases students' social awareness.[14]

3. Qishosh al-Qur'an as Narrative Pedagogy

Teaching through Qur'anic stories adopts a narrative pedagogy approach that has emotional power in instilling moral values. The stories in the Qur'an not only provide examples of good behavior but also help students understand the ethical consequences of actions. Studies by Zaid and Al-Mashikhi show that faith-based narratives significantly enhance learners' moral and spiritual awareness.[15] In addition, stories also help build a deep critical mindset regarding religious values and life.

4. Advice as a Means of Moral Communication

Advising this pesantren uses a *values-based communication* approach, delivering moral values directly through verbal interaction. Advice given by kyais or ustadz often reflects personal experience, so it is more readily accepted by santri. Studies by Erik Kostelijk show that individual and empathic value-based communication can create a strong emotional connection between educators and learners, strengthening the value internalization process.[16]

5. Discipline as a Foundation for Self-Control

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[12] Seda Aktı Aslan and Yiğit Emrah Turgut, "Effectiveness of Community of Inquiry Based Online Course: Cognitive, Social and Teaching Presence," *Journal of Pedagogical Research* 5, no. 3 (2021): 187–97.

[13] Thomas Lickona, "Character Education: Seven Crucial Issues," *Action in Teacher Education* 20, no. 4 (1999): 77–84.

[14] Ngadiono Ngadiono, "Habituation-Based Character Formation at Al Irsyad Tengaran 7 Islamic Islamic Boarding School, Batu City," *Salam International Journal of Islamic Education* 3, no. 1 (2024): 31–41.

[15] Tareq M Zayed, "The Role Of Reading Motivation And Interest In Reading Engagement Of Quranic Exegesis Readers," *O-JIE: Online Journal of Islamic Education* 3, no. 1 (2017): 1–13.

[16] Erik Kostelijk, "Values-Based Communication: A New Impulse to Communication Effectiveness," in *Joy*, vol. 5 (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2020), 21–35.

The disciplinary method focuses on sanctions and aims to form the santri's awareness of responsibility for their behavior. This principle aligns with the *behavioral management* theory by Skinner (1953), which emphasizes the importance of reinforcement in forming behavior. However, this approach has been modified to include the values of justice and wisdom,[17] As Ramon Lewis' research shows, fair sanctions increase the sense of responsibility without creating psychological resistance in learners.[18]

6. Targhib and Tarhib as a Motivational Approach

The Carib (motivation through rewards) and this (motivation through threats) methods reflect the dualistic motivation theory in educational psychology, which utilizes learners' intrinsic and extrinsic drives. In this context, this method is consistently used to instill awareness about the importance of good deeds and avoiding sins. Trisnawaty's research shows that this approach effectively creates deep moral awareness, especially in a faith-based educational environment.[19]

Character Values Instilled in Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima Karanganyar

Culturing character values at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima Karanganyar reflects a systematic effort to internalize Islamic values in santri. This approach refers to the thoughts of Dr. Abdul Karim Zaidan in *Kitab al-Mustafad min Qoshosh al-Qur'an*, which makes the Qur'an the primary source of character education. The following is an in-depth analysis of the instilled character values connected to theories and previous research, as well as the contribution of the findings to the character education literature.

1. Al-Taqwa (Piety)

Piety is the core of Islamic character education. In the context of education, piety can be interpreted as an attitude of life that is always oriented towards the commands and prohibitions of Allah SWT, as stated by Ismail, that religious value-

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[17] B F Skinner, "Herrnstein and the Evolution of Behaviorism.," 1977.

[18] Ramon Lewis, "Classroom Discipline and Student Responsibility:: The Students' View," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 17, no. 3 (2001): 307–19.

[19] Trisnawaty Trisnawaty, Herawati Herawati, and Tatang Hidayat, "The Role of Teachers in Realizing the Goals of Islamic Education," *Islamic Research* 5, no. 2 (2022): 157–63.

based character education has a strategic role in the formation of moral behavior.[20] Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima applies piety through consistent habituation of compulsory and sunnah worship, such as praying in congregation, reading the Qur'an, and sunnah fasting. This approach is relevant to the theory of *moral habituation*,[21] which states that habituation in carrying out moral values creates a deep internalization of values. This finding strengthens previous research on the effectiveness of worship habituation in building individual morality.

