# Factors Affecting Job Expectation and Job Satisfaction among Academic Professionals in A Private Institution of Higher Learning in Selangor

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#### ABSTRACT

A higher learning institution's success is defined by the performance of its leadership, employees and the quality of service produced. Thinking and acting strategically about human resource is one of the core functions of human resource management. Therefore, the aim of this exploratory study is to investigate the factors affecting job expectation and job satisfaction among academic professionals in a private institution of higher learning. The results indicated that the private institution of higher learning needs to give attention to both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors to motivate and influence new academic staff from a state of uncertainty to that of job satisfaction so as to retain existing academic staff and make the profession an attractive option for new applicants. Therefore, private institutions of higher learning should take necessary steps to not only increase the satisfaction level of academic professionals but also to maintain it.

**Keywords:** Recruitment and selection, Job expectation, Job satisfaction, Human resource management.

# INTRODUCTION

A higher learning institution's success is defined by the performance of its leadership, employees and the quality of service produced. Thinking and acting strategically about human resource is one of the core functions of the management. The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 raised the bar of recruiting educators to the top 30% of the graduates to ensure a quality learning process (MOE, 2015). In the future, only the best candidates will be recruited as academic professionals. Increasing opportunities and the challenges in the 21st century has created the need for academic professionals who are able to manage the challenges of globalization. The Human Resource Department and Administrator of private higher learning institution need to function efficiently and understand the nature of the academic professionals. Therefore, academic professionals should not be treated as mere resources but as contributing members, thus developing human relations is crucial as it successfully supports the achievement of the higher learning institution's objectives.

Academic professionals are the key stakeholders in any institution of higher learning and their job satisfaction is crucial in producing high quality learners. Job satisfaction is defined as an employee's effective orientation to his or her work (Saari & Judge, 2004). In addition, job satisfaction is crucial in the functioning of organisations, which includes performance, absenteeism, turnover of staff and other aspects (Antony & Elangkumaran, 2014). The general purpose of this study is to study the factors affecting job expectation and job satisfaction among academic professionals in a private institution of higher learning. The objectives of this study are to identify the recruitment process of academic professionals and their performance, to investigate underlying issues on academic professionals' retention, to investigate the job expectations and job satisfaction of the academic professionals and to identify strategies implemented by the institution to strengthen the performance of new academic professionals. Therefore, this study will address the following research questions:

- 1. How are the recruitment and performance of new academic professionals?
- 2. What are the underlying issues faced on academic professionals' retention?

- 3. What are the job expectation and job satisfaction of the academic professionals?
- 4. What are the strategies implemented to strengthen the performance of new academic professionals?

#### **METHODS**

This study aims to study the factors affecting job expectation and job satisfaction among academic professionals in a private institution of higher learning. This study used the interpretivist research paradigm, which uses the case study method in the qualitative research methodology. Lichtman (2012) defined qualitative research as a way of collecting and interpreting information which is gathered through observations and interviews in natural settings. The research conducted is exploratory and qualitative in nature, based on principles associated with the case study method. The case study method is used in this research as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the people or the context that is being studied (Mukherji & Albon, 2015).

The data will be collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with three academic professionals with 2, 5 and 10 years of experience in teaching at the private institution of higher learning. The participants will be referred to as Academic A (10 years' teaching experience), Academic B (5 years' teaching experience) and Academic C (2 years' teaching experience). The semi-structured interview consists of a mixture of more and less structured questions which allows the researcher to be more flexible in the interview and respond to the situation accordingly to the respondents (Merriam, 2009). As the interview progresses, the participants will be given an opportunity to elaborate on their responses. Interviews are a valuable method of data collection because they encapsulate the real-life responses of participants (McNiff, 2013). Moreover, each interview will be conducted for 30 to 45 minutes and tape-recorded to provide the researcher the opportunity to go back over the responses during data analysis. In depth qualitative interviewing is a face-to-face encounter between the researcher and informant directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words. As Seidman (2013: 9) noted, "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience."

