

Introduction

Hip-hop has contributed to social change by becoming a voice to articulate life's intricacies, particularly within marginalised groups (Travis & Bowman, 2017). It has served as a force for social critique and cultural discourse, reflecting the socio-political worlds and hopes of its authors and listeners. Hip-hop goes far beyond music in shaping identity, socialisation, and cultural acceptance (Fadil, 2022). Nigerian hip-hop music is a rich expression of the interplay between language, identity, and urban youth subculture. This genre is a significant cultural construct that mirrors and defines the Nigerian urban young generation through distinct linguistic tactics and cultural styles (Gbogi, 2016). Nigerian hip-hop producers play with language through wordplay, puns, and double entendres to create a subculture that reflects the youth's experiences and dreams. These words not only make the music sound more appealing but also allow multiple identities to be constructed in the subculture of urban youth (Muhammed, 2023).

Linguistic studies of Nigerian hip-hop songs reveal a depth of cultural variation in slang, code-switching, and theme-based expression, allowing Nigerian musicians to address pressing social issues, engage with international trends, and express local identities (Sam & Ordu, 2023). Nigerian hip-hop language is both an art form and an instrument of cultural comment and social activism. The ways Nigerian hip-hop and rap artists alter language are complex, which reflects Nigeria's sociolinguistic diversity. They use these tactics to promote self-identity, culture, and social commentary and to appeal to different audiences (Agbo, 2009). Nigerian hip-hop artists combine all these linguistic strategies to craft a sound that resonates both at home and abroad.

In this study, we examine Eedris Abdulkareem as a social activist and the rhetorical devices weaponised in his music to express sociopolitical concerns. The lyrics of Eedris Abdulkareem are powerful and have social commentary. Eedris uses music to speak up and demand changes in Nigerian society. Corruption, poverty, inequality, and his desperate intentions frequently feature in his lyrics (Afo, 2014). On the musical side, Abdulkareem's songs are influenced by Afrobeat, an underground genre invented by Nigerian musician Fela Kuti. This is a style that blends African traditional rhythms with contemporary sound to create a fresh, energetic sound. The percussion and choruses are a key feature of his songs, which often combine hip-hop and reggae with Afrobeat (Ohunyon, 2024). Abdulkareem's lyrics also serve as social commentary, making you think about the challenges faced by a typical Nigerian. The artist uses his music to raise awareness, promote activism, and drive change. His songs are the instrument through which the voiceless and oppressed are heard, their struggles heard. The current study delves into rhetorical patterns that characterise Eedris Abdulkareem's selected songs and shows how these patterns foreground the voice of social advocacy.

Literature Review

An avalanche of studies have attempted the linguistic exploration of popular music (see Adedeji, 2010; Motschenbacher, 2016; Squires, 2019; Lin & Chan, 2022; Rasuh et al., 2024), particularly Nigerian hip-hop music (Temitope & Filani, 2014; Gbogi, 2016; Bamgbose, 2019; Sam & Ordu, 2023; Adeyemo et al., 2024). Temitope and Filani (2014) report that Nigerian rappers are careful not to use pronouns for the sake of individualism and character as well as competitiveness and animosity in the industry. First-person pronouns like "I" and possessive phrases like "my" and "mine" emphasise individuality, while second- or third-person pronouns

like "You," "they," and "them" mark a boundary in competition. The study also notes that pronouns foster fan solidarity and collectiveness, as we use inclusive pronouns such as "we" and "our" to connect performers with fans. This dual purpose of pronouns serves not only to make a message cohesive but also to express pragmatic content related to social and competitive issues in Nigerian hip hop.

Gbogi (2016) observes that Nigerian hip-hop music is rich in intricate linguistic tricks, including indirection, ambiguity, and language mixing, that artists can use to create multiple identities and indicate a glocal orientation. The study emphasises how, by using linguistic cues classified under "signifying", "slangifying", "double meaning", and "pronominals and ghetto naming", Nigerian hip hop helps inculcate sub-identities and a new subculture among urban youth. Bamgbose (2019) points out humorous devices that Nigerian hip-hop performers have used, such as metaphor, hyperbole, deception, teasing, put-downs, litotes, polysemy, and repetition, to titillate the audience. It discovers that the hilarious statements in the chosen hip-hop songs are name-induced or object/phenomenon-induced, involving comparisons, contrasts, and extensions of ideas, as well as the distortion of knowledge and control over collective cultural images, all of which appeal to listeners familiar with the artists' socio-cultural history. The study avers that Nigerian hip-hop is a comedy beyond the beat and words, with rappers consciously manipulating language to incite humour. These manipulations include comparisons, contrasts, and extensions of ideas, as well as distortions of collective understanding and cultural portrayals, understood only by the audience who share a socio-cultural identity with the artists.