2. *Al-I'timad 'ala al-Nafs* (Self-reliance)

The independence instilled in this child aligns with the concept of self-efficacy developed by Bandura, where self-confidence in managing and completing individual tasks becomes the foundation of independence.[22] Santri is trained to be independent through responsibilities in daily activities, such as washing clothes, managing time, and maintaining personal hygiene. Research by Dian Popi Oktari shows that habituation to independence in a boarding education environment can create more confident and resilient individuals facing challenges.[23] These findings prove that independence instilled through a disciplinary approach and sustainable habituation positively impacts the readiness of santri's independent life in the future.

3. *Al-Shidq* (Honesty)

Honesty is a core value in character education at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima, which is highly emphasized, especially in Qur'an memorization activities and academic exams. Honesty is not only related to individual behavior but is also the foundation for the moral development of society. Solihin's research highlights the importance of honesty in shaping student character in pesantren as a pillar of Islamic *ethics*.[24] This implementation is relevant to Aristotle'*s virtue ethics theory*, which teaches that honesty creates moral individuals. This finding

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[20] Ismail Ismail, "Character Education Based on Religious Values: An Islamic Perspective," *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 21, no. 1 (2016): 41–58.

[21] Thomas Lickona, "Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education," *Journal of Moral Education* 25, no. 1 (1996): 93–100.

[22] Albert Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change," *Advances in Behaviour Research and Therapy* 1, no. 4 (1978): 139–61.

[23] Dian Popi Oktari and Aceng Kosasih, "Pendidikan Karakter Religius Dan Mandiri Di Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial* 28, no. 1 (2019): 42.

[24] Ihin Solihin, Aan Hasanah, and Hisny Fajrussalam, "Core Ethical Values of Character Education Based on Islamic Values in Islamic Boarding Schools," *International Journal on Advanced Science, Education, and Religion* 3, no. 2 (2020): 21–33.

strengthens the view that the habituation of honest behavior at the individual level has positive implications for forming a just and ethical society.

4. *Al-Intizham* (Discipline)

The discipline applied in this Madrasah covers various aspects of life, from worship time to Qur'an memorization management. Discipline in the context of education is a form of self-management to achieve more significant goals, as outlined by *behavioral theory*. Students are trained to adhere to a strict schedule, which helps them develop an appreciation for time and responsibility. Research by Khairuddin corroborates this by stating that discipline in dormitory-based education significantly impacts students' academic success and self-management.[25]

5. *Al-Ijtima'iyah* (Social Care)

The social care character instilled through social service activities and community cooperation reflects the application of the value of "*ta'awun 'ala al-birr wa al-taqwa*" (helping in goodness). This value is very relevant to the theory of moral education,[26] Which places empathy as the core of moral action. In addition, Ismail's research shows that community-based education in pesantren can increase social care and collective awareness.[27] These findings are essential in understanding how religious value-based education can build high social awareness.

6. *Al-Tasamuh* (Tolerance)

Tolerance education in this pesantren is taught by respecting cultural, traditional, and language differences among santri. This aligns with the concept of *cultural empathy*, where tolerance is an important element in building a harmonious society. Kholilur Rahman's research shows that religion-based tolerance education in pesantren can form a generation open to diversity.[28] This finding confirms the relevance of pesantren education in creating a generation that respects differences, both in the national and global contexts.

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[25] Khairuddin Alfath, "Pendidikan Karakter Disiplin Santri Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Fatah Temboro," *AL-MANAR: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2020): 125–64.

[26] Lawrence Kohlberg, "The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice," 1981.

[27] Ismi Rifaatul Mahmudah, "Upaya Pendidikan Karakter Peduli Sosial Di Pondok Pesantren Al-Utsmani Kajen Pekalongan" (UIN KH Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, 2023).

[28] Kholilur Rahman, "Strategi Pengembangan Nilai Toleransi Dan Pluralisme Dalam Pendidikan Pesantren," *Hikmah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2016): 107–40.

Islamic Character Education: Value Integration and Personality Formation at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima

Character education at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima Karanganyar, which is based on the perspective of Dr. Abdul Karim Zaidan, provides a holistic approach to the formation of santri character. By integrating teaching and learning activities (KBM), religious routines, and extracurricular activities, this education program aims to produce students who excel academically and have superior personalities with solid moral values.