The study will use a questionnaire to investigate the three participants' perceptions and provide the participants with an opportunity to express their experience on job expectation and job satisfaction. The questionnaire consists of 10 open-ended questions, however, questions will be expanded based on the participant's responses. According to Creswell (2013), in qualitative research the researcher becomes a key instrument in the research process and does not rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers. The researcher will select the participants using the purposive sampling method to achieve the objectives of this study. A good qualitative researcher engages in purposive sampling to deliberately select participants that fit the parameters of the study's questions and goals (Tracy, 2013). Creswell (2013) recommended selecting participants who can provide information about the phenomenon being studied.

#### RESULTS

#### Recruitment and Selection of Academic Professionals

One of the research questions addressed the recruitment and selection process of new academic professionals at the private institution of higher learning. Academic A explained that the candidates are shortlisted by the Human Resource Department and the Programme Leader and Head of Faculty conducts the interview which includes a mock lecture. She further added that candidates who met the requirements will then be selected for the position. However, Academics B and C stated that the new candidates are selected based on needs, recommendations and requested salary. When asked whether this private institution of higher learning selected the best candidate for the position, Academic A mentioned that it is difficult to determine this and further stated that, "The first impression does not tell much, especially on personality. So, after some time then we can gauge if the candidate is suitable." This is true as it is not easy to determine the appropriateness of a candidate without working with them on a daily basis. Furthermore, Academic B stated that the candidate is usually selected when they meet the requirements or expectations of the Management. At this private institution of higher learning, the Human Resource Manager usually attends the interview sessions as a representative of the Management. However, Academic C explained that there is no such thing as the 'best candidate' and provided an interesting answer by stating that, "Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. The college needs to select the most suitable for the job requirement."

Moreover, the participants were asked whether the training institutions trained the academic staff effectively. Both Academics B and C stated that they are not sure and it depends on the training institutions and that academic staff come with teaching experiences. However, Academic A disagreed that the training institutions trained the academic staff effectively and stated that, "Training is conducted by the institution itself, sometimes academic staff are sent for external trainings, conferences, workshops and forums as professional development." The requirement for a teaching position at this private institution of higher learning is a Bachelor's degree for diploma courses and a Master's degree for degree courses from a recognized university. In addition, the Degree must commensurate with the discipline(s) they are required to teach and some experience in lecturing. The candidates are also required to present a mock lecture on a topic given earlier in a real classroom setting with current students.

#### Performance of Academic Professionals

The three participants were further interviewed on the performance of new academic staff at the private institution of higher learning. One of the questions asked was on the preparation and quality of academic staff for the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom. According to the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, international research shows that the quality of educators is a crucial school-based factor which influences student outcomes, and the quality of a system cannot exceed the quality of its educators (MOE, 2015). Likewise, according to Santos (2012), changing the structure of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education system will help schools better meet the needs of learners, increase learner's academic achievement, and equip them with the essential skills.

According to Academic A, new academic staff are prepared for teaching as they are provided internal and external trainings and

brainstorming sessions. She further added that, "All academic staff needs to fulfil 40 hours of training per year. Head of Departments usually inform HR department on the type of trainings needed by the new academic staff based on observations and also their request." In addition, Academic B agreed that HR Policy stated that 40 hours of training is required, and HR usually plan compulsory training topics for the academic staff to attend. Furthermore, Academic C agreed that new academic staff are prepared for the 21st century classroom as they are sent for trainings and workshops like using Flipped Classroom, and other innovative online teaching and learning methods. Similarly, Academic B also stated that new academic staff are prepared for the 21st century classroom, "If they have been to more updated training sessions like Flipped Classroom or educational technology, and etc." When asked whether the quality of the new academic staff improved over the years, all three participants stated that the quality is at satisfactory level and improved to some extent. Academic A stated that, "With a number of training and stringent recruitment process, there is a lot of improvement." Furthermore, Academic B stated that the quality of new academic staff can be maintained, "If they are recruited with experience and good source of knowledge."

In addition, the three participants were asked on the performance of new academic staff in their respective Faculties. Academic A confirmed that to date, there are no issues with the academic staff and further added that, "The evaluation from the students is good and majority obtained good scores." When asked on the academic staff who do not obtain good scores, she explained that they would be sent for additional training in areas that require improvement or enhancement. Both Academics B and C had different opinions on the same question as Academic B stated that it will take at least 6 months for new academic staff to adapt, while Academic C stated that new academic staff will perform well if the faculty supported their needs.