According to Babalola (2023), Nigerian hip-hop music is an instrument for sensitising and illuminating the connections and relationalities between African and African diasporic peoples, and the importance of such intimacies and expressions for the construction of cultural production beyond the normative concepts of origin or authenticity. The study emphasises the presence of Black politics in popular music by suggesting that the intimacies and language of Nigerian hip-hop offer new models for thinking about race, redefining the genre as an expressive language rather than a singular or domestic cultural phenomenon. Sam and Ordu (2023) find that slang terms and phrases in Nigerian hip-hop songs serve many functions, such as sublimating vulgarity to align with moral norms, avoiding explicit allusion in satirical lyrics, and providing linguistic fodder for continued discussion of the songs after they are forgotten. Using a hands-on approach, the study concludes that understanding the subtext behind slang and catchphrases in these songs is critical to understanding what the artists are trying to convey, underscoring the need for linguistic analysis in the interpretation of hip-hop music. The authors emphasise that hip-hop producers are fond of making assumptions about their listeners, in the expectation that shared characteristics enable understanding of meaning.

Adeyemo et al. (2024) point to themes that are prevalent in Nigerian hip-hop lyrics like "get rich at all costs", materialist ideologies, hypermasculinity, and sexism, which are contributing to the inertia and survival of gender inequality in Nigeria's patriarchal societies. The study also shows that hip-hop artists' linguistic practices are not merely the representation of masculine ideology but also the active articulation of these values, demonstrating a strong relationship between these values and the expectations of society and broader cultural and economic processes. It outlines the need to critically examine popular culture messages, as these messages, in addition to reflecting expectations and pressures, inform and shape gender relations, and make us aware of the influence of music on public life and the maintenance of

hegemonic masculinity. Despite the efforts of extant studies to explore how hip-hop music performs social transformation, linguistics-based works have not paid significant attention to how linguistic features in Eedris Abdulkareem's songs stand out in expressing the artist's central message. To fill this gap in the literature, this study examines how some rhetorical patterns give voice and prominence to the central preoccupation of Eedris's songs on social advocacy.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Myers-Scotton's markedness model and Adegbija's concept of Nigerianism. The markedness model is an influential concept in sociolinguistics that explains the social function of code alternation. It is a framework that provides insight into how social motivations for code alternation (mixing or switching) are understood (Myers-Scotton, 2020). It holds that speakers are conscious of their choice of language varieties to foreground particular social meanings and achieve specific communication goals. The main idea of the markedness model is that speakers are highly strategic and intentional in their choice of code in relation to the social context they share with their audience (Amuzu, 2015). In essence, situations are assessed, and codes are deliberately selected, either in alignment with or in deviation from conventional forms, to achieve particular social communicative goals. In addition, the markedness model primarily focuses on code alternation as a strategy for negotiating social relationships, given that the mixture or change in codes can vary depending on shared social and cultural context (Rafiq et al., 2022). The model further avers that through strategic code alternation, power can be asserted, solidarity can be expressed, and social distance can be created. The model fits a multilingual environment and is therefore suitable for this study, mainly because Nigeria is a multilingual society and Nigerian hip-hop artists essentially mix codes to construct social meaning.

Complementarily, Adegbija's (1989) concept of Nigerianism is a fascinating account of Nigeria's peculiar linguistic diversity. It explores how languages play out in a multilingual society where English, left behind by colonialism, is blended with hundreds of local languages. Nigerianism refers to the linguistic aspects (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) that are distinctive of Nigerian English and are born of the interaction between English and Nigerian languages and the sociocultural milieu of Nigeria. Adegbija names several varieties of Nigerianisms: lexical novelty, semantic variation, and grammatical difference (Babarinde & Ahamefula, 2020). By recognizing Nigerianisms as linguistic characteristics, Adegbija has helped create a more open and sophisticated notion of linguistic difference. Adegbija offers a framework for making sense of the particularities of this linguistic diversity and invites reconsideration of preconceptions about language and identity (Ogunjobi & Akindutire, 2020). By appreciating Nigerian English's richness and variety, we can understand the language's ability to create and express cultural experiences (Babarinde & Ahamefula, 2020).

