

Harmony of Movement and Culture: An Ende-Lio Dance-Based Physical Education Learning Strategy in Elementary Schools

Aschari Senjahari Rawe^{1*}, Berti Sadipun¹, Muhammad Salman Arroseyid²

Joko Widodo³

¹Universitas Flores, Indoensia

²Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

³Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia

ascharisenjaharirawe@gmail.com*

Abstract

This study aimed to explore and describe an Ende-Lio dance-based physical education learning strategy and to understand students' learning experiences through the integration of movement and local culture. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design conducted at Mokeasa Public Elementary School, Ende Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, from February to April 2026. The participants consisted of 30 fifth-grade students, with the physical education teacher serving as the key informant. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed thematically using ATLAS.ti. The analysis generated four main themes: increased student engagement, learning through imitation and repetition, interaction and cooperation, and more engaging and contextual learning. These themes indicate that Ende-Lio traditional dance can serve as a learning strategy that simultaneously integrates motor, social, and cultural learning experiences. Demonstration, imitation, repetition, and group practice encouraged student engagement, communication, cooperation, and understanding of local culture. The study concludes that Ende-Lio traditional dance has potential as a contextual and meaningful physical education learning strategy. Further research is recommended to examine its implementation across broader school contexts and educational levels to strengthen culturally based physical education practices.

Keywords: Physical Education, Ende-Lio Dance, Local Culture, Case Study, Thematic Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Physical Education, Sports, and Health (PJOK) at the elementary school level plays an important role in developing movement skills, active lifestyle habits, and students' personal and social competencies. The PJOK subject guidelines position movement learning as an experience that should be meaningfully designed, aligned with students' developmental stages, and provide opportunities for students with diverse abilities to participate (Ririn Ariyani et al., 2025; Ritiauw et al., 2026). Nevertheless, physical education practice in schools is often trapped in a mechanistic-biological paradigm that focuses primarily on physical performance, mastery of particular sports, or generic rhythmic gymnastics exercises that are disconnected from students' cultural contexts (Yangiboy & Allamuratovich, 2025). The dominance of technocratic learning approaches contributes to an increasing gap between learning materials and students' sociocultural realities (Amri, 2025).

Consequently, students engage in bodily movement without understanding the symbolic connections among the kinesthetic space, self-identity, and local wisdom values embedded in their environment (Mashuri, 2022).

Physical education that emphasizes only performance may limit opportunities for students to experience movement activities as part of their social and cultural lives (Yıldırım & Gürpınar, 2023). The disconnection between physical activity and cultural context is an important issue, particularly at the elementary school level, when students are developing relationships among concrete experiences, their social environment, and learning processes (Rawe et al., 2026). Physical activities rooted in local culture can provide learning experiences that are closer to students' environments while creating opportunities to develop values of togetherness, social responsibility, responsibility, and communal solidarity (Faojina et al., 2024; Irmansyah et al., 2025).

The challenge in physical education is not merely how to increase students' physical activity, but also how to provide learning strategies that connect movement experiences with the social and cultural contexts in which students live. Therefore, ethnopedagogical innovations are needed to integrate physical and cultural dimensions harmoniously into the elementary school curriculum (Masyitah et al., 2026). Integrating traditional dance into rhythmic movement activities within the physical education curriculum offers a holistic solution to address this gap. Traditional dance is not merely an aesthetic expression; it is a structured system of bodily movement rich in balance control, flexibility, rhythmic articulation, and proprioceptive coordination (Faojina et al., 2024; Masyitah et al., 2026). By using regional dance as a medium for physical education, elementary schools can foster character-based physical literacy, in which kinesthetic development progresses alongside cultural awareness.