When looking at performance of the academic staff, the institution of higher learning develops academic staff with a career pathway by recognizing their abilities, skills and competencies. The goal is to provide them with an opportunity to make vigilant efforts to discover their own skills and competencies. In addition, the career pathway is designed as an incentive for academic staff based on specific criteria and standards after taking into consideration of their capabilities. The general criteria to qualify

for progression to the next level are qualification, teaching experience, teaching certificate, subject leader, student evaluation, and performance evaluation. At this institution of higher learning, the Head of Department will recommend their academic staff for promotion.

Furthermore, academic staff are appraised based on their performance in teaching and learning and also their contribution to the institution of higher learning. The academic staff are also evaluated through an evaluation form filled by students online at the end of each semester. Distribution of duties and responsibilities among academic staff is under the Human Resource Department who will ensure that all staff have equal responsibilities. Distribution of rewards will be based on performance. In addition, there are career advancement opportunities for academic staff based on an annual performance review conducted at the end of each year to evaluate employees' performance. Moreover, students' feedback through the evaluation process will be studied and improvements implemented where appropriate. Comments from partner universities, moderators, and examiners are also taken into account and implemented if found necessary.

Finally, the participants were asked to share on the strategies to strengthen performance of new academic staff in this institution of higher learning. Academic A stated that, "More relevant training and dialogue sessions with the Management will help the new academic staff to cope better." This is similar to the opinions of Academic B who stated that new academic staff need to be given proper training and time to adapt to the culture of the institution. However, according to Academic C, the strategies are, "Listen to them and understand where they are coming from, and challenge them when needed."

# **Job Expectation of Academic Professionals**

The participants were further interviewed on the job expectation of new academic staff at this institution of higher learning. One of the questions asked was on the new academic staff knowledge on their roles and responsibilities. According to Academic A, the new academic staff are briefed on the first day of work by the Human Resource Manager on the job description, policies and procedures of the institution. She further stated that new academic staff will also attend an induction for new staff,

which was also agreed by the other participants. However, Academic B explained that, "The new academic staff are made aware of their roles and responsibilities through the guidance of the senior academic staff." This also confirms the senior academic staff role on mentoring new academic staff is a requirement at this institution. The views above are in line with the institution's policies, whereby all new staff undergoes an 8-hour orientation or induction programme over two days. Following this, academic staff will need to attend training on pedagogical skills, curriculum and instructional design, and assessment which includes setting and moderating examination questions. These trainings are held at least once a year and made compulsory for the academic staff.

In addition, the participants were asked on the job expectation of the new academic staff in this institution of higher learning. Academic A explained that some of the expectations on the new academic staff are to maintain high passing rate, good learning process, pastoral care for students, and meet all deadlines set by the Management. Academic B stated that new academic staff need to fulfil the teaching load set by the Management and keep the company's vision and mission in mind while delivering lectures. However, Academic C stated that new academic staff need to, "function to the requirements of an academic staff and at times to try new things so as to challenge their abilities."

#### **Job Satisfaction of Academic Professionals**

Job satisfaction is an important indicator of how employees perceive their jobs and a predictor of work performance such as organizational citizenship, absenteeism and turnover (Mustapha, 2013). The participants were asked whether the new academic staff are happy and satisfied with their job. Academic A stated that, "They are usually enthusiastic and try to get along with the team." Similarly, Academic B also mentioned that new academic staff are definitely happy with their job as they are not stressed by the institution. When asked why the new academic staff are not stressed by the company, she stated that, "Because the college expects more from senior academic staff." However, Academic C felt that happiness and satisfaction are not always measurable.

Moreover, the participants were asked to share on the major problems or issues faced by new academic staff in this institution of higher learning. Academic A stated that new academic staff have to follow the standard operation procedures, but they require a longer time to understand the policies and procedures of the institution. Academic B explained that the new academic staff are loaded with a heavy teaching load without the opportunity to adapt to the institutions culture. Academic C also cited similar issues, for instance lack of support and a heavy teaching load as everything is new to the academic staff. She further added that, "There is a need to balance administrative and non-academic duties as at times academic staff are given too much administrative job but the teaching load remains the same. So, it's difficult to juggle between the roles."