1. Character Education through Teaching and Learning Activities (KBM)

    In teaching and learning activities, integrating moral values in all subjects aims to develop the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions of santri. This approach supports *constructivist learning* theory,[29] This emphasizes the importance of constructing knowledge through contextual experiences. Teachers use contextual learning (CTL) methods, such as linking the subject matter to real-life santri, to understand the practical relevance of moral values. In addition, the teacher's role as a facilitator in the core and closing activities shows a systematic effort to ensure a deep understanding of the material and to inculcate values. Effective character education should encompass the dimensions of knowledge, feelings, and actions, all of which are reflected in the structure of the KBM in this madrasah.

2. Character Building through Religious Routines

    The daily routines of the santri, such as congregational prayer, taslim of the Qur'an, muroja'ah, and morning dhikr, are genuine efforts to habituate Islamic values. This *habituation* aligns with *moral habituation*, which states that continuously carried out behavior will become an inherent character. These activities also integrate values such as discipline, responsibility, and independence.

    This routine includes worship and the formation of a work ethic through responsibility for the cleanliness and orderliness of the pesantren environment. Roihatul Jannah's research confirms that religious value-based habituation effectively builds morality and social commitment in students.[30]

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[29] L Vygotsky and M Cole, "Learning and Social Constructivism," *Learning Theories for Early Years Practice. UK: SAGE Publications Inc*, 2018, 68–73.

[30] Roihatul Jannah, "Islamic Education Character Education Concepts," *DIROSAT: Journal of Education, Social Sciences & Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2023): 7–12.

3. Interest and Character Development through Extracurricular

    Extracurricular activities like sports, arts, and language training allow santri to develop their interests and talents while strengthening moral values. Qur'an recitation (qira'ah), speech (muhadharah), and Arabic and English language training train students to become confident and competent communicators.

    This approach supports the theory of *multiple intelligences*, which recognizes that human intelligence is diverse and can be developed through diverse activities. In addition, activities such as SAPALA (Santri Pecinta Alam) teach cooperation, courage, and care for the environment.

4. Implications for Santri's Personality and Achievement

    Character education in this pesantren produces disciplined, independent, and responsible santri. Changes in santri attitudes can be seen from their consistency in carrying out sunnah worship, such as Monday-Thursday fasting, and their active involvement in maintaining cleanliness and helping with social activities in the pesantren. The emphasis on simplicity, such as clothing and pocket money restrictions, also supports the formation of thrifty and unpretentious characters.

    Character education at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima Karanganyar is an actual implementation of value-based education theory. This approach forms religious, disciplined, and responsible santri and produces academically and socially competent individuals. This model inspires other institutions to integrate spiritual values and formal education in forming a generation with superior personalities.

    This study contributes to three main aspects. Theoretically (*academic contribution*), this study expands the study of Islamic values-based character education by integrating the thoughts of Dr. Abdul Karim Zaidan as a framework for analysis that has not been explored in depth in the context of catfish madrasahs. The novelty of this research lies in its holistic approach, which combines classical Islamic thought with contemporary character education practices based on tahfizh al-Qur'an. From a policy perspective (*policy implication*), the character education model implemented at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima can serve as a reference for policymakers in formulating a national character education curriculum based on religious values and local pesantren wisdom. In terms of practical implications, this study provides a concrete and applicable overview of strategies for internalizing character values through students' daily lives,

which other educational institutions can adapt to create an educational ecosystem that supports the formation of excellent, religious individuals with integrity.

Conclusion

The character education model at Madrasah Aliyah Tahfizhul Qur'an Isy Karima Karanganyar emphasizes a holistic approach that integrates Islamic values with modern educational principles. This approach includes exemplary methods, habituation, narrative teaching through Qur'anic stories, giving advice, discipline, targhib, and this-based motivation. This model successfully forms a strong religious and moral character in santri and creates a habit pattern that encourages discipline, responsibility, and independence. This implementation emphasizes that religious value-based education can facilitate the formation of individuals with superior spiritual and social character.

In addition, the character education implemented contributes to the academic success of the santri. Success in various local, national, and international competitions shows that this education program focuses on morality and develops intellectual and social skills. With an integrated approach, the educational model in this pesantren is an essential reference in the literature of Islamic character education, and it offers innovations to be applied in various other academic institutions that want to develop a generation with superior personality and global competitiveness.

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