The Ende-Lio community on Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara, possesses a rich intangible cultural heritage strongly reflected in its traditional dance practices. One of the oldest and most prominent traditional dances is *Gawi*, a communal dance rooted in agricultural rituals and customary ceremonies of the Ende-Lio community (Lina et al., 2023). Etymologically, the word *Gawi* is formed from two words in the local language: *Ga*, meaning reluctance, reserve, or respect, and *Wi*, meaning to draw or bring oneself together (Tidha et al., 2024; Tupen et al., 2024). This etymological construction defines *Gawi* as a communal movement system that removes feelings of awkwardness, embraces each individual within a circle, and affirms deep respect among community members. The kinesthetic characteristics of Ende-Lio dance, particularly *Gawi*, are marked by rhythmic and repetitive foot movements that require high levels of concentration and bodily coordination (Segi & Seran, 2019). Historically, these movements evolved from the agricultural activity known as *todo pare* (processing and husking rice grains by stamping with the feet), in which initially irregular stamping rhythms were transformed into structured movement patterns to foster communal work spirit. The main movement structures in *Gawi* include *peju* (alternating foot stamping), *rudhu* (forward steps), and *ngendho* (backward steps). The dance is performed in a large circular formation (*tubu musu*), with dancers holding hands firmly (Wangge, 2022).

The transformation of the agricultural ritual activity *todo pare* into a structured movement system demonstrates how the Ende-Lio community codified physical needs and social cooperation into a performing art. In the context of physical education pedagogy, the dynamic movements of Ende-Lio dance extend beyond the basic *Gawi* patterns and include various regional kinesthetic forms that offer diverse movement exploration. The *Woge* form, for example, requires agility and sophisticated footwork combined with the manipulation of traditional weapons such as shields (*mbaku*) and machetes (*sau*). *Wedho* provides spatial exploration through energetic free jumps, while *Tekka Se* develops cardiovascular endurance through rapid rotations around a fire source. In addition, perceptual-motor skills are intensively developed through *Sangga*

Alu, in which dancers must jump over bamboo poles moved crosswise at increasingly faster tempos (Balu et al., 2025; Ndata et al., 2026).

All of these movement forms are accompanied by traditional musical instruments such as Nggo Lamba/Nggo Wani and Feko Genda, as well as oral chants or bhea. Beyond its motor aspects, Ende-Lio dance contains profound philosophical and spiritual values, expressing universal gratitude to Du'a Ngga'e (Almighty God) and respect for ancestral spirits (Babo Mamo) and nature. The unbroken circular formation and firm handholding symbolize the absence of social barriers; the dance involves equal interaction between the mosalaki (traditional leaders) and ana kalo fai walu (ordinary community members). Values of politeness, social responsibility, etiquette, and gender protection are clearly reflected in the formation and bodily gestures of the dancers (Tidha et al., 2024). These cultural values and movement mechanics provide the main foundation for designing local-wisdom-based physical education modules in elementary schools.

Integrating Ende-Lio dance into physical education is consistent with the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) framework and the direction of the Merdeka Curriculum policy, which emphasizes contextualizing learning materials according to the local wisdom of students' living environments (Bostwick et al., 2025; Hasan et al., 2025). Local-wisdom-based physical education (ethno-physical education) does not treat culture merely as a passive spectacle, but as the primary context in which motor learning takes place (Rawe et al., 2026). When elementary school students explore rhythmic movement through Gawi or Sangga Alu patterns, they are experiencing a process of embodied cultural internalization (Baskora Aji, 2020; Nofrizal et al., 2024). Although studies on integrating local wisdom and traditional games into physical education have been widely discussed, research specifically examining the pedagogical formulation of Ende-Lio dance as rhythmic movement content in elementary schools remains very limited. Studies that specifically explore how Ende-Lio dance is used as a physical education learning strategy in elementary schools, and how students experience and respond to this strategy during learning, are also limited. The literature on Ende-Lio dance has primarily positioned it within cultural anthropology, ethnomusicology, philosophy, and performing arts. This limitation indicates a research space for understanding not only the characteristics of dance as cultural heritage, but also the pedagogical process that occurs when culturally rooted movement is introduced into elementary physical education.

Recent studies indicate that the integration of local wisdom into physical education is receiving increasing attention, but the focus and orientation of this research still show several limitations. (Yoda et al., 2025), for example, developed a local-wisdom-based physical education learning model aimed at improving fundamental motor skills, character, gender equality, and inclusion. These findings demonstrate the potential of local wisdom as a pedagogical resource in physical education, but the approach was primarily oriented toward model development and effectiveness testing. Other studies on traditional games have shown that culturally based activities can improve student engagement, cooperation, discipline, sportsmanship, and appreciation of culture (Rawe et al., 2026). However, such studies predominantly use traditional games as forms of physical activity and therefore provide limited explanation of how traditional dance, with its movement structures, cultural symbols, and communal values, can be constructed as a learning experience in elementary physical education.