The participants were further asked on the job turnover of the academic staff in this institution of higher learning. All three participants agreed that it is at a satisfactory level. Academic A stated that a number of academic staff work more than five years in this institution. This indicated that they are satisfied with their working life at this institution. Nevertheless, Academic B stated that, "We do lose one or two academic staff due to them pursuing higher studies or move to another institution for better pay." Similarly, Academic C agreed with the above opinion and stated that, "New academic staff have little ability to sustain at one place, and prefer to move to greener pastures."

Furthermore, when asked on how the academic staff can be retained in this institution, the participants provided interesting responses. Academic A felt that recognition from the Management and working relationship with peers are important ways to retain new academic staff, which is similar to the views of Academic B. Moreover, Academic C stated that, "Giving flexible working hours and allowance to do their higher studies," could retain new academic staff. Moreover, Academic C added that there should be a balance between the financial aspects with the humanistic aspect to retain academic staff. She further added that, "Understanding how people can contribute, challenging those who need to be challenged, and removing the slackers" are also ways to retain new academic staff.

# **DISCUSSION**

Human resource management includes the recruitment, selection, welfare, maintenance, training and retraining, placement, promotion, motivation relationship, compensation or rewards, transfer and discipline of staff (Omebe, 2014). In addition, human resource management in education is set of practices and methods of integrating and maintaining the academic professionals in any learning institution. The functions of human resource management in education include staff maintenance, staff relations, staff development, procurement of staff and job performance reward. This section will highlight main aspects from the findings from the participants' perceptions on recruitment and selection of new academic professionals, performance of new academic professionals. The future success of any organization depends on the capability to manage staff that can bring innovative ideas and views to their work (Srivastava & Agarwal, 2012).

One of the main aspects of human resource management on recruitment and selection involves searching for a qualified candidate to fill the vacant position. The ultimate goal of the selection is usually choosing the best person for the job (Yaseen, 2015). Moreover, the selection of staff in education deals with obtaining individuals with appropriate and necessary skills, abilities, knowledge and experience to fill the vacant teaching posts (Omebe, 2014). The findings from this research showed that the Human Resource Department shortlists appropriate candidates and the Head of Department will conduct the interview which includes a mock lecture in a real classroom setting with current students. The candidates who met the requirements will then be selected for the position. According to Mercer, Barker and Bird (2010), potential staff might be asked to teach a demonstration lecture or present a teaching portfolio, but conventional interviews still carry the most weight.

The findings also showed that it is difficult to determine if the best candidate for the position is chosen until the candidate works for a certain amount of time. Selecting the most dynamic candidate according to the requirements of the job vacancy can be done by evaluating the candidates with several tools or measures and making a rational choice followed by an offer of employment (Yaseen, 2015). However, the participants in this

study explained that all academic staff have their strengths and weaknesses, therefore, the institution of higher learning needs to select the most suitable for the job requirement. Yaseen (2015) further added that organizations should focus more on qualified as well as experienced candidates.

In addition, staff performance significantly contributes to student satisfaction which in turn affects the university image and student loyalty (Helgesen & Nesset, 2007). The participants in this study were interviewed on their perceptions on the performance of the academic staff in preparation and quality of educators for the 21st century classroom. The findings showed that academic staff are prepared for teaching as they are provided internal and external trainings on updated approaches and skills in preparation for the 21st century classroom. The Learning and Development Department of the institution has structured internal and external training programmes for the academic staff. Industry experts are also invited to conduct trainings. Heads of Departments will identify the academic staff to attend the trainings according to the training needs of each staff. According to Fullan and Hargreaves (2016), change in the school culture includes continuous improvement of professional practice, and the development of innovative practice. In Malaysia, there is a major drive to transform education and improve educational performance. The professional development should be differentiated to take account of an educator's personality, present motivation, job description, school conditions and profession phase (Mercer, Barker & Bird, 2010).