Methods and Materials

This study adopted the descriptive qualitative research method. According to Yin (2011), qualitative research allows studying a real-world setting in its terms, thereby putting a broad array of study topics at one's disposal. Data was sourced from the song lyrics of selected songs of Eedris Abdulkareem (born Eedris Turayo Abdulkareem Ajenifuja). Eedris is a Nigerian rapper, singer, songwriter, and social activist. Eedris Abdulkareem is a well-known socio-political rapper who has written music on some of the most controversial and political topics in Nigeria and beyond. In his solo career, he was famous for speaking without censorship on social and political issues in Nigeria. His songs regularly decried corruption,

injustice, and poverty in the government (Afo, 2014). He was praised and criticised for his bold slur against the Nigerian government and culture with one of his best-known songs, "Nigeria Jaga Jaga", released in 2004. Religion, poverty, and the indignities faced by everyday Nigerians are among the issues Eedris Abdulkareem addressed in his music. He became an icon of the voiceless and used his platform to champion change and justice (Osugwu, 2019). Eedris Abdulkareem is one of Nigeria's founding voices of conscious, socially engaged music. His provocative and unapologetically explicit lyrics have cemented his standing as an artist willing to use his art to illuminate social problems and effect change (Afo, 2014).

The songs were carefully selected from Eedris Abdulkareem's albums *Jaga Jaga* (2004), *Jaga Jaga Reloaded* (2021), and *Egunje* (2020). The data were adopted because they consisted of themes and lyrics that reveal political issues in Nigeria, economic jeopardy, poverty, theft, brutality, and corruption, among others. The songs were downloaded from www.naijaloaded.com and transcribed. After all the data had been collected and transcribed, the researchers took some steps to analyse the data, including classifying the collected lyrics and highlighting their meanings. Significantly, the data are presented in forms other than standard English. However, translations and equivalent meanings are provided in the analysis to provide context for readers unfamiliar with some peculiar linguistic codes in Nigeria. In the analysis section, Nigerian pidgin expressions and the local symbols that served as extracts were glossed and contextually interpreted. The data is subjected to rhetorical analysis and interpretive explanation.

Findings

Nigerian Pidgin or Naija as a rhetorical device

Nigerian Pidgin is a Creole language widely spoken and understood across Nigeria, making it an inclusive and accessible medium for communication. In recent literature on Nigeria's linguistic ecology, Nigerian Pidgin, or Naija (Egbokhare, 2022), has become an entrenched mode of communication across all ages, ethnic groups, and classes in Nigerian society (Akano, 2024). One of the most prominent linguistic features of the understudied Nigerian hip-hop songs is the use of Nigerian Pidgin. Eedris Abdulkareem utilises NP to reach a broad audience, transcending linguistic barriers and connecting with listeners from different regions and backgrounds. [1] Nigeria Jaga Jaga, everything scatter scatter, poor man dey suffer suffer (Jaga Jaga, 2004)

[2] Na political armed robber be that (Jaga Jaga, 2004)

[3] Dis no be military regime (Jaga Jaga Reloaded, 2021)

[4] Monkey no go work make bamboo dey chop am (Jaga Jaga Reloaded, 2021)

[5] ...Na hin put us for where we dey (Egunje, 2020)

[6] National Hospital no get Ventilators" (Egunje, 2020)

[7] Them go dey complain plenty; But when he reach them
turn oy oh; Them self go do cunny oh ya (Jaga Jaga Reloaded, 2021)

The phrase in [1] "Jaga Jaga", repeated throughout the song, encapsulates the central message. "Jaga Jaga" means "disorder" or "chaos" in Nigerian Pidgin English, effectively portraying the state of the nation and expressing the frustration of many Nigerians. Another synonymous phrase, "scatter scatter," depicts the socio-economic state of Nigeria as portrayed by the song lyrics. By the expression "political armed robber" in [2], the songwriter strongly criticises the actions of corrupt politicians in the country by labelling them as real criminals who are against the growth of Nigeria. The line in [3] reiterates the themes of disorder and chaos, and the lack

of orderliness among politicians and leaders. To achieve intertextuality, the line alludes to the military regime that ended in 1999. However, the expression "Dis no be military regime" in Nigerian Pidgin means "This is not the military era", which calls for genuine democratic practice in the country and agitates for the expungement of dictatorship masquerading as democracy on Nigeria's political soil.