This gap becomes more apparent when the outcomes examined in the physical education literature are considered. Some contemporary studies continue to place strong emphasis on motor skills, fitness, coordination, and movement creativity. (Khorkova et al., 2025) for example, evaluated a Physical Education (PE) learning intervention among elementary school children primarily through indicators of motor creativity, motor fitness, hand-eye coordination, agility, and cardiorespiratory endurance. On the other hand, recent systematic reviews indicate that physical education also has potential to develop social and moral competencies

and that alignment with cultural contexts can increase program relevance. However, this evidence remains general across various forms of PE programs and does not specifically explain how particular cultural values are incorporated through students' movement experiences and interactions during physical education learning.

Based on these gaps, this study aimed to explore and describe how Ende-Lio dance is integrated as a physical education learning strategy in elementary schools and to understand the learning experiences formed through students' processes of observing, imitating, repeating, interacting, cooperating, and making meaning from movement within a local cultural context. This study is expected to provide empirical contributions to the development of physical education that is not only oriented toward movement skills, but also integrates cultural context, social experiences, and students' meaning-making regarding local cultural heritage (Timba et al., 2025).

METODE

This study employed a qualitative approach with a qualitative case study design (Creswell, 2013; Louis Cohen et al., 2005). This design was selected because the study sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Ende-Lio dance as a physical education learning strategy in the natural context of an elementary school. The study focused on exploring how the dance-based learning strategy was implemented, how students responded to the learning activities, and how interaction, cooperation, movement experiences, and cultural context emerged during the learning process.

The case examined was Ende Lio dance-based physical education learning among elementary school students. The local social and cultural context was an integral part of the case because the dance used in the learning process originated from the students' cultural environment. Accordingly, the learning phenomenon was understood holistically through the relationships among teacher strategy, movement activities, student responses, social interaction, and local cultural context. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis with the assistance of ATLAS.ti <https://atlasti.com/> (Williamson et al., 2025; Zairul, 2025). The analysis was directed at identifying codes, categories, themes, and relationships among themes emerging from interviews, observations, and documentation,

The study was conducted at Mokeasa Public Elementary School, Ende Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, from February to April 2026. The site was purposively selected because the school is situated within the social and cultural environment of the Ende-Lio community and provides a context in which physical education uses Ende-Lio dance as a source of movement activities. The research stages included preparation, data collection through observation and interviews, documentation of the learning process, data organization, and thematic analysis using ATLAS.ti. The participants were 30 fifth-grade students at Mokeasa Public Elementary School who participated in Ende-Lio dance-based physical education, while the main informant was the physical education teacher directly involved in implementing the learning. (Guise et al., 2023; Scattergood, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Thematic Analysis Results

Analysis of observation, interview, and documentation data using ATLAS.ti generated four main themes describing Ende-Lio dance-based physical education learning in elementary schools: (1) increased student engagement, (2) learning through imitation and repetition, (3) interaction and cooperation, and (4) learning becoming more engaging and contextual. The four themes were not independent, but demonstrated interconnected dimensions of motor, social, and cultural learning experiences. Structurally, the analysis

showed that the learning process began with the use of Ende-Lio dance as a local cultural context, which was then translated by the teacher into strategies involving demonstration, observation, imitation, repetition, and group practice. This process was associated with increased student engagement, interaction among students, and perceptions that learning became more engaging and closer to their cultural experiences. The network of themes, categories, and codes resulting from the ATLAS.ti analysis is presented in Figure 1.