In addition, the findings showed that continuous professional development among academic staff is highly encouraged and enhanced with compulsory training on updated approaches in teaching and learning. According to Harris (2015), there is a need to focus on improving teaching and learning as it is the main driver in improving student success. For example, changes in pedagogy or teaching approaches such as Outcome Based Education and Flipped Classroom trainings were organized in the institution within the year 2016, to equip academic staff with the knowledge and strategies in implementing these changes. These changes are essential as Fullan (2011) found that current pedagogies do not meet the criteria for whole system change as education practices for most students are mind-numbing (low engagement), unfulfilling for the effort (low yield), and inclined toward low-level skills (lower order skills). Moreover, many

educators and learning institutions have engaged learners in cooperative learning, inclusive education, interdisciplinary learning, problem-based and project-based learning (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016). Therefore, innovative teaching and learning may possibly contribute to successful system improvement in education, and positively impact 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom.

Moreover, this study found that academic staff performance is determined by the evaluation from the students, and the staff who receive lower scores would be sent for additional training in areas that require improvement or enhancement. The institution of higher learning conducts an online academic staff evaluation at the last few weeks of the semester with no intervention from the staff. A research by Samian and Noor (2012) on academic staff performance assessment found that to be an excellent academic staff (or otherwise), ability to deliver lecture effectively played a significant role compared to other performance criteria. According to Foon and Fah (2012), knowing the predictors of overall academic staff performance would help the academic staff and university identify the specific areas for improving their performance.

The findings on the job expectation showed that the academic staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities through a briefing on the first day by the Human Resource Department on job description, policies and procedures of the institution. Furthermore, the findings showed that new academic staff will attend an induction organised for new staff. After potential employees' final selection is completed, next step is induction and probation is the last step of the recruitment and selection (Yaseen, 2015). However, induction programmes must provide rigorous professional development for new academic staff as usually first year staff are often left in isolation to work through the challenges in their own teaching (Wong, 2004).

However, one of the participants explained that new academic staff are made aware of their job expectation through the guidance of the senior academic staff. According to Mercer, Barker and Bird (2010) beginning educators require both professional and organizational socialization as they need to develop their identity as an educator. Induction should preferably emphasise on subject-specific pedagogy and involve a mentor in the same field. The mentor should receive specific training for the role, and both mentor and mentee should have sufficient time for mentoring (Mercer,

Barker & Bird, 2010). A research by Bilimoria *et al.* (2006) on mentoring processes and job satisfaction found that faculty members believe that leadership and mentoring influence their job satisfaction through the mediating processes of internal academic resources and internal relational supports.

Furthermore, job satisfaction is important for organizational functioning, which refers specifically to performance, absenteeism, staff turnover and other work outcomes. The participants in this study perceived that the new academic staff were happy and satisfied with their job as they showed enthusiasm, team work, and were not stressed by the Management. However, these findings are based on the general observations of the participants interviewed and not the new academic staff themselves. A research on job satisfaction in Sri Lanka by Antony and Elangkumaran (2014) found that recognition and work itself are strong significant positive predictors of job satisfaction of academic staff. A survey by Hooda and Singh (2014) found that job satisfaction among the faculty members is influenced by three variables such as leadership behaviour of their heads, rewards received for the work, and the working environment of the institution.

The issues raised by the participants in this study were that new academic staff required a longer time to understand the policies and procedures of the institution, allocated a heavy teaching load without an opportunity to adapt to the company's culture, and lack of support from the Management. Similarly, the results of the study by Chimanikire et al. (2007) showed that the academic staff were not satisfied with their jobs due to high volume of work, inadequate salaries, and allowances. Moreover, according to Hong et al. (2012), to increase job satisfaction, the Management need to improve the work environment, enhance participation in decision making, nurture an intellectual environment, and improve clarity of institutional mission. The findings of the study by Hong et al. (2012) are similar to some of the findings in this study. Likewise, findings from the research by Ahmad and Abdurahman (2015) showed that the majority of the participants have a moderate level of job satisfaction on aspects such as staff relationships, career development, scope of work, and salary. These academic staff perceived the environment of the university and job conditions as pleasurable, and their job as happy.