Another pidginised expression in [4] "Monkey no go work make baboon dey chop am" literally and contextually means that someone else cannot be the sole beneficiary of another person's effort. This pidginised code also depicts the endemic corruption and extortion of people with low incomes by the political class, who, by shared social knowledge, are often a component of the high class. There is a call to address the meagre wages given to the lower class who work so hard to improve the nation's economy, and the gross embezzlement of public funds resulting from their labour. [5] further reveals such lamentation through the expression "Na hin put us for where we dey," which literally translates to 'It is responsible for our current state'. This points to the fact that corruption by the political class has served as an albatross to the nation's social and economic advancement. In a similar vein, [6] reveals how such corrupt practices have hurt the healthcare sector. The expression "National Hospital no get Ventilators," which means "National hospitals do not have ventilators," reflects the pitiable state of government-owned hospitals, which lack a quintessential medical facility like a ventilator.

In addition, the songwriter further laments the recycling of wrong political ideology, which the older generation of Nigerian politicians has passed on to the new generation. The expression in [7] literally translates to "they complain about it, and when allowed to lead too, they also act the same". This means the problems of Nigerians on the social, economic, and political fronts are constantly being recycled. In essence, when a new crop of leaders assumes power, they further perpetrate the ills they once condemned. In this sense, the songwriter expresses the hopeless situation into which the political class has plunged the nation. Arising from the above, the songwriter weaponises Nigerian Pidgin English throughout his songs. This linguistic fusion reflects Nigeria's cultural diversity and resonates with a broader audience, both within the country and internationally. English is often used for more intricate storytelling and to convey specific details, while Nigerian Pidgin English is employed to enhance the song's accessibility and authenticity. The use of Pidgin English creates a sense of connection with the listeners, as it is widely spoken and understood across various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Local Symbolism and Mixed Codes as a Rhetorical Device

Local symbolism, as linguistic imports from local languages, is the application of symbols and metaphors from those languages to convey universal ideas or sentiments. These ideas can be deeply rooted in the cultural and historical tradition of the local language, with significances and resonances that foreigners might not immediately recognise. By embracing such linguistic imports into their work, authors and speakers can draw on a potent reservoir of universal wisdom and elicit strong emotional responses in readers and listeners. To add cultural authenticity and connect with diverse regional audiences, the writer uses local-language imports to convey their thoughts.

[8] Your Ojoro don much" (Jaga Jaga, 2004)

[9] Our smiling and suffering sef na pasy as you go-go go " (Jaga Jaga Reloaded, 2021)

[10] Ojoro don de o ojoro don dey but we go overcome (Egunje, 2020)

- [11] Police collect your money, na egunje, budget. (Egunje, 2020)
- [12] Egunje, egunje, egunje, egunje ('gunje) Na hin put us for
where we dey oh (Egunje, 2020)
- [13] Police collect your money, na egunje, budget (Egunje, 2020)
- [14] Army dey kill people papa, police dey kill people mama
(Egunje, 2020)