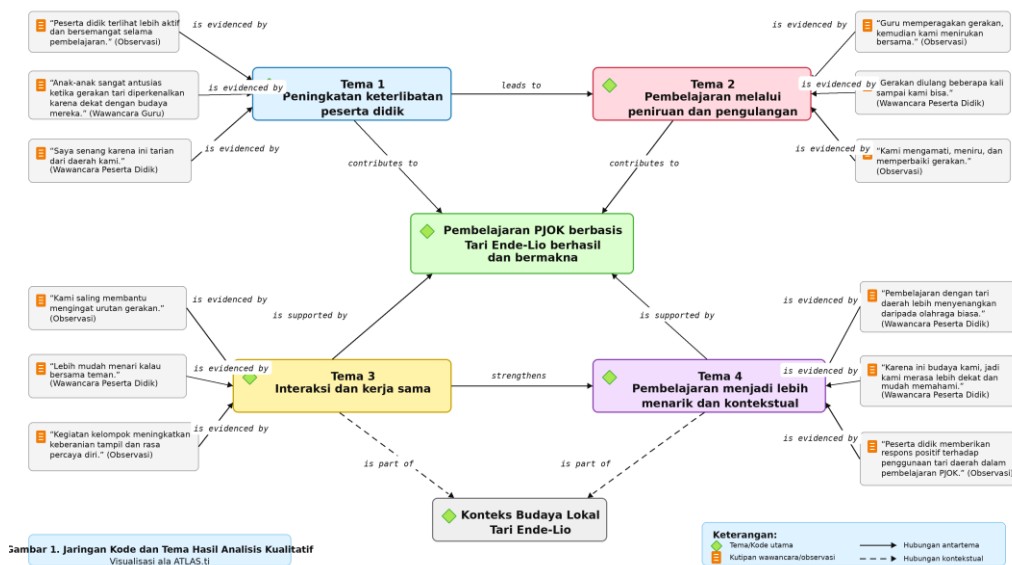


Figure 1. Thematic Analysis Results

Increased Student Engagement

The first theme shows that the use of Ende-Lio dance in physical education was associated with student engagement during the learning process. The categories forming this theme were interest and motivation, as well as active participation. The codes that emerged included interest in the dance, enthusiasm, enjoyment, motivation, willingness to try, active participation in following movements, and participation in activities.

Observations showed that students demonstrated more visible engagement when learning activities used dance movements originating from their cultural environment. Students did not merely follow the teacher's instructions, but also paid attention to the movements, attempted to imitate them, and participated in group practice. This engagement indicates that movement activities closely connected to students' cultural experiences can provide a more familiar entry point into physical education learning.

Learning Through Imitation and Repetition

The second theme concerned the process of learning movement through demonstration, observation, imitation, and repetition. The codes included teacher demonstration of movements, student observation, teacher explanation, use of tempo/rhythm, movement imitation, movement repetition, following movement sequences, following rhythm, and correcting movements. This theme generated 28 quotations, indicating that mastery of Ende-Lio dance in physical education relied strongly on gradual and repetitive motor learning strategies. During the learning process, the teacher demonstrated the movements as an initial

model, after which students observed and attempted to imitate them. Students then repeated the movements, followed the sequence and rhythm, and made corrections based on the teacher's guidance and feedback. The use of tempo and rhythm was also evident, particularly in helping students adjust movement timing and maintain coordination.

Interaction and Cooperation

The third theme shows that Ende-Lio dance-based physical education encouraged social interaction and cooperation. The categories included group cooperation, communication, and support, with codes such as group practice, helping one another, remembering movement sequences together, adjusting movements, performing together, communication among students, encouragement, peer support, and increased self-confidence.

This theme generated 24 quotations. Observations showed that dance learning did not occur individually, but involved collective activity. Students learned to adjust their movements to those of their peers, help classmates who were not yet able to follow the movements, remember movement sequences together, and build group cohesion.

Learning Becomes More Engaging and Contextual

The fourth theme shows that Ende-Lio dance-based physical education made learning feel more meaningful, engaging, and close to students' lives. The categories were local cultural context and meaningful learning experiences, with codes including familiar culture, closeness to students' lives, understanding of local culture, pride in regional dance, enjoyable learning, learning that was not monotonous, ease of understanding, new experiences, and more meaningful learning.

This theme generated 27 quotations. The findings show that students recognized Ende-Lio dance as part of their cultural environment. This familiarity made the learning activity less likely to be perceived as something entirely unfamiliar. Students also demonstrated understanding of local culture and pride in their regional dance.

Discussion

Increased Student Engagement

The finding regarding increased student engagement indicates that the use of Ende-Lio dance can create learning conditions that are more engaging and relevant to students. The closeness of the learning material to students' cultural experiences provides a familiar context, so movement activities are not understood merely as motor tasks but also as experiences connected to their lives.