In addition, the participants in a study on job satisfaction in a public tertiary institution in Singapore indicated satisfaction over interpersonal relationships with learners and co-workers, the independence and flexibility of the job, and dissatisfaction on the amount of administrative and nonacademic task, heavy workload, income, presence of 'red tape' and other company procedures (Paul & Phua, 2011). This is in line with another important finding from this study which is the need to balance between administrative and non-academic duties, as at times academic staff are given too many administrative jobs but the teaching load remains the same. Therefore, the Management need to monitor the amount of administrative and non-academic duties given to academic staff, and ensure that these are not excessive. Furthermore, the participants in the current study mentioned that the job turnover of academic staff is at a satisfactory level, which could indirectly indicate a positive job satisfaction. Therefore, both Management and academic staff should play an active role in managing workloads through advocacy for needed changes to institutional practice, and programme delivery patterns (Houston, Meyer & Paewai, 2006).

Job satisfaction is an important aspect in retaining academic staff in any educational institution. The findings of this study on strategies to retain academic staff found that the staff should receive recognition and support from the Management, have positive teamwork with peers, given flexible working hours and allowance to complete higher studies. Similarly, Pavan and Reddy (2016) found that Human Resource practices such as training, performance appraisal, teamwork, employee involvement and compensation need to be maintained in order to achieve high level of job satisfaction. However, the findings from this study showed that flexible working hours is not practiced as academic staff need to fulfil 18 to 20 hours of teaching load per week. According to Chimanikire et al. (2007), there is a need to provide a responsive incentive package that addresses the concerns of academic staff on issues related to job satisfaction and thus avoids staff turnover. Moreover, features of the job should fulfil the demands of the faculty and the faculty members should be satisfied with their job (Hooda & Singh, 2014).

Furthermore, there is career advancement opportunities for academic staff based on an annual performance review conducted at the end of each year. According to Hooda and Singh (2014), rewards need to be designed

properly for the faculty members as rewards have a remarkable impact on the job satisfaction. In the education sector, on the occasion of educator's day, faculty members may be given appreciation certificates, awards, and increments in salary, or gifts on the occasion of festivals. In addition, the findings also showed that there should be a balance between the financial aspects with the humanistic aspect to retain academic staff. Generally, people who go into teaching are motivated more by intrinsic factors, such as job satisfaction and a desire to share their knowledge, than by extrinsic factors, such as income or position (Gorard et al. 2006 as cited in Mercer, Barker & Bird, 2010). However, there is evidence which suggests that higher income encourages graduates with higher qualifications to consider teaching as a profession, and encourage educators with more than five years' experience to stay on (Borman & Dowling, 2008 as cited in Mercer, Barker & Bird, 2010). In addition, to retain academic staff, Human Resource personnel need to motivate them with monetary and non-monetary methods such as employing proper performance evaluation system and career advancement strategies (Srivastava & Agarwal, 2012).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study answered the research questions and have practical implications for the management of the tertiary institution. The perceptions of the participants in this study provided insights into job expectation and job satisfaction of the new academic staff in their respective faculty and provided important strategies to retain them. Ellili-Cherif and Romanowski (2013) stated that ignoring academic staff perceptions and contribution is problematic as it delays education improvement and creates conflict in some staff. Job satisfaction is important to explore as it plays a crucial role for the employee's commitment and performance. The employee who experiences a high level of job satisfaction may decide to remain in the organization, as long as their needs are met. Therefore, educational institutions should take necessary steps to not only increase the satisfaction level of academic staff but also to maintain it.

Moreover, career prospects are also required to uplift both, the organization and the faculty members, therefore they should be supported to attend internal and external trainings, seminars, and conferences. According

to the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, school-based training has proven to be the most effective form of continuous professional development as it employs educator coaches, senior educators, and principals to disseminate best practices. The training will allow teachers to continuously build their skill levels against each of the competencies expected of an educator (MOE, 2015). Therefore, ongoing professional development raises academic staff quality and allows them to maintain and enhance their skill set, including being updated with the latest developments in pedagogy.

The present study indicates that the tertiary institution needs to give attention to both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors to motivate and influence the academic staff from a state of uncertainty to that of job satisfaction so as to retain existing academic staff and make the profession an attractive option for new applicants. In addition, an institution of higher learning should recognize the crucial role of Human Resource in employee's selection and recruitment.

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