The word "Ojoro" is borrowed from the Yoruba language and serves as a common colloquial expression that conveys "cheats" or, sometimes, "cheater". The expression "don much," meaning "too much," is a mixture of English and Pidgin English. This language combination showcases Nigerians' fluidity in switching between linguistic forms. This expression implies that the political class has continually cheated Nigerian citizens, as evidenced by corruption, embezzlement of public funds, and diversion of public funds to projects of self-interest, among other activities connected to governance. While the songwriter in [8] harps on the phenomenon of the practice of "cheating" perpetrated by the political class, [9] it is an expression of the consequences of such ills. In [9], the line "our smiling and suffering sef na pasy as you go-go go" is an instance of code alternation that combines English and local symbolic codes ("our smiling and suffering") with the pidgin phrase "sef na pasy as you go-go go" (meaning eat as you find), depicting the desperate survival mode of many Nigerians. The recurrent political malaise has kept many Nigerians, especially those in the lower class, in a state of perpetual struggle and, by extension, abject poverty. An average citizen is condemned to consume only what is available, especially in the recent precarious economic situation that bedevils the nation. In response, the songwriter in [10] expresses hope for emancipation and victory over corrupt politicking and governance in the future. [10] shows that there is evidence of cheating and fraudulent activity in the government, yet the singer still assures learners that they will overcome it. "We go overcome" conveys a sense of resilience and determination to suppress activities related to bad politics that have slowed the nation's social and economic progress.

Another local symbol that is widely used in the selected songs, as evident in [11], is "egunje". Egunje is a borrowed term from Yoruba that means "bribery" or "extortion". It means the involuntary gift extorted from the giver by corrupt officials. The term is a further revelation of activities related to bribery, especially within law enforcement circles, such as the police. There is a rapid mention of the word "Egunje" in [11], [12], and [13] as the songwriter attempts to call the attention of the audience to the biting consequences of "Egunje" (extortion). The expression "Na hin put us for where we dey oh" translates to "it has put us where we are," and this signals that the song's artiste foregrounds how bribery and extortion have stalled the country's economic and socio-political progress. In essence, the song artist rides on the shared knowledge of the common corrupt practice of extortion perpetrated by some members of the law enforcement agencies in Nigeria, who are expected to be the true vanguard of justice, fairness, equity, and genuine service to the people. [13] reveals the depth of such corrupt practices, showing the degeneration to the extent of murder. The line "Army dey kill people papa, police dey kill people mama" relates to the various cases where officials of law enforcement agencies have callously murdered people who do not kowtow to their demands. Invariably, such cases of police brutality unsurprisingly led to the popular and monumental EndSars protest, which specifically called for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), who have, over time, been indicted for committing atrocities against Nigerians, especially the youth, through extrajudicial practices (Balogun & Akano, 2021; Ekoh & George,

2021; Dambo et al., 2022; Akano, 2023). The use of local symbolism, therefore, reflects Nigeria's linguistic diversity and the way Nigerians naturally switch between languages or dialects in everyday conversations.

Repetition as a Rhetorical Device

Repetition is a rhetorical device used to achieve emphasis. In recent years, researchers' efforts have been channelled towards exploring the concept of repetition as a rhetorical device and its pragmatic functions in political communication (Awoniyi et al., 2024). Considerable attention has been given to how repetition serves as a persuasive appeal in political remarks and addresses (Khdaif, 2016). Hsieh (2011, p.163) avers that "pragmatically speaking, repetition, both self-repeats and other repeats, can be used to double up the illocutionary force, i.e., to do emphasis or to do persuasion, through repeating the linguistic form". Repetition is a common feature in music stanzas. Repetition is one of the most common rhetorical devices in Eedris Abdulkareem's songs, as it helps the songwriter or theist make their point. To draw the listeners' attention to the lyrics of the music and to make them understand why it is being emphasised.

[14] Egunje Egunje Egunje Egunje (Egunje, 2020)

[15] Everything Scatter Scatter, Poor man dey suffer suffer (Jaga Jaga, 2004)

As shown in [14], Egunje (bribery and extortion) was constantly repeated in the first line of the music chorus. It was done to show emphasis on bribery, extortion, and unlawful detention and jailing of some citizens who fall victim to the corrupt officials' greed. There are several instances of repetition in Eedris Abdulkareem's song Jaga Jaga. This is done so the artist draws listeners' attention to the issue addressed in the songs. The socio-political issues in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised since corruption and theft appear to have become the order of the day in the country (Williams & Obuzor, 2023). The song Jaga Jaga Reloaded was inspired by the EndSars saga that featured the massacre killing of youth at the Toll Gate in Lagos. The song was brought about to reveal the hidden truth about the killings. The Toll Gate massacre (Ojedokun et al., 2021) is a historic experience that features the death of some Nigerian youth after the Nigerian army opened fire on them for protesting against police brutality. Similarly, "Suffer suffer" in [15] emphasises the suffering of the masses due to poor governance and greed by political leaders. As is customary in musical songs, repetition is used to achieve emphasis, and this feature typically characterises the selected songs of Eedris Abdulkareem, whose music challenges socio-political ills and serves as the voice of the masses.