This finding can be explained through the ARCS motivation model, consisting of Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction (Nikou, 2026). Ende-Lio dance attracts students' attention because its movement patterns differ from those commonly used in physical education; it is relevant because it is close to local culture; it builds confidence through gradual practice; and it provides satisfaction when students successfully follow the movements. Recent research on the ARCS model indicates that attention, relevance, and satisfaction are important predictors of student engagement. Enjoyable dance activities that are close to students' experiences make learning less monotonous, thereby encouraging students to engage physically and emotionally. This finding extends the understanding that engagement in physical education is shaped not only by the characteristics of physical activity, but also by the meaning and relevance of the activity for students.

Learning Through Imitation and Repetition

This finding is consistent with the principles of Bandura's Social Learning Theory, in which students learn by observing a model, retaining representations of movements, imitating actions, and then improving them through practice (Biyikoglu Alkan & Cavusoglu, 2024; Ge, 2025). In the context of physical education, teacher demonstration serves as the primary source for forming an initial movement representation. Students then imitate, repeat, and improve movements based on teacher guidance and feedback during the learning process.

Empirical support for the importance of feedback in motor skill learning is also evident in a recent meta-analysis in physical education. Han, Zhang, Ji, and Syed Ali found that feedback significantly improves students' motor skill acquisition in physical education, for both simple and complex skills (Han et al., 2025). In the context of Ende-Lio dance, teacher feedback helps students correct movement errors, adjust tempo, and understand movement sequences more accurately. The use of tempo and rhythm in dance learning supports movement coordination. Rhythm helps students regulate movement timing, maintain group cohesion, and develop body awareness. Learning through demonstration and repetition therefore not only improves dancing ability but also develops students' coordination, concentration, and motor control.

Interaction and Cooperation

Findings regarding group practice, mutual assistance, communication, support, and movement adjustment indicate that Ende-Lio dance-based learning creates a strong space for social interaction. Students do not only attempt to master movements individually, but must also adjust their movements to those of group members.

This condition reflects characteristics of cooperative learning, particularly positive interdependence, shared responsibility, direct interaction, and social skills. The success of a group performance does not depend solely on one student's ability, but on the ability of group members to cooperate and maintain cohesion.

A bibliometric study of cooperative learning in physical education indicates that this approach contributes to increased student participation, motivation, social skills, and responsibility in physical education learning (Ngoc Tuong Nguyen & Thi Kim Oanh, 2025). Another study also confirms a strong relationship between cooperative learning and student engagement, particularly because of group interaction, shared tasks, and social support (Zhou et al., 2023). Thus, traditional dance-based physical education not only develops physical skills but also fosters social attitudes such as empathy, responsibility, communication, and solidarity.

Ende-Lio Dance as Contextual Physical Education Learning

The finding that students perceived the learning as engaging, familiar, enjoyable, and meaningful demonstrates the importance of cultural context in physical education. Ende-Lio dance is part of students' cultural environment, allowing learning materials to be connected with experiences they already know. This finding can be explained through the culturally responsive pedagogy approach, which recognizes, values, and utilizes students' cultural backgrounds as learning resources. As local cultural heritage, Ende-Lio dance is closely connected to students' identities, so physical education material is not perceived as something foreign but as part of their social and cultural lives.

Global research on intercultural and indigenous dance education indicates that dance education plays an important role in strengthening cultural identity, preserving cultural heritage, and developing culturally responsive learning (Liu et al., 2024). Research on culturally grounded dance interventions also indicates that culturally relevant dance practices can improve participation, fitness, cultural expression, and student engagement in physical education (Jesus, 2025). A study of local-wisdom-based sports literacy

indicates that integrating local games, movement, and cultural practices into physical education can increase students' physical engagement while strengthening their cultural identity (Emayanti et al., 2025).

Ende-Lio dance functions as a contextual learning medium because it provides learning medium because it provides learning experiences that are close to students' environments. Learning becomes easier to understand because students do not merely learn the movements, but also understand the cultural meanings behind them. Pride in regional dance also indicates that physical education can become a strategic space for preserving local culture.