Discussion

Through a contextual examination of Eedris Abdulkareem's selected songs, we can identify consistent social and political themes that demonstrate the artist's passion for addressing societal challenges in Nigeria. The selected hip-hop songs evoke corruption and injustice. The songwriter keeps criticising corruption and injustice in Nigerian society. The songwriter-activist brings home the ravages of corruption in the everyday lives of the people, contrasting the luxurious life of the political class with that of the population. The other central trope reflected in the songs is poverty and socioeconomic struggle. The songs usually portray real-life Nigerians living in poverty and lacking resources. The songwriter also illuminates a country that suffers from a lack of basic services, unemployment, and economic inequality.

Notably, Eedris Abdulkareem is well-known as a political commentator who sings about dissatisfaction with the political order, advocating openness, accountability, and good governance. The lyrics condemn politicians for empty promises and inaction. However, amid the criticism, Eedris also highlights national pride and solidarity. The artist urges Nigerians to unite, across ethnic and religious lines, to solve common problems and bring about positive change.

In addition, Eedris Abdulkareem uses several narrative styles to convey his messages effectively. The songwriter uses the imagery in the selected songs to visualize the social struggles articulated. Descriptive language is used to evoke emotion and elicit a strong response in his audience, bringing them closer to the songs. The song's artist makes sense of the metaphors and symbolism to convey complex messages familiarly. By resolving social issues through analogies to what we already know or through symbolic metaphor, the artist enables elucidation of the problem. This aligns with Mohamed's (2022) view that repetition in songs cements key themes and provides viewers with hooks that endure. The repeated lines, such as "Jaga Jaga," keep the song's message consistent and memorable. More to this, it is not unusual for the artist to use direct address and call-to-action lines in the songs to bring the listener into the room and inspire them to protest against the various tropes of socioeconomic injustice in Nigerian society.

This study reiterates Afo's (2014) view that Eedris Abdulkareem's music speaks to the tragic reality of political and socioeconomic malaise in Nigerian society. The recurring themes of corruption, economic struggle, political debate, and appeals to solidarity are the artist's means of disseminating information and advancing the agenda. With narrative devices such as descriptive imagery, metaphor, repetition, and direct speech, the songwriter keeps readers engaged and leaves them with a lot to digest. Eedris Abdulkareem's music speaks volumes about the situation of ordinary Nigerians, and it is a cry for justice, fairness, and equity in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study has examined how Eedris Abdulkareem, a Nigerian hip-hop artist and social activist, artfully deploys rhetorical devices of Nigerian pidgin, local symbolism, mixed codes, and repetition throughout his songs. This linguistic synthesis echoes Nigerian diversity and is appreciated more widely within and outside the country. Nigerian Pidgin English is used to make the song more accessible and authentic. Nigerian Pidgin English connects with the listener because it is a spoken language understood by many ethnic groups in Nigeria. The article also highlights rhetorical analysis as an appropriate tool for capturing the craft of language usage in music. Through the lens of rhetorical patterns, scholars can appreciate the subtle ways in which language, linguistics, literary devices, and the larger social and political contexts in which music is produced and heard are linked. The study acknowledges its limitations in terms of data availability and the potential for researcher bias. Despite these limitations, the research is an important addition to the literature on musical language as a tool for social revolution, Eedris Abdulkareem's music, and the use of rhetorical patterns to appreciate the artistic and social effects of songs with social commentary. This study offers a unique perspective on the effectiveness of music as a social activist tool and on the broader use of rhetorical devices in conceptualising the aesthetic and social impact of music. In conclusion, Eedris Abdulkareem's music is a strong testimony to the power of music as a platform for social activism, solidarity and self-realisation. The song artist has leveraged fame to shed light

on critical topics and promote change which serves as a legacy in Nigerian music and Nigerian society.

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The author(s) declare no conflicts of interest in the article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

Declaration of AI Refined

The authors used Grammarly for structural accuracy and to improve the overall writing style of the paper. All other intellectual content of the research remains the sole work of the authors.

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