Implication Research

The findings of this study have theoretical, pedagogical, and curricular implications for the development of Physical Education, Sports, and Health (PJOK) learning in elementary schools. Theoretically, this study extends the understanding that physical education is not merely a process of developing motor skills and physical fitness, but can also be a learning experience integrating social and cultural dimensions. The use of Ende-Lio dance shows that movement activities can function as pedagogical resources that enable students to learn through cultural experiences close to their lives. Findings concerning student engagement, observing and imitating movements, repeating and improving movements, and interacting and cooperating in groups indicate that movement learning occurs within social and cultural contexts rather than as physical activity separated from students' experiences. Thus, this study provides a conceptual basis for a more holistic understanding of physical education, connecting movement competence with student engagement, social interaction, and meaning-making regarding local culture.

Pedagogically, the findings imply that traditional dance can be positioned as a structured learning resource in physical education, rather than merely as a performance activity or an additional cultural topic. Teachers can integrate demonstration, observation, imitation, repetition, feedback, and collaborative practice into Ende-Lio dance-based movement learning. This pattern enables students to develop movement skills while also creating opportunities to communicate, help one another, cooperate, support peers, and build self-confidence. The findings indicate that when movement activities are closely connected to students' cultural experiences, learning can become more engaging, familiar, and meaningful. Therefore, the pedagogical implication is that teachers should view local culture not merely as additional context, but as a source of learning experiences that can be directly integrated into the achievement of physical education learning objectives.

At the curricular level, this study indicates that local intangible cultural heritage has the potential to become a learning resource for contextualizing physical education in elementary schools. Ende-Lio dance has movement characteristics that can be linked to rhythmic movement learning objectives, while its social structure and cultural meanings provide opportunities to connect physical activity with students' social and cultural experiences. This implies that the development of culturally based physical education can be directed toward integrating movement, culture, and learning experiences, so that students not only learn how to perform a movement but also understand the cultural context underlying it. In this context, physical education can contribute to introducing, appreciating, and sustaining local cultural knowledge without compromising the primary objectives of physical education.

For future research, these findings provide an empirical basis for developing and testing physical education learning models that systematically utilize local movement heritage as a pedagogical resource. Because this study focused on exploring learning strategies and students' experiences, subsequent research can develop these findings into learning models or instructional materials and then test them using quantitative, experimental, or mixed-methods designs. Further testing can examine the extent to which Ende-Lio dance-

based learning contributes to motor skills, student engagement, social-emotional abilities, cultural awareness, and other physical education learning outcomes. Comparative research in other cultural contexts is also needed to determine whether the pedagogical mechanisms identified in the Ende-Lio context can be applied or adapted to different cultural environments. Thus, this study does not claim the experimental effectiveness of Ende-Lio dance, but provides an empirical and conceptual foundation for developing physical education that is more contextual, culturally responsive, and holistic.

Limitation Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The study was conducted within an elementary school and the Ende-Lio cultural context, so the findings cannot be directly generalized to different cultural contexts and school characteristics. In addition, the study focused on exploring the learning process and students' experiences and therefore did not quantitatively test the effectiveness of Ende-Lio dance on motor, social, or character outcomes. Future research should involve more diverse contexts and use quantitative or mixed-methods designs.

Recommendation Research

Future research is recommended to develop these findings into a more structured Ende-Lio dance-based physical education learning model and to test its effectiveness through quantitative or mixed-methods approaches. Such testing could examine motor skills, student engagement, social-emotional development, and character, and could be conducted across more diverse school and cultural contexts to provide stronger evidence regarding the broader applicability of the model.

CONCLUSION

Based on the thematic analysis, Ende-Lio dance-based physical education can serve as an active, contextual, and meaningful learning strategy that integrates the development of movement skills, student engagement, cooperation, communication, and appreciation of local culture. The use of Ende-Lio dance through demonstration, imitation, repetition, and group practice encourages students to become more enthusiastic and active while creating learning experiences that are close to their lives and cultural identities. Although its implementation requires teacher readiness, sufficient time, and support tailored to students' abilities, Ende-Lio dance has potential as a local-wisdom-based physical education learning resource that integrates motor, social, affective, and cultural dimensions